

Sports News

TOWN MATCH VERDICT

West Ham.....2
Luton Town.....2
(Half-time.....0-0)

★★★★★

Brian Swain reports Action pictures: Josh Levy



● **DEBUT CHALLENGE:** Martin Williams, 19, starting a league game for the first time in his life, pictured doing one of the day's most important jobs at Upton Park, closing down Julian Dicks, a full-back who likes to attack.

THE SEASON SO FAR

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

BARCLAYS LEAGUE DIV I

AUGUST			
15 Leicester (a) 1-2 (Campbell)	17,428	21	
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 Trarnere (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 Motts 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	
21 Millwall (h) 1-1 (Gray)	8,371	23	
29 Watford (h) 2-0 (Benjamin, Oakes)	8,341	21	
DECEMBER			
5 Bristol Rovers (a) 0-2	6,245	22	
12 Wolves (a) 2-1 (Gray 2)	13,932	19	
19 Sunderland (h) 0-0	8,286	20	
28 West Ham (a) 2-2 (Hughes, Dreyer)	18,786	20	

APPEARANCES (as sub in brackets): Ever-presents, 22 each: James and Gray. Preece 21, Peake 17, Linton 16(3), Rees 16, Salton 15, Johnson 14(2), Petterson 14, Dreyer 13, Kamara 12, Oakes 10(11), Hughes 9, Chamberlain 8, Telfer 7(1), Benjamin 4 (2), Campbell 2(7), Williams 1(2). **BEFORE TRANSFERS:** Claridge 15(1); Matthew (loan) 3(2).

GOALS: Gray 10, Oakes 3, Claridge 2 (1 pen), James 2, Dreyer 2, and one each by Campbell, Linton, Johnson, Telfer, Benjamin and Hughes.

ASSISTS: Gray 4, Preece 3, Claridge, Rees, Hughes and Kamara two each. One each by James, Linton, Salton, Johnson and Dreyer.

THE COCA-COLA CUP

Round 2, first leg:
Sep 23 Plymouth (h) 2-2 (Claridge 2)..... 3,702
Second leg:
Oct 6 Plymouth (a) 2-3 (Claridge, Preece)..... 8,946
APPEARANCES: Two each by Petterson, Linton, Salton, Peake, Johnson, James, Kamara, Preece, Gray and Claridge. Oakes 1(1), Rees 1(1). One each as sub by Campbell and Dreyer.
GOALS: Claridge 3, Preece 1.

ANGLO-ITALIAN CUP

Sep 15 Watford (a) 0-0..... 5,197
29 Bristol City (h) 1-1 (Claridge)..... 2,538
APPEARANCES: Two each by Petterson, Linton, Salton, Rees, James, Kamara, Claridge and Gray. Preece 1(1), Campbell 1(1), Peake 1, Johnson 1, Dreyer 1, Matthew 1, Oakes 2.

A RED hot revival, fighting back from two down in the last 24 minutes, delighted the frozen Luton Town fans who made the trip to Upton Park on Monday.

After a slow start in near-zero temperatures the game caught fire to warm up West Ham's biggest attendance of the season.

The second half was pulsating stuff, and while both sides could have nicked victory the result was about right.

For the Town it was fair reward for a mixture of honest toil, defiance, and a determined refusal to accept defeat.

Skipper Trevor Peake emerged as my man of the match, imperious and solid in defence despite taking a bit of a buffeting.

The defence survived some hairy moments in the first half, and West Ham needed a penalty to make a breakthrough early in the second.

And when Tim Breacker scored against his old mates in the 66th minute it should have been all over, and would have been against a lesser team.

But the Town roared back, and every man played his part as they earned their point, the two subs included.

So did manager David Preece, who reverted to the five-man midfield formation which did the

Quick double changes the Bubbles tune

business in the previous away game, at Wolverhampton.

If anything, it worked better at West Ham, and it looked as though the players were happier with it at the second time of asking.

A pre-match surprise was the decision to give 19-year-old Martin Williams his first start in league football, wide on the right.

He did well, without hitting the high spots. He concentrated on not doing anything silly and his most valuable contribution was as a half-way line defender, working to restrict the overlapping runs of West Ham left back Julian Dicks.

Little Jason Rees was a sort of front sweeper, and he showed that his game is not only about running his legs off. He stood tall, all 5ft 5ins of him, to ensure that Hammers dangermen Clive Allen and Trevor Morley were given little of the quality service they needed.

At left back Marvin Johnson had to hang on in the first half when the pace of Mark Robson threatened, but he stuck to his job, and turned in a very disciplined display, while John Dreyer put the icing on a solid performance alongside Peake with the equalising goal.

Town players have so much faith in Alec Chamberlain that he came in for some ribbing at the end for not saving the penalty which Dicks blasted into the roof of the net.

But he made a couple

of vital early saves, as West Ham opened at a brisk pace.

The Town were caught dallying by a quick free kick, and Chamberlain parried a fierce cross-shot by Robson, then regained his feet instantly to save Peter Butler's header from the rebound.

Long range

On run of play West Ham had much the better of the first half, but could not make it count because the Town's deep defence kept them at long range.

But we had a scare in the 22nd minute when Robson cut in past Johnson and fired in a low cross which zipped to the far post and was turned into the net by Morley. The roar from the crowd was still going on as referee Mike Pierce accepted the off-side decision from a linesman.

We were to realise later that the linesman was probably more on his game than the ref, some of whose decisions had a hangover look about them.

The Town's best first-half strike came from a run by Williams which ended with a cross. Preece cracked a sharp 20-yarder which Luke Miklosko caught.

At the interval my feeling was that the Town had done well to get through unscathed, and a hard-fought 0-0 was the likely outcome.

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