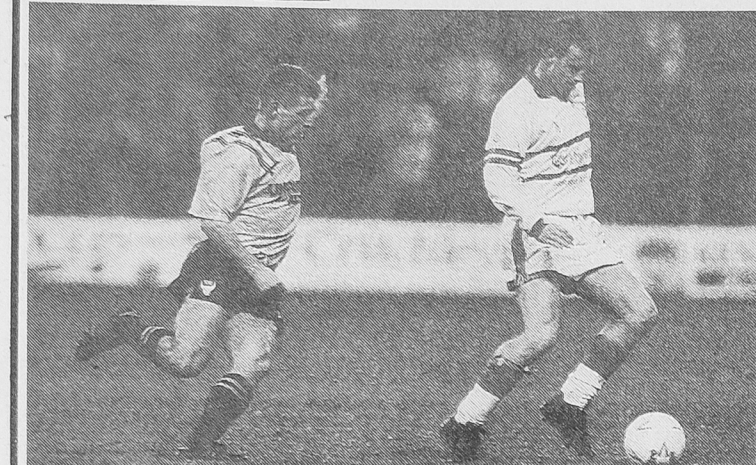


Sports News



● CHASING: Steve Claridge on the break.



● COVERING: Darren Salton close to the opposition.

THE SEASON SO FAR

● RESULTS showing Town score first, Town goalscorers, attendances and league position:

BARCLAYS LEAGUE DIV I		
AUGUST		
15 Leicester (a) 1-2 (Campbell)	17,428	-
22 Bristol City (h) 0-3	7,926	22
29 Charlton (a) 0-0	6,302	21
SEPTEMBER		
2 Newcastle (a) 0-2	27,054	21
5 Tranmere (h) 3-3 (Claridge, Linton, Oakes)	6,801	23
13 Brentford (a) 2-1 (James, Gray)	7,310	19
19 Birmingham (h) 1-1 (Claridge pen)	8,481	21
26 Notts Co (a) 0-0	5,992	21
OCTOBER		
3 Portsmouth (h) 1-4 (Dreyer)	7,954	22
10 Barnsley (a) 0-3	5,261	23
17 Derby (h) 1-3 (Johnson)	8,848	23
25 Peterborough (a) 3-2 (Gray 2, Telfer)	7,125	22
31 Southend (h) 2-2 (James, Gray)	7,256	22
NOVEMBER		
3 Cambridge (a) 3-3 (Oakes, Gray 2)	5,715	22
7 Grimsby (h) 1-4 (Gray)	6,928	22
14 Oxford (a) 0-4	5,760	22

APPEARANCES (as sub in brackets): Ever-presents with 16 each: Linton, James and Gray. Claridge 15(1), Preece 15, Petterson 14, Salton 14, Kamara 12, Peake 11, Rees 10, Johnson 9(1), Dreyer 8, Oakes 7(8), Telfer

TOWN MATCH VERDICT

Oxford United....4
Luton Town.....0
(Half-time.....2-0)

Brian Swain reports.

Action pictures: Josh Levy

OLD PAL ADDS MORE WORRIES

Two early strikes all but settle it

BRIAN Horton, once the pupil who studied under David Pleat, passed an easy test when the two came up against each other as managers for the first time.

The margin may have been flattering to the Oxford United boss, but Luton Town were swept away in another game where they were all but buried in the first half-hour.

By that time John Durkin had snapped two goals, and the Town followers know better than to expect miracle recoveries.

The team is not good enough to make a challenge for honours in the First Division.

The worry is that as the goals flood past

them a shoestring squad may be on the long slide we suffered after the first time we enjoyed a bright spell in the old First Division.

Shuffle

With Chris Kamara gone to Sheffield, David Preece was brought back, and Paul Telfer returned to the starting line-up in place of Scott Oakes, who was on the bench.

Alongside Oakes in the dug-out was John Dreyer, who was in the back four the last time the Town kept a clean sheet, at Notts County in September.

There have been 21 goals conceded in seven league games since then.

Oxford found it all too easy to pressurise the Town on the flanks, and

the service from the right wing provided by Joey Beauchamp in the first half-hour settled the contest.

Too late

The Town cut off his threat after that, after he had done the damage.

Oxford's fluid 4-4-2 formation used two men as wingers behind the front pair, with Beauchamp on the right and Chris Allen on the left getting upfield whenever they could.

And while they were not brilliant, Oxford had one of those days when almost everything they tried came off.

It was particularly true of Durkin, who hit four goals for the first time in his career.

He was also the third opponent to do the hat-

trick against the Town this season.

It is pointless slaying the Town side in print: while I thought the manager might have shuffled things a little more before the start by sending Dreyer into battle against his first club, he has problems because of the small squad.

Rest?

For instance, if Des Linton and Marvin Johnson need a rest from the continual pressure, how does a switch to fullback of, say, Julian James affect a midfield which would be short of bite without him?

Similarly, Steve Claridge was bought at a time when it was thought Mick Harford

would provide him with support, with Phil Gray and Clardie competing to play alongside the big striker. We might even have seen a Town side with three men up front, particularly at home.

At the Manor, Claridge tried hard, as did the rest of the Town side, but it was another unequal contest.

What hurt was that you could see Oxford knew they had the measure of the Town after the first 30 minutes, and while the Town got much more into it after the break, they rarely threatened to do the sort of damage to Oxford's defence that had been suffered at the other end.

Extended

Nippy Beauchamp looked top quality only in the first half-hour, but it was enough to extend Oxford's run to eight league games without defeat.

He went close to an



● SHOOTING: Phil Gray lets fly at goal.

early solo goal, shooting wide after cutting in past Johnson.

Skipper Trevor Peake had to plug gaps on both sides.

He made two vital tackles, to stop Lewis on the left and Beauchamp on the right as Oxford opened proceedings at a very enthusiastic canter.

But the defence was well out of shape when Oxford went ahead in the 24th minute. Beauchamp ran at Parkside.

FC Coral Res. 5:30 2:10 12:6

He thought Oxford deserved their win, but added:

"I have seen worse sides than Luton. And they keep trying to play the right way, although it doesn't always get the results."

Mr. Pleat took care to let his men down gently. "The result was a little harsh, but Oxford scored a couple of very fine goals," he said.

"We put in a good effort in the second half. We were pushing forward when we got caught."

"Four players give everything they can in terms of effort I have to be careful about what I say. It's easy to berate them, but they have my support provided they are working hard."

routine with 25 minutes to go almost gave Oakes a goal. His drive was narrowly wide, with the keeper beaten.

But it should have been 3-0 ten minutes after that when the Town, pushing up positively, were caught stretched. Penny sprinted clear, eluded Peake's challenge, and was denied as Chamberlain raced out to save with his legs.

Slipped

But there was no such luck two minutes later when Linton slipped to allow Allen to go down the left wing without a real challenge.

Chamberlain went to meet him, and Allen pulled back a low pass for Durkin to complete his hat-trick, tapping the ball into an unguarded net.

The striker saved his best till last. His fourth goal was a real beauty.

He was about 30 yards out, in the inside left channel, when the ball broke his way, perhaps a little fortunately. He hit an instinctive volley which boomed into the top of the net, dipping over Chamberlain.

It was the sort of shot that nine times out of ten will be more danger to spectators than to goalkeepers. But not, you suspect, when it is the Town involved.

OTHER STRIKES: Town seven saved and six wide; Oxford four saved, six wide and one hit the bar and led to a goal. Corners: 3-2 to Oxford.

REFEREE: Philip Don, Hanworth. Must have found it a very easy game to control, with neither side showing any nastiness.

BOOKED: Des Linton, for a foul on Chris Allen.

ATTENDANCE: 5,760. Not bad on a very cold and wet afternoon, with 908 Town fans braving a soaking at the open end.

ENTERTAINMENT: Pretty gruesome again, with Oxford not looking brilliant and a little flattered by the margin, although they well deserved to win.

Managers' viewpoints

BOTH BOSSES at the Manor Ground thought the result was flattering to Oxford.

Brian Horton spoke of the debt he and his coach, David Moss, owed to David Pleat for what they learned under him at Kenilworth Road.

"We played in a very good side, and Luton still try to play good football," said the Oxford boss who was skipper of the team which went into what is now the Premier League ten years ago.

"He thought Oxford deserved their win, but added:

"I have seen worse sides than Luton. And they keep trying to play the right way, although it doesn't always get the results."

Mr. Pleat took care to let his men down gently. "The result was a little harsh, but Oxford scored a couple of very fine goals," he said.

"We put in a good effort in the second half. We were pushing forward when we got caught."

"Four players give everything they can in terms of effort I have to be careful about what I say. It's easy to berate them, but they have my support provided they are working hard."

Match details

LUTON TOWN: Chamberlain; Linton, Salton, Peake, Johnson; Telfer, Rees (Oakes 56 mins), James, Preece; Claridge, Gray, Other sub: Dreyer.

OXFORD: Reece; Smart, Evans, Melville, Ford; Beauchamp, Magilton, Lewis, Allen; Penney (Cusack 76 mins), Durkin. Other sub: Nabert.

THE GOALS: All four by John Durkin — 1-0, 23 mins; shot under A.C. Chamberlain's body after a perfect pass by Joey Beauchamp, who had cut in from the right wing past Marvin Johnson and Julian James. 2-0, 30 mins: Durkin first to the rebound after Beauchamp's cross from the right led to David Penney hitting the bar. 3-0, 74 mins: Durkin tap-in after Des Linton's slip allowed Chris Allen to run free and cross, with the Town stretched as they pushed upfield. 4-0 80 mins: brilliant right foot volley, from nearly 30 yards, dipping at the last moment.

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THE FIRST DIVISION

HOME AWAY

P W D L F A P P W D L F A P

Newcastle.....16 6 1 1 16 4 7 0 1 16 9 40

Swindon.....17 7 2 1 22 11 2 2 3 9 12 31

Tranmere.....16 7 3 0 22 6 2 1 3 8 9 31

Millwall.....16 6 2 0 21 6 2 3 3 6 8 29

West Ham.....16 3 1 2 11 4 5 2 3 17 9 27

Leicester City.....17 5 2 2 10 8 3 1 4 10 12 27

Wolves.....17 3 4 1 17 11 3 4 2 10 7 26

Charlton.....16 3 1 1 13 9 3 1 4 11 9 25

Grimsby.....16 2 0 4 11 12 5 3 2 16 9 24

Derby.....15 2 2 4 10 12 5 1 1 14 8 24

Peterborough.....16 3 5 2 16 10 2 3 1 9 7 23

Oxford Utd.....16 5 0 1 13 2 1 5 4 15 21 23

Portsmouth.....17 4 2 3 14 14 2 3 3 11 13 23

Watford.....16 4 2 2 13 12 2 0 6 11 24 20

Bristol City.....16 4 2 3 17 11 1 2 4 7 9 19

Brentford.....15 4 0 3 9 11 1 4 3 4 12 19

Birmingham.....16 2 2 4 8 8 3 1 4 12 9 18

Barnsley.....17 4 1 4 12 15 0 4 4 5 16 17

Sunderland.....16 3 2 3 10 9 1 1 6 5 18 15

Notts County.....17 1 4 3 7 11 2 2 5 13 24 15

Luton Town.....16 0 3 4 9 20 2 3 4 9 17 12

Southend.....16 1 3 2 5 7 1 2 7 9 19 11

Bristol Rovers.....17 2 1 6 12 24 0 2 6 10 22 9

Local soccer tables

A & B Sports NHC Sunday League

PREMIER DIVISION							DIVISION FOUR								
	P	W	D	L	F	A P		P	W	D	L	F	A P		
Enterprise	8	5	1	2	19	13	11	Black Swan.....	6	4	0	2	13	14	8
St. Joseph's.....	6	5	0	1	18	10	5	Checkout.....	7	3	1	3	18	12	7
Sacred Heart.....	7	4	2	1	13	5	10	Britannia Airways.....	5	2	3	0	9	15	7
Celtic Supporters.....	8	3	2	3	23	11	8	Caddington Res.....	4	2	2	0	11	6	6
FC Coral.....	6	3	2	1	15	10	8	Magnum.....	4	3	0	1	12	7	6
Brache Green Man.....	7	3	1	3	15	13	7	Markyate.....	5	3	0	2	15	13	6
AFC Heron.....	7	3	1	3	15	15	7	White Swan.....	4	2	1	3	10	14	5
Crawley Sports.....	7	3	1	3	10	12	7	Silsoe Rangers.....	4	2	1	3	10	14	5
LW Tottenham.....	5	2	1	2	11	5	5	Cavalier.....	6	1	2	3	11	22	4
Slap Sports.....	5	1	2	2	10	14	4	Lewsey Res.....	3	0	2	1	7	8	2
TRWSS.....	7	1	1	5	12	25	3	Laporte.....	3	0	2	1	7	8	2
Limbury Black Swan.....	7	0	0	7	13	40	0	AFC Stopley.....	7	1	0	6	9	25	2

Primary Book only

DIVISION ONE							DIVISION FIVE						
	P	W	D	L	F	A P		P	W	D	L	F	A P
Sacred Heart Res	7	3	3	1	16	7	Roman Legion	5	5	0	30	2	10
Stopley Harriers	6	3	2	1	35	8	Wells Star	8	4	2	2	14	16
Horseshoe Saints	7	3	2	2	11	8	Flint United	5	4	1	0	26	4
St. Joseph's Res	4	3	1	0	12	5	Barbarians	7	4	1	2	19	11
GIS Leagrave	5	3	1	1	12	9	AFC Oakley	5	3	2	0	19	6
Stopley WMC	6	2	2	2	10	7	Casa Bianca (61)	6	2	1	1	12	10
Crawley Sports Res	5	2	2	1	10	12	Crescent Social	4	2	1	1	5	3
Hexton	5	1	2	2	7	14	Lea Sports Res	5	2	1	2	10	10
Celtic Res	5	1	1	3	8	12	Kenilworth Rangers	7	1	1	5	6	19
Lewsey	5	0	1	4	6	16	Streatley Chequers	6	1	1	4	19	3
Vauxhall Hightown	5	0	1	4	6	31	Borough Arms Res	5	1	1	4	17	15
							Luton BR	7	0	1	6	4	41

DIVISION TWO

	P	W	D	L	F	A	P
Lilley Rangers	7	4	3	0	21	12	11
Caddington	7	4	2	1	21	15	10
AFC Heron Res	7	3	2	2	15	10	8
The Swan	5	3	0	2	10	8	6
LW Tottenham Res	4	2	1	1	12	5	5
Valley Sports	6	1	3	2	12	14	5
Lea Sports	6	1	3	2	12	15	5
Boater	5	2	0	3	8	8	4
AFC Wigmore	4	2	0	2	9	4	4
Brewery	6	1	2	3	10		
Borough Arms	5	0	0	5	4	20	0

DIVISION SIX

	P	W	D	L	F	A	P
Wigmore Ath.	5	5	0	0	35	6	10
Thames United	4	4	0	0	20	4	8
Fidus	7	4	0	3	19	15	8
FC Houghton Res	4	3	1	0	16	7	7
White Swan	5	3	0	2	22	14	6
Toddington	7	3	0	4	14	11	6
HR Chequers	8	2	2	4	13	31	6
Lewsey Park Soc	3	2	0	0	6	6	4
Red Star Res	5	1	1	4	7	2	2
Lufkin F.C.	5	1	1	4	7	2	2
Renaults	6	1	0	5	10	32	2
Renault Dodge Res	3	0	1	2	9	1	9