# JOST TOWN MATCH Luton Town...1 Grimsby......4 (Half-time....0-3)

Brian Swain reports.

Action pictures: Josh L

was at least a little better

It could hardly have

Perhaps the absence

There was precious

Town midfield until it

because they knew they

A crisis of confidence

department in the Town

side, with the defence

having a nightmare

Close

The deputy for

Preece, Jason Rees, at

and effort. Things might

have been different if he

had completed a sweet

Town move in the first

seemed to strike every after he had

was too late to matter,

the same team could be of flu victim David inches short



WATCHFUL: Paul Futcher shadowing Steve Claridge.

THE self-inflicted agony the

Town suffered against Grimsby

was a case of restarting where they

had left off at the Abbey Stadium

It was an astonishing change of

ortunes, and frightening drop in con-

For 70 minutes the Town looked as

though they had put all their troubles

behind them, and the third win of the

They had played their best football for a

ong time, based on sharp accurate passing,

Shambolic

But with 17 minutes to go Cambridge,

ing with the long ball, pulled a goal

very quick, and now mixing a little more

back, and all the old defensive frailties

returned, and shambolic defending saw

Cambridge had only two good spells, the

first ten minutes and the last 20, with the

Town weathering the first expertly and the

The interval lead was well merited on

run of play, given them in the 21st minute

by Scott Oakes, with a side-footed flick

from a left wing run and cross by Marvin

two more points go down the drain.

and were a class above the home side.

eason was all but buttoned up.

in midweek.

# ALL TOO EASY FOR VISITORS

If the mood and spirit something.

If you saw the first 70 than the first.

midweek you would been otherwise.

so very different for the Preece played a major

intact again four days little creativity in the

start.

minutes at Cambridge in

hardly credit that almost

awful level of mediocrity

last 20, and keep that part.

the pits of pain at Kenilworth Road as Luton Town's plight was ruthlessly exposed by

Grimsby. The first home win of the season was put out of reach before the game was half an hour old, and after that Grimsby took it so easy that their manager gave them an

ear-bashing at half-time. Absolutely nothing went right for David Pleat or his men, and the best the diehards could hink was that perhaps the visitors had a little luck with offsides not given in the build-up to

Contrasts at The Abbey

CAMBRIDGE UTD 3

LUTON TOWN 3

Johnson, who had tricked his way round

Two goals in six minutes by Phil Gray

early in the second half had the Town

following singing in delight. The first was a

25-yarder helped in by a deflection off

Mick Heathcote, the second a sweet and

But it all went wrong after Lee Philpott pulled one back in the 73rd minute, with a

shot that Andy Peterson allowed to slip

underneath his body. The cross had been

delivered by Devon White after he had

turned Darren Salton on Cambridge's right

both subs to try to change things, and one

of them, John Francis raced through for a

gift after a midfield mistake by Chris

Kamara four minutes later. The only sur-

prise after that was that Cambridge did not

go on to win as the Town's heart and con-

fidence drained. The inevitable equaliser

came from Francis, running in as the spare

man after a deep cross from the left by

Micky Norbury, leaving the Town hanging

"I was delighted with the first 70

on for the last three minutes

Acting manager Gary Johnson threw on

Gary Rowett.

But it was not luck which beat the Town.

that would have looked Oxford on Saturday. little better on Sunday mornings on pitch Q at is right, it is by no means Lothair Road, where the an impossible dream. local league Division Eight teams play.

The fans had their say MD David Kohler was away at a wedding, but his was not the only name chanted with some derision.

reaction will be to roll up

responsibility and put

we must learn lessons from the last 20.'

Match details

LUTON TOWN: Petterson; Linton, Salton,

Peake, Johnson; Oakes, James, Kamara, Preece;

CAMBRIDGE: Sheffield; Fensome

Heathcote, O'Shea, Kimble; Rowett (Francis 55

mins), Raynor, Clayton (Ainsworth 59 mins),

0-2 48 mins — Phil Gray, deflected drive after

taking on two men and shooting from just outside

the box. 0-3, 54 mins — carbon copy by Gray, but

without the deflection. 1-3, 73 mins - Lee

Philpott drive under Andy Petterson from Devon

Francis after Chris Kamara headed towards his

Norbury to put Francis clear. 3-3, 87 mins -

from a left-wing cross by Norbury.

REFEREE: Vic Callow, Solihull.

BOOKED: No

was thrown away.

spare man Francis, unmarked on the blind side.

OTHER STRIKES: Town five saved and four

oss bounced onto the top of the bar. Corners: 5-

ATTENDANCE: 5,715, including 1,144 from

ENTERTAINMENT: Lovely for the first 73

es. Wretched after that as a three-goal lead

n goal from the centre circle to set up Micky

White's cross. 2-3, 77 mins — substitute John

THE GOALS: 0-1, 21 mins — Scott Oakes

efooted flick from a cross by Marvin Johnson.

Claridge, Gray. Subs: Campbell and Greene.

Philpott: Norbury, White,

sleeves, take collective

There was hardly a Jeering single success in the when Grimsby eased off For the first time Town side, which was there was an appreciable left looking aimless and had it in the bag.

on tenterhooks by the groundswell of jeering at the manager, and for early blows Grimsby players who simply did dished out. not do the business. The optimists can Allover only hope that the team

It took the visitors only 27 minutes to finish the contest by easing into a three-goal lead.

Cambridge, full of fire and a refusal to accept least shows enthusiasm the apparent inevitable. can fight back from that sort of shock. Luton Town couldn't. Tension and fear of minute.

failure seemd to To prove that they can permeate almost every- be good going forward at his other clu thing they did until a the Town made progress

THE FULL MATCH DETAILS

LUTON TOWN: Chamberlain; Linton (Telfer HT), Salton,

Johnson; Oakes, James, Kamara, Rees; Claridge (Campbell 82), Gray

Croft; Watson, Dobbin (Smith 80 mins), Groves, Gilbert; Rees, Mendon

by David Pleat, close range at the second attempt from a right wing

by Tommy Watson, after the first had been played back to him by C

Kamara; 0-2, 23 mins — Tony Rees after fullback John McDermotis

and five wide. Corners: 5-4 to Grimsby.

Grimsby's third goal.

over in less than half an hour

THE GOALS: 0-1, 18 mins — Paul Groves, once a Leicester reserve

GRIMSBY: Beasant; McDermott, Futcher, Lever, (Rodger 53

faint hopes of saving move which The second half show

rea, and Re

league gam

David Gilb

the rebound wide

turned out to be

the few mistak

The Grims

fielder showed

and brain that

sadly lacking i

Chris Kamara, so

getting the bird

the defence was all Linton and the place as good ing and pace carried sby forward.

The composure and idence evaporated the 18th minute, when mmy Watson got the Grimsby right ying and crossed for Froves to open his ount for the club he

to better effect,

he was not the only

ed in the summer. give minutes later a ball by fullback in McDermott got Trevor Peake and ny Rees raced into a de open space behind

crossed Marvin Johnson's header went Chamberlain did all straight to Groves, who ould, charging out to directed his header edge of the area, but carefully wide of es kent cool and lobb-

### THE FIRST DIVISION

		HOME					AWAY				
P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	1
Newcastle 15	6	1	1	16	4	6	0	1	13	8	3
Swindon 16	6	2	1	19	9	2	2	3	9	12	2
Tranmere 15	6	3	0	19	4	2	1	3	8	9	2
West Ham 15	3	1	2	11	4	5	2	2	16	7	2
Millwall 15	5	2	0	19	5	2	3	3	6	8	20
Charlton 16	4	4	1	12	5	3	1	3	8	8	20
Wolves 16	3	4	1	17	11	3	3	2	8	5	2
Peterborough 15		2	4	10	12	5	1	1	14	8	2
Leicester City 16	5	2	2	10	8	2	1	4	8	11	2
Portsmouth 15	5	0	1	13	2	1	4	4	15	21	2
Watford 16	4	1	3	14	14	2	3	3	11	13	2
Grimsby 15	3	3	1	11	8	3	1	4	11	9	2:
Derby 15	2	0	4	11	12	4	3	2	14	8	2
Bristol City 15	4	2	2	13	12	2	0	5	10	22	20
Uxford Utd 15	2	5	2	12	10	2	3	1	9	7	20
Brentford 15	4	2	3	17	11	1	2	3	5	6	1
Birmingham 15	4	0	3	9	11	1	4	3	4	12	19
Cambridge 16	4	1	3	11	13	0	4	4	5	16	1'
parnsley 15	2	2	4	8	8	2	1	4	10	8	1:
Sunderland. 15	3	2	2	9	7	1	1	6	5	18	1:
Notts County 16	1	3	3	5	9	2	2	5	13	24	1
Luton Iown 15	0	3	4	9	20	2	3	3	9	13	13
outnend 15	1	3	2	5	7	1	2	6	7	16	1
Bristol Rovers 16	2	1	5	11	22	0	2	6	10	22	

# Chamberlain.

		HOME					AWAI						
P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	P		
Newcastle 15	6	1	1	16	4	6	0	1	13	8	37		
Swindon 16	6	2	1	19	9	2	2	3	9	12	28		
Tranmere 15	6	3	0	19	4	2	1	3	8	9	28		
West Ham 15	3	1	2	11	4	5	2	2	16	7	27		
Millwall 15	5	2	0	19	5	2	3	3	6	8	26		
Charlton 16	4	4	1	12	5	3	1	3	8	8	26		
Wolves 16	3	4	1	17	11	3	3	2	8	5	25		
Peterborough 15	2	2	4	10	12	5	1	1	14	8	24		
Leicester City 16	5	2	2	10	8	2	1	4	8	11	24		
Portsmouth 15	5	0	1	13	2	1	4	4	15	21	22		
Watford 16	4	1	3	14	14	2	3	3	11	13	22		
Grimsby 15	3	3	1	11	8	3	1	4	11	9	22		
Derby 15	2	0	4	11	12	4	3	2	14	8	21		
Bristol City 15	4	2	2	13	12	2	0	5	10	22	20		
Oxford Utd 15	2	5	2	12	10	2	3	1	9	7	20		
Brentford 15	4	2	3	17	11	1	2	3	5	6	19		
Birmingham 15	4	0	3	9	11	1	4	3	4	12	19		
Cambridge 16	4	1	3	11	13	0	4	4	5	16	17		
Barnsley 15	2	2	4	8	8	2	1	4	10	8	15		
Sunderland 15	3	2	2	9	7	1	1	6	5	18	15		
Notts County 16	1	3	3	5	9	2	2	5	13	24	14		
Luton Town 15	0	3	4	9	20	2	3	3	9	13	12		
Southend 15	1	3	2	5	7	1	2	6	7	16	11		
Bristol Rovers 16	2	1	5	11	22	0	2	6	10	22	9		

JUMPING TO IT: Substitute Jamie Campbell under pressure.

ed in the second goal.

The third was from a

set piece, with the Town

complaining that offside

Julian James was

booked in the Grimsby

half for a foul on

Gilbert. The free kick

was hit long and high,

the Town back four

pushed out. The offside

they expected was not

Two clear

Gilbert and Groves

were both in the clear

The defence got back

well, but when Gilbert

behind the back four.

should have been given.

'Going down, going seven minutes after

rolled around the piece of work of the

ground after that, from game, with a surging

For the second half from the left towards the

three at the back and glorious goal which

far post

crossfield run whic

took him diagonally

It finished with a

waspish low drive which

beat the goalkeeper, bu

flashed just wide of the

It was close to being a

might have sparked a

Instead Grimsby were

able to capitalise on the

Town's accent on attack

with Groves, a former

Leicester City reserve

sold off by David Pleat

completing his hat-trick

in the 82nd minute, with

The final whistle was a

relief after that

'Rubbish' was one of the

more polite epithet:

Mr. Kohler thinks

some of the protesters

I know a minority are

Intolerance

And what about th

club yobbery from the

PA box, where the

oafish response to a few

dozen people shouting

and jeering was to turn

eardrum-bursting level

to discomfort all who

were still in the ground.

Luton Town used to

be a happy club. It hurts

but not the great majori

are yobs.

pull-back by Gilbert.

real fightback.

down, going down," was Gray's goal.

the despairing chant that

the long-suffering home

longer nightmare than

the one he had already

suffered, with Paul

Telfer going on as sub to

The Town played

Grimsby settled to hold

The Town got much

more into the game, but

were unable to make

their improvement

Johnson, with a far

post header wide of the

by Rees, and Oakes.

target after a good cross

with a wild 30-yarder

into the terrace, did

nothing to improve the

crowd's humour, but

slowly the Town showed

signs of what they are

played a one-two and

Claridge had a low shot

saved, and Gray was out

of luck with a lovely

piece of football when

he took a cross from

Oakes on his chest and

instantly despatched a

flicked lob which was an

Claridge and Gray

count early enough.

try to boost attack.

what they had.

Linton was spared a right.

supporters.

inch or two the wrong side of the bar. With 20 minutes to go up the music volume to Gray got his reward, with his sixth goal in four games, an expert far post header from a cross Grimsby braced when they sink to that

'Stick at it, Luton' on the day I am sure we deserved

> "The thing I noticed most, as a defender, was that they are lacking a big target man up front. You need one to give you more

after scoring three in the first 27

looked in a different class.

"It was quick, bright and positive football, and Luton couldn't do anything about it. But then we started to take too long on the ball to deliver the

"I was impressed by the way Luton kept battling on. They

Town boss David Pleat said: "I think I have got the worst job in football at the moment.'

first half. are to lose more players, as is the stated intention of the managing director, it means even younge players will have to come in, who

#### Bottle

"I am afraid at the momen one or two don't want to be part

players now going through the mill could pay a heavy price, with their development threatened by

potential problem. But we can make no excuse

I WOULD like to take issue with the careers finished years ago, including Stein, Harford, morality of some of the comments in Mr. Peake and Kamara. No wonder Leicester gave him Walby's letter in the Luton News last the boot. Now is the time to call a boycott. All supporters

should stay away for the rest of the home matches J. HARRIS (ex-supporter), The Cedars, Stopsley.

#### Blame players, not the management

Mr. Pleat is also not beyond criticism for the I HAVE to support the letters by Mr. Gage and Mr. Walby supporting David

Kholer and David Pleat.
How can you blame them, when the players have a notivate the remaining players, including those he two-goal lead against Southend, and a three-goal If anyone doubts this you only have to look at the lead against Cambridge, and then throw it away? nability to maintain winning positions against

I think that is terrible. It is the players who want a good ticking off.

LETTERS TO THE SPORTS EDITOR

Diversionary tactic?

When questioned in public Mr. Kohler has stated

that it would be unethical to discuss contracts of club

However, these rules apparently do not aply when

Could it be that he wishes to divert the blame for

he club's financial and playing position since he and

decline. While agreeing that some players have been old without his blessing, he apparently cannot

**Disgraceful dismissals** 

John Faulkner there has been no heart, commitment

or spirit at Kenilworth Road. Mr. Pleat stated in the

Depleted fanzine that three months prior to his

dismissal from Spurs Scholar was talking to Tel. How

ronic! The same situation applied to Jim Ryan, as

Mr. Pleat has confirmed that he was approached by

the Luton Town board three months before Jim was

Major changes are required at both board and

managerial level as soon as possible if our club is to

I know there are people waiting in the wings who care about Luton's future. Please come out into the

open. You'll get all the help and support you need

week's Luton News shows that Mr.

Kohler is trying to talk round some of the

supporters while a campaign against the

inconsistencies in anything Mr. Kohler says.

transfer prices is absolute rubbish as well.

t obvious they are not wanted.

This campaign resulted in articles in Today, the

Sep 23), £15,000 a week (Luton News Oct 21), wages

£2.3m, gate income £1m (Luton News Oct 21), losing

which means a £1.6m loss a year (Mr. Walby's letter).

What are we expected to believe?

The claim that low wage players mean high

Low wages simply mean that players will accept

the first decent offer that comes along, because they

are in no position to show loyalty to a club that makes

Low wages also mean poor results and relegation,

which brings a lack of confidence and loss of transfer

value. Surprise, surprise. If you pay peanuts... So Mr. Kohler is a shrewd businessman? Who will

be the next player to go for £1m? No-one, because a

On the subject of selling the club, Mr. Walby

reports that Keith Haslam was ruled out due to

"If a deal is done, I will walk away, no strings

So Mr Kohler is a nice chap? Presumably he has

been misquoted with alarming regularity. Or is it

For a man who wants to sell the club, he is making

This man must go, and go now, before our club is totally destroyed. The campaign against him must

Finally, if Mr. Kohler wants to answer my points I

KEITH HAYWARD

Icknield Way, Luton.

a disgrace

(co-editor, Mad As A Hatter)

Present team is

am sure the supporters club would be happy to

I HAVE been a Luton supporter for 40 years and this

This is all due to lack of effort by both manage-

organise an open meeting so that he can do so

present team is a disgrace

it very difficult for himself, or is that the intention?

attached," (Luton News Aug 26). "I will walk away

as soon as there is a buyer" (Luton News Oct 7). Mr.

player's value also reflects the level he has played at.

having insufficient funds to prevent player sales.

Another case of Mr. Kohler's inconsistency

£1.6m a year (Today Oct 28), wages total £2.3m

Kingsdown Avenue, Luton.

Trying to talk the

Since the disgraceful dismissals of Jim Ryan and

employees, or dismissals or transfers.

nis ex-partner took over Luton Town?

criticism is levelled at him.

signed to play for Luton

Southend and Cambridge

from the supporters who care

rest of us takes place.

I can't imagine Billy Schwer or Everton Blake slacking off after winning the first rounds I hope the players take a leaf out of their books,

and then they would be champions as well. Congratulations to Billy and Everton. Luton is

Florence Avenue, Luton.

PHIL BURGESS

## Abysmal defending has to be put right

• The following letter arrived too late for publication last week, and was written after the Southend game.

DAVID KHOLER may well be the underlying reason for Luton Town's decline, but the immediate problem lies with the performances on the pitch, and not in the boardroom.

supporters round Despite the loss of Harford and Pembridge, which THE LETTER from Gary Walby in last were major setbacks, we still have a team capable of maintaining a position in the top half of the division.

However the game against Southend was a disgrace. After taking a two-goal lead, quite a rare occurrence by Town standards, Luton defended abysmally, looking as though they wanted to let Southend back in the game, and nearly handing them all three points.

Evening Standard and the Daily Mail, the gist of which was what a nasty, hateful bunch of people we Southend should have been dead and buried when it was 2-0, and most Town fans must have hoped for a However, Mr. Walby's letter revealed the usual 3-0 or 4-0 win.

The problem does not seem to be scoring goals, as For example losses £850,000 a year (Luton News Sep 23), £15,000 a week (Luton News Oct 21), wages partnership, and five goals scored in two games can't

#### Kick up the backside

But the defending was inexcusable, and all of the back four should be given a kick up the backside. Des Linton, in particular, had an awful game.

However he is still fairly young and inexperienced. However, why was John Dreyer, one of the most experienced squad members, allowed to sit through the game on the substitutes bench?

Other questions: why was Jason Rees dropped, after playing the best football of his career so far? Why in recent matches has Jamie Campbell been brought on as substitute to play on the wing when surely his height is needed in the middle?

What on earth is David Pleat playing at? I pity poor Andy Petterson, who has looked in excellent form this season, and obviously must be a man of great self-confidence not to let an average of

two goals conceded a game destroy his confidence. This is not meant to be a criticism of the whole team as some players cannot be faulted for their efforts and always give 100 per cent, Claridge, Haslam a buyer, no sale due to strings? — "I will not Preece, Petterson, Rees and a rejuvinated Gray. leave unless someone with more money than me can come in..." (Luton News Oct 21). Those strings However I just wish some of the other players

would play with their hearts for the club. David Pleat has constantly pleaded for the fans to

get behind the team, which they faithfully do week after week.

#### Getagrip

vever it is about time that Mr. Pleat took a grip of the situation because as a long-standing supporter I for one am rapidly losing my patience with the club, and am reluctant to renew my season ticket next season to watch the likes of Hull, Wigan, Stockport etc. This is where we will be if things don't improve As for Mr. Kohler, surely the best way he could

highlight the club's financial plight would be to publish details of the audited accounts in the Luton News so we can see for ourselves exactly where all the money has gone.

I don't expect miracles overnight, but the likes of Liverpool and Arsenal playing at Luton must not

become memories replaced by constant relegation battles through the lower divisions. The players of the club are capable of performing

better than our present position would suggest, so

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#### ball passed an inch too high for Trevor Peake and left luck Chamberlain exposed and alone; 0-3, 27 mins — Groves again, he from poor to a chamberlain exposed and alone; 0-3, 27 mins — Groves again, he chamberlain exp from poor headed clearance by Marvin Johnson; 1-3, 70 mins — Phillips of the cook of the c themselves for a storm sort of intolerance to try sixth goal in four games, far post header from left wing cross by red in the closing stages, but to silence a view they the greatest danger to would rather not hear Jason Rees; 1-4, 82 mins — Groves, completing the first hat-trickof his reer with a careful low drive from a right wing run and pull-back by the match David City the match David Gilbert. OTHER STRIKES: Town two saved and seven wide; Grimsby INC

REFEREE: John Martin, Hampshire. Used to be one we loved to he there were other targets, in Town shirts, for the home fans this time. BOOKED: Julian James for a foul on Gilbert, with the free kick lead ATTENDANCE: 6,928, second lowest league gate of the season iss player, spoke sadly of slump will continue if results do not pick up.

as happened at Luton ENTERTAINMENT: Painful for the home crowd, with the mate since he was a Kenilworth ears ago, and

believes Grimsby are a he was surprised at how y took their current run es without defeat.

If an hour we played d stuff and got the ut I don't know whether e the result of good play lefending," he said.

Angry manager

light have had four or n that spell. The gaffer at half-time because one so well but then got second half Luton

ition to the winds, but ver really created that read about Luton's and I am sad to see aggling. I have happy

of the place, and I et out of trouble. ever goes on in the it comes down to 11

Visiting manager Alan Buckley had a go at his men at the interval for going off the boil

He said: "For half an hour we played some good stuff and we

# **Battling** on

never threw in the towel and kept playing the game in the right way. They stuck to their beliefs, and if you do that things will turn."

He exonerated Alec He exonerates

The exonerates

Chamberlain from blame for the

"He was unfortunate to be left so exposed," said the manager. We defended very badly in the

are not ready. We have eroded it too quickly, and this is the result.

"Now we will have to see which players have the bottle to carry on in the pressure cooker and those who don't have it.

of it, and I have no replacements for them. And he fears that young

bad experiences. Said the manager: "Whereve I look there is a problem, or a

for defeat: if you don't play wel you don't deserve anything.

stop the rot now! What good has David Pleat done since his return J. COOK to the club? He has signed a bunch of players whose Rudyard Close, Luton. • We have received other letters from correspondents who did not give names and addresses, and which were therefore not considered for publication. In answer to a question raised by many readers, the letter from Gary Walby last week, a report on a conversation he had with David

Kohler, was checked with the MD before publication, and he confirmed it

was an accurate report of what he had said to Mr Walby. - Sports Ed.