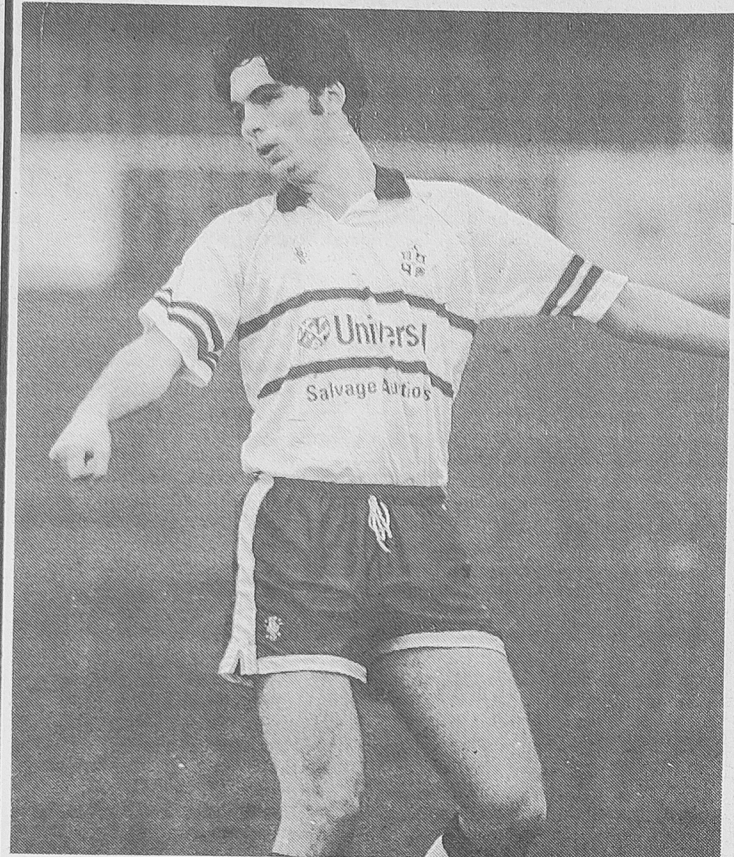


Sports News



● **DEBUT BOY:** David Greene, who played the first league match of his career at Blundell Park. (See back page interview).

Welcome lift up the table

DAVID Pleat spoke of the irony of the victory over Oxford at Kenilworth Road which lifted the Town to 17th place in the league table for a few days, their highest of the season.

"That was one of our poorer performances," he said. "We did not play as well as we did when we lost at Portsmouth."

Oxford Boss Brian Horton found it a very unhappy return on his first visit in charge to the ground where he was such a good player. Just awful was one of the milder comments from him about Oxford's performance.

The Town, with Martin Williams preferred to Ceri Hughes in midfield, had looked the better of two struggling sides in the first half, but had only one goal to show for it, a careful looping header by David Preece after Oxford keeper Paul Reece made a hash of trying to cut out a right wing cross by Williams. Kerry Dixon nearly made it two, but Reece produced the save of the match to flick his header round a post.

But confidence drained after Nick Cusack headed an equaliser in injury time at the end of the first half.

Luton Tn.....3 Oxford Utd..1

With neither side on top form, the second half was mediocre, with the smallest league crowd of the season beginning to jeer the mistakes of both sides before the Town raised themselves in the closing stages.

The Town defence had some excuse: skipper Trevor Peake played despite the onset of the flu attack which then kept him out of the team at Grimsby, and Julian James and Marvin Johnson were both carrying knocks from their superlative efforts at Fratton Park.

Phil Gray was put away by Preece to thump in a tremendous drive for his fifth goal in as many games from 13 minutes to go, with the help of a deflection, and three minutes from time Scott Oakes latched on to a quick throw by Johnson and crashed in a superb volley from the edge of the box to make the result a little flattering, but very welcome on a night when all the other struggling teams were beaten.

TOWN MATCH VERDICT

Grimsby.....3
Luton Town.....1
(Half-time....1-0)

Brian Swain reports

Action pictures: Josh Levy

All at sea against master Mariners

Red card completes an afternoon of misery

LUTON Town are due to turn in a good performance against Swindon at Kenilworth Road tonight.

They will surely be in the mood to bury the memories of Saturday's trip to Blundell Park, when almost the whole team had a bit of a nightmare and caved in to a side playing the Luton way.

With Julian James collecting a red card and Phil Gray another yellow, which may well cost him a suspension, it became a day manager David Pleat wished to forget.

He won't, of course, and one result of a woeful team show at

Grimsby may be that he will see a return to the five-man midfield style for the next away match, at The Den next Wednesday.

The latest defeat was a real slap in the face for the team and their fans. Perhaps we were kidded by the seven clean sheets on the trot: since then four games have seen eight goals conceded.

It was rough luck on 19-year-old David Greene that he should be pitched into the battle on a day when the others around him failed to hit anything like form.

The stand-in for flu victim Trevor Peake almost had a dream start, powering in one of the day's best attempts at goal, a cracking

header from a corner by Scott Oakes. The ball whistled beyond the grasping hands of Rhys Wilmot, but just the wrong side of the bar.

All the early signs were that we were going to see bright entertainment from both sides to match the sunny spring afternoon.

But the Town defence was cut apart by a super move when Tony Ford and Clive Mendonca swapped passes on the run through the inside right channel, and Ford cracked in a hard angled drive which gave Alec Chamberlain little chance.

It was a very good goal, one down to smart attacking rather than poor defending. Ford is in his second spell with

his home town club, and the irony of his day's work, with a second goal later, was that more than ten years ago David Pleat had spotted his potential when he first broke through at Grimsby.

The Town did not follow it up, and he went on to Stoke and West Brom, and at 33 still showed a nose for goal that was sadly lacking at the other end.

The Town were lucky to get to the interval only one down, with the defence well short of its usual composure.

Chamberlain was put in jeopardy by a short back pass by Marvin Johnson but the keeper managed to flick the shot by Mendonca round the post.

From the corner he tipped over a blockbuster by Ford, then comfortably saved a header from the same man.

The Town were lost in midfield, and neither side was helped by some strange refereeing by Jeff Winter, of Middlesbrough. He was determined to be involved, spotting 'fouls' that no-one, not even the victims, had seen.

Grimsby benefited most in the first half, but suffered to some degree in the second.

Apart from Greene's early header, the Town's only real threat before the interval came when David Preece, skipper for the day, sent Gray on a run down the middle, but Kevin Jobling got in a very good saving tackle before the striker

could set himself for the shot.

The second half was painful to watch as the Town caved in almost without a fight.

A recall for Ceri Hughes in midfield did nothing to boost the department, and while Preece tried hard to bring in a little order and composure Scott Oakes could not get moving too often, and Paul Telfer was almost anonymous.

The defence was almost all at sea when the Mariners attacked, those who have been howling for Peake's head were given no backing by what we saw from the back four without his experience.

It turned out to be a horrible day for Greene to make his debut. I don't believe he would want to read that he had a great game, because he will know better.

But the experience will do no harm, and the lack of it was what cost him most dear.

Collision

He was a big asset at set pieces, and connected to some degree in his last taste of action, when Ford made it 2-0 in the 73rd minute.

Greene had gone wide to shadow the nimble Mendonca down Grimsby's left wing. They collided, and the ref's whistle had been playing so often until everyone stopped for a split second to see which way he would give it that time.

The onset of cramp had been no help to Greene, but nor was his determination to play through it, instead of going down for treatment.

Mendonca reacted quickest to the referee's whistle. He was going to be sent off for only the second time in his career.

was going to be sent off for only the second time in his career.

The first was at Leeds, on his full debut in a Littlewoods Cup match. The Town won that one 2-0 and went on to lift the cup at Wembley, but there was no sign that they could lift anything at Blundell Park.

A half-chance fell to Kerry Dixon from a near post cross by Oakes, but, under pressure from Paul Fletcher, he headed wide.

Three minutes from time, the ten men, with Telfer filling in for James, were caught out again as Grimsby drove forward through passing by Rees and Jobling. Mendonca supplied the finishing strike.

It was precious little consolation when Gray snapped his 18th goal of the season from a pass by Dixon a minute later.

And to round off the Town's miserable day, the striker then got booked for dissent, which means that like James he may well also be out of the side for the game with Cambridge in ten days' time.

● **GOAL KING:** Phil Gray blasts in his goal against Oxford. He hit another at Grimsby to make it one in each of the last six games.

Match details

Grimsby 3 Luton Town 1 (HT 1-0)

LUTON TOWN: Chamberlain; James, Greene (Rees 74 minutes), Dreyer, Johnson; Oakes, Preece, Telfer, Hughes (Williams 67 minutes); Gray, Dixon.

GRIMSBY: Wilmot; McDermott, Fletcher, Lever, Ford; Croft, Jobling, Groves, Gilbert; Mendonca, Rees, Subs: Childs, Agnew, not needed. GOALS: 1-0 24 mins: Tony Ford, low shot after swapping passes on run into the box with Clive Mendonca; 2-0 73 mins: Ford again, cracking drive from edge of the box after Mendonca got past debut boy David Greene and crossed from the left; 3-0 87 mins: Mendonca, well-taken shot after crisp passing move by Tony Rees and Kevin Jobling; 3-1 88 mins: Phil Gray's 18th of the season, carefully lifting a shot over Rhys Wilmot after being put through by Kerry Dixon's pass.

OTHER ATTEMPTS: Town four saved and four wide; Grimsby seven saved and five wide. Corners: 8-6 to Grimsby. REFEREE: Jeff Winter, Middlesbrough; very poor. Saw 'fouls' that no-one else did, to the annoyance of both teams, and caused far too many stoppages when players were happy to get on with it. He looked a bit of a homer in the first half, but it became Grimsby's turn to suffer from him in the second.

BOOKED: Julian James for tugging at the shirt of Tony Rees; Dave Gilbert, foul on Paul Telfer; Phil Gray, dissent.

SENT OFF: James, for his second yellow card, in the 75th minute, a foul on Gilbert.

ATTENDANCE: 5,193 — poor support for a Grimsby side that plays good football and is challenging for a play-off place. The following from Luton boosted it by 584.

ENTERTAINMENT: Dire. The Town never got their act together and they deserved what they got.

The season so far

CHART SHOWS Town score first, goalscorers, gates and league position:

CLAYTONS LEAGUE DIV I			
DATE	SCORE	GOALS	GATES
AUGUST			
Grimsby (h) 1-2 (Campbell)	17,428		
Grimsby (h) 0-3	7,926		
Grimsby (h) 0-4	6,302		
SEPTEMBER			
Grimsby (h) 0-2	27,054		
Grimsby (h) 0-3 (Claridge, Linton, Oakes)	6,801		
Grimsby (h) 0-1 (James, Gray)	7,310		
Grimsby (h) 1-1 (Claridge pen)	8,481		
Grimsby (h) 0-4	5,992		
OCTOBER			
Grimsby (h) 1-4 (Dreyer)	7,954		
Grimsby (h) 0-3 (Johnson)	5,261		
Grimsby (h) 0-3 (Gray, 2 Telfer)	8,848		
Grimsby (h) 2-2 (James, Gray)	7,125		
NOVEMBER			
Grimsby (h) 3-3 (Oakes, Gray 2)	5,715		
Grimsby (h) 1-4 (Gray)	6,928		
Grimsby (h) 0-4	5,760		
Grimsby (h) 0-4	8,371		
Grimsby (h) 2-0 (Benjamin, Oakes)	8,341		
DECEMBER			
Grimsby (h) 1-2	6,245		
Grimsby (h) 0-3	13,932		
Grimsby (h) 2-2 (Hughes, Dreyer)	8,286		
Grimsby (h) 0-4	18,786		
JANUARY			
Grimsby (h) 1-2 (Hughes)	9,601		
Grimsby (h) 0-4	6,729		
Grimsby (h) 0-4	10,237		
Grimsby (h) 0-4	8,877		
FEBRUARY			
Grimsby (h) 0-4 (Johnson, Gray)	9,140		
Grimsby (h) 0-4 (Gray, Johnson)	7,248		
Grimsby (h) 0-4 (Gray)	8,723		
Grimsby (h) 0-4 (Dixon, Gray pen)	8,443		
Grimsby (h) 1-2 (Gray)	7,595		
MARCH			
Sep 15 Watford (a) 0-0	10,457		
Sep 20 Bristol City (h) 1-1 (Claridge)	6,687		
Grimsby (h) 0-4 (Preece, Gray, Oakes)	5,193		

THE FA CUP

Round 3: Jan 19 Bristol City (h) 2-0 (Gray, Hughes) 6,094
Round 4: Jan 23 Derby County (h) 1-5 (Telfer) 9,170

APPEARANCES: Two each by Chamberlain, James, Dreyer, Peake, Johnson, Telfer, Rees, Preece, Hughes, Gray and Benjamin. Two each as subs by Oakes and Harvey.

THE COCA-COLA CUP

Round 2 (1): Sep 23 Plymouth (h) 2-2 (Claridge 2) 3,702
Round 2 (2): Oct 6 Plymouth (a) 2-3 (Claridge, Preece) 8,946

APPEARANCES: Two each by Peterson, 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
Sep 20 Bristol City (h) 1-1 (Claridge) 2,538

APPEARANCES: Two each by Peterson, Linton, Salton, Rees, James, Kamara, Claridge and Gray. Preece 1(1), Campbell 1(1), Peake 1, Johnson 1, Dreyer 1, Matthew 1, Oakes 2.

Local soccer tables

Campri South Midlands League

PREMIER DIVISION

	P	W	D	L	F	A	P
Oxford City	30	24	3	3	97	29	75
Arlsey Town	35	21	9	5	75	31	72
Brace Sparta	28	19	4	5	64	25	61
Biggleswade Town	34	18	5	10	74	60	60
Wingate	31	17	8	6	64	41	59
MK Borough	28	17	5	6	65	28	56
Hatfield Town	33	16	8	9	51	57	56
Hoddesdon	28	16	8	6	60	42	52
Harpden Town	32	15	13	6	53	34	52
Potters Bar Town	32	15	7	10	67	51	52
Shillington	30	15	6	9	46	36	51
Letchworth GC	31	13	6	12	59	51	45
Welwyn GC	32	10	11	11	56	54	43
Langford	34	10	11	11	44	47	41
Tottenham	33	10	5	18	40	62	35
Luton Old Boys	32	8	7	17	34	68	29
Welwyn GC	26	8	4	14	34	45	28
Leverstock Green	30	6	3	22	44	76	24
Buckingham Athletic	33	6	5	22	37	98	23
61FC Luton	30	6	3	22	32	85	21
Pistone	31	6	3	22	32	85	21
Pirton	30	3	6	21	22	84	15
New Bradwell	30	0	4	26	14	102	4

*Three points deducted.

DIVISION ONE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	P
Bedford Town	34	28	4	2	137	31	88
London Colney	25	22	1	3	84	23	67
Bedford United	28	21	3	4	91	39	66
Winstow United	31	17	5	9	100	46	56
Toddington Rovers	31	16	7	8	71	40	55
Shenley & Loughton	29	15	8	6	60	49	53
Tring Athletic	32	15	8	9	60	49	53
Potters Bar Cru	34	17	2	15	79	53	53
Risborough Rangers	28	15	7	6	56	44	52
Caddington	26	10	6	12	48	66	48
Shefford Town	30	12	7	11	56	41	43
Amphill Town	32	11	7	14	50	49	40
Stony Stratford	28	11	4	13	60	55	37
Sandy Albion	34	9	8	17	33	64	28
Delo	32	9	3	20	50	83	30
Framstead	32	7	8	17	52	88	29
Cranfield United	30	7	6	17	45	68	27
*De Havilland	33	6	7	20	41	64	22
Emberton	31	6	4	21	38	72	22
Walden Rangers	29	4	4	21	29	90	16
Ickleford	28	1	3	24	25	100	6

*Three points deducted.

A & B Sports NHC Sunday League

PREMIER DIVISION

	P	W	D	L	F	A	P
Celtic Supporters	17	11	3	3	47	15	25
Enterprise	15	11	2	2	36	19	24
Sacred Heart	16	10	2	4	28	12	22
St. Joseph's	11	10	0	1	25	6	20
AFC Heron	17	6	1	6	43	36	19
FC Coral	14	6	4	4	33	27	16
LF Tottenham	12	6	2	4	34	22	14
Brace Green Man	16	6	2	6	26	29	14
Crawley Sports	16	5	2	5	23	12	12
TRWSS	19	3	2	3	38	65	8
Slag Sports	14	1	5	8	14	36	7
Limbury Black Swan	17	1	1	15	25	67	3

DIVISION ONE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	P
St. Joseph's Res	12	9	3	0	33	14	21
Sacred Heart Res	14	7	5	2	34	12	19
GIS Leagrave	12	7	2	3	26	16	16
Stopsley Harriers	15	6	3	6	50	32	15
Horseshoe Saints	13	6	3	4	21	16	15
Stopsley WMC	16	6	3	7	25	24	15
Horton	13	6	3	4	22	15	15
Celtic Res	15	4	1	4	30	30	12
Lewsey	14	5	2	7	28	31	12
Crawley Sports Res	14	3	3	8	20	35	9
Vauxhall Hightown	14	1	1	12	14	69	3

DIVISION TWO

	P	W	D	L	F	A	P
Lilley Rangers	15	9	5	1	43	21	23
AFC Heron Res	18	8	7	3	45	32	23
LF Tottenham Res	14	9	1	4	41	27	19
Lea Sports	16	7	4	5	39	27	18
Caddington	15	7	3	5	32	31	17
Valley Sports	18	7	3	8	39	38	17
The Swan	15	7	2	6	28	25	16
Brewery	15	3	6	6	23	31	12
AFC Wigmore	12	3	3	6	22	32	9
Boater	17	3	3	11	28	45	9
Borough Arms	17	3	3	11	19	50	9

DIVISION THREE