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Sports News

TOWN MATCH VERDICT

Birmingham City..1
Luton Town 1
(Half-time 1-0)

★★★

Action pictures: John Sherwood

Brian Swain reports

Shock victory so close, but draw is still welcome

ALTHOUGH lacklustre Carl Hughes missed an amazing chance to win an unlikely victory in the closing minutes, Luton Town could be well pleased with the point they worked for at St. Andrew's.

They were certainly much happier with it than the Birmingham City fans, who knew that the visitors had let the Town off the hook when they had the greater share of the play.

The Town's first goal was aimed and assured for Mike Walker, who had not displayed his best form until then, very assertive and very promising upon the ball.

BETTER

Two points from two away games will look even better if the Town can make full use of the home games to come, against Barnsley this Saturday and Bristol City on Tuesday.

At Birmingham the Town had to match endeavour raw the home side's might that despite the absence of Tommy Tait, who had a knee injury.

Takeshi Yamada spearhead work was done with his back to goal, Harlson, at 18 a better prospect than Carl Ian Benjamin, who was 36 and had not been in midfield for £50,000, but the big man was very.

Mr. Harlson, the man that Harrison's career may be harmed on the altar of necessity if he is a goal-scoring success. He works hard, puts himself into the simple things well: taking the ball from the defence and giving it to the good attacking positions.

It worked like a dream in the first 20 minutes, with the Town winger Mike Walker forward confidently and smoothly.

A lot of the ball was given to Steve Claiden on the left wing, and he ran and Hills, a right-back that the City right back hardly never saw the book for bringing down the midfielder as he tried to cut in he got.

It's from the Tonbridge cavaliers that the Town's first goal came.

From a run on the green by Claiden Tuffey, who got from a transfer deadline day signing on a team that was in the Nationwide Conference last season, put James Rennie in mid-field, a very little league goal was drawn defended and well worked.

Then Harper gave an a considered half-time lecture, and Hughes, on his head for goal, underlined the quality of goalkeeper Chris Whitehead with the pick up ball around wide.

Full match details

LUTON TOWN: Sommer; James, Peake, Dreyer, Johnson; Ian Benjamin (Williams 64 mins), Tuffey, Hughes, Harper, Oakes; Harlson, Other.
Campbell and goalkeeper Patterson.

BIRMINGHAM: Miller; Hilley, Whyte, Dryden, Frain; Donowa, Sedgley, Tait (Mardon 69 mins), McMinn (Peacock 69 mins); Claiden, Sale.
Goalkeeper sub: Steadman.

THE GOALS: 1-0 31 minutes: Carl Shutt, unmarked on the by-ball after a near point corner was blocked and after John Hartson, 1-1 77 mins: Paul Telfer, crisp close-range shot after John Hartson's header had broken wide off the line by Scott Hiley to Scott Oakes, who quickly returned the ball into the danger area.

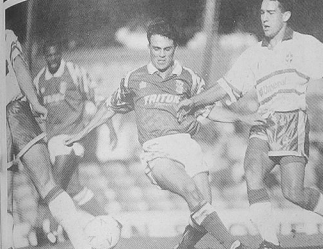
OTHER ATTEMPTS: Town two saved and four wide; Birmingham five saved, six wide and one hit a post. Corners: 9-6 to Birmingham.

BOOKED: Scott Hiley for tripping Scott Oakes; Paul Tait for a foul on Julian James; Alan Harper for kicking the ball away after a free kick was given against his side; Paul Telfer for a foul on Ted McMinn.

REFEREE: Terry Lunt of Ashton in Makerfield. Kept a good cross, and was actively on hand even if some decisions did look a little debatable.

ATTENDANCE: 11,081, including about 600 from Luton.

ENTERTAINMENT: For Town fans it was very good for the 26-mins spells at the beginning and end of the match, but Birmingham gave too much on top in the middle section for it to be top notch enjoyment to Luton eyes.



● POINT-SAVER: Paul Telfer about to move in to hit his second goal of the season.

● WELL DONE: Paul Telfer the hero of the hour at St. Andrew's. Martin Williams is all but out of sight as he leads the congratulations.

The Town's facts and figures so far

● CHART SHOWS Town scorer first, goalscorers, gates and league position.

ENDSLEIGH LEAGUE DIV 1

1993

AUGUST
14 Watford (h) 3-1 (Telfer, Bloom)
21 Portsmouth (a) 0-1 12,248
28 Middlesbrough (h) 1-0 (Hartson) ..... 9,798 ■■

SEPTEMBER
4 Sunderland (a) postponed
11 Bolton Wdrs (h) 2-2 ..... 7,196 ■■
18 Tranmere Rov (a) 2-2 (Sommer, Oakes) ..... 7,471 ■■
25 Middlbrough (a) 1-1 (Hartson) ..... 13,487 ■■
28 Birmingham (a) 1-1 (Telfer) ..... 11,081 ■■

APPEARANCES (on subs in brackets): Ever-presents, seven goals scored: Peake, Sommer, Johnson and Telfer. Presence and Hughes 6. James 5(1), Oakes 5(1), Rennie 4(1), Bloom 4, Harlson 3(1), Harper 3, Williams 3(4), Campbell 2(1), Patterson (1), Reform transfer: Benjamin (21). Number of players used: 17 (20 last season.)

GOALS: Telfer 3. Bloom, Harlson and Benjamin all one each.

ABSENTS: Oakes 3, Bloom 1, Harper 1.

THE COCA-COLA CUP

Round 1 (1): Aug 17 Cambridge (a) 6-1 4,365
Round 1 (2): Aug 24 Cambridge (h) 5-1 3,961
APPEARANCES: Two each by Sommer, James, Johnson, Peake, Dreyer, Benjamin, Preece and Hughes. Oakes 1(1), Harlson (1), Rose 1, Telfer 1, Campbell 1, Williams 1, Harlson (1).

THE ANGLO-ITALIAN CUP

Aug 31 Watford (a) 1-2 (Preece) 2,854
Sep 7 Sunderland (h) 1-1 (Bloom) 2,205
APPEARANCES: Two each by Sommer, Hughes, Preece, Peake, Dreyer, Johnson, Benjamin, Bloom and Harlson. Williams 1(1), James 1, Telfer 1, Linton 1. One each on sub by Oakes, Greene and Wearger.

The First Division

	HOME					AWAY				
	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A
Tranmere	9	4	2	1	10	5	2	1	1	4	3
C. Palace	8	3	1	0	8	1	2	1	1	6	5
Leicester City	9	3	1	0	7	1	2	1	1	6	5
Charlton	9	3	2	0	7	1	1	2	1	4	7
Middlesbrough	8	2	1	0	5	1	2	1	2	9	7
Southend	9	2	1	1	7	5	2	1	2	5	7
Watford	9	2	1	1	8	5	1	1	3	4	9
Wolves	9	2	1	1	5	3	1	1	3	4	9
Bolton Wdrs	8	3	0	0	8	0	0	2	2	2	11
Derby Co.	8	3	0	0	6	0	0	2	2	3	11
Grimsby	8	1	0	3	5	2	2	0	2	9	7
Stoke City	8	1	0	3	3	5	2	0	2	9	11
Birmingham	9	3	0	1	8	4	0	1	3	5	10
Portsmouth	9	3	0	1	7	3	0	1	3	4	10
Swindon	9	1	1	3	5	9	2	0	2	6	10
Barnsley	9	1	1	3	5	9	2	0	2	6	10
West Brom	8	1	1	3	4	8	2	0	2	6	10
Millwall	8	1	1	3	4	8	2	0	2	5	9
Peterborough	8	1	1	3	4	8	1	1	3	5	9
Notts Forest	8	1	1	3	8	7	1	1	3	6	9
Bristol City	8	1	1	3	4	7	1	1	3	5	9
Oxford Utd	7	2	0	1	7	7	0	0	4	2	5
Luton Town	7	1	2	1	4	3	0	2	2	3	5
Sunderland	6	1	0	1	5	2	0	1	3	1	6

● Not including Sunderland. Grimsby last night.

LETTERS TO THE SPORTS EDITOR

Don't blame the manager

I THINK the problems being encountered by our present manager are all down to our chairman, Kevin Blackburn.

Since he has arrived at Luton he has run it like a grocery corner shop, and treated David Pleat like a mug.

We have in David one of the most intelligent managers in football, but what has the club done with his talent?

No funds available for new players, and still the same old story of selling off our best staff and directors resigning.

To blame David is disgraceful. It would take make any difference in the present squad if we had Souness or Daley back.

Without funds available no manager can succeed.

We cannot even sign Kenny Dixon for us (at some experience), and they say the club is run in a joke.

I was very reluctant to renew my season ticket this year, and this will be the last unless Mr Blackburn goes.

You can't run a football club like any other business as success comes in this field of play, which in turn brings in increased revenue.

Mr Mollar must be on a good thing. And why does he allow the people who have expressed an interest pulled out?

Perhaps they can't stand up to him, or share his attitude.

So, like many others, my go now, before you have pulled the club.

And stop treating the supporters like dirt.

Les Skinner
21 Elvington Close
Bramlingham Park
Luton

Scoring duties must be shared

MANAGER David Pleat opted out of the Press conference at St Andrew's, leaving coach John Moore to handle it with considerable aplomb.

Reporters asked to talk to Paul Telfer and Carl Hughes, but the Town bosses refused the requests.

"We felt the players' talking was done on the field," said Mr Moore. He added that they did not want Telfer to be put under any more pressure as he continues to peel behind him the trauma of his road accident of last November.

And Hughes, he said, was not in the mood for talking. He had gone into the dressing room so angry about his last miss that he had been throwing things around.

If the anger is channelled into getting it right next time, suggested the coach, it will be worthwhile.

City manager Terry Cooper was bitterly disappointed as his team's run went to six games and cup games without a win on a day when they had enough of the ball to have taken three points.

"We knew we needed a second goal," he added. "And you could see Luton's goal coming even though we played quite well.

"We had a lot of chances and played some good football, but one goal is never enough for us.

"We all know David Pleat doesn't know where his next goal is coming from, but we have to do the right thing day to get it.

"We have been one up in each of our last two home games, and then thrown away it."

Mr Moore agreed that the Town would have done well to hold on to the lead, though he is no target, but added: "It was nice to see us getting through to the second round."

● JOHN MOORE

"We have got to keep working. We worked hard for the goals. We had played very well at Tranmere and got nothing and you can't keep going on like that."

Asked who was going to get the goals, Mr Moore said: "Everybody has to be a potential scorer, and we have got to make the players believe that.

"Paul Telfer has more get two this season because he gets into the box, and we have all got to work for each other.

"And we have to be able to stay with the game when we are having a bad spell.

"After the first 20 minutes we let our game drop but in the last ten I thought we looked the more likely side to score."

And he said he believed the club had been right to sell Ian Benjamin, who is 32, when they had John Hartson at 18.

"We have actually moved, he said, was a player somewhere between those two ends of a footballers' career, aged around 25 or 26.

More support deserved vocally and financially

MANAGER David Pleat writes:

AS you have now got into the swing of using public letters as a way of setting valuable journalistic space, I suggest that you publish this one, which I received this week:

FOR some reason I have been telling myself and my family that I should write a letter of encouragement to you.

Having taken a party of ten to Tranmere to support the Hatters I have all the incentive I needed.

Well done! Please pass on my thanks to our chairman for a wonderful evening, spoiled only by the actions of a scoreline.

We were staggered by the wonderful spirit shown by the team in very trying circumstances.

I counted 11 to 20 shots on target by your team. Tranmere had about eight, four of them were in error.

Yes, I know Eric Nixon had a great night but our showing could have been a little sharper at times, but we still had terrific entertainment and this was largely because your team kept playing good football, with a high skill level, in spite of the setbacks and their league position.

If it's any consolation we're right behind you and the team's style of play will bring its just reward, and the glory will follow.

We look forward to a climb up the table and, hopefully, a good run in the FA Cup.

The two families at Tranmere, incidentally, have fathers, Peter Whitby and myself, who grew up in Leagrave and Eaton Bray, hence our loyalty to the Town.

Peter and I have supported the club through many ups and downs since the 1950s. We're so glad to have a manager who is as dedicated as we can admire.

Thank you. You deserve far more support than you're getting, both vocally and financially.

MIKE GRAHAM
Hardwicke
Leyland Methodist Junior School
Cambourne Road
Leyland, Lancs.

PS. I wonder if you have considered forming a supporters club? Give you a boost, by trying a defender as a striker?

THE WEEKEND'S FULL LOCAL SOCCER RESULTS

Luton District League

PREMIER DIV: Lower Pk 0, Luton OB Rec 3.
DIV ONE: Brickmakers Arms 2 Kent Ath Rec 2; Crawley Grn Rec 2 Lea Spurs 4; Flitwick 2 Ac Rec 1; Harlington 2 Old Stars 4; Lower Park Rec 3; Monarch Ch Lady 0 2; Stadium Rec Lions Eagles 2; Thistle Thrasher 0 2.
DIVISION TWO: First & Last 1 Chalcots 0 4; Harlington 1 Thrasher Rec 1; Hartwell 4 Thistle Rec 1; The Commons 3 Marlpyne Rec 1; FC 0; Sportsman Dynamo 4 Old Dunstaplians Rec 1; Stopsley Rec 2 Ac Rec 1.
Reds International Cup: Elsey Phoenix 1 Lions Hugh Sable 0; Off Duty Rec 2 Stopsley Rec 1; Hitchin Rovers Rec 0 Houghton & Wakemarsh 1; Kent Ath Rec 0 Workers 1; Old Dunstaplian 1 Stodham 1; Chalcots 1 Downtyne (Stat); 0; FC Rec 0 Toddington Rec 1; Hughoweds 7 Ex Rec 3 Stotfordrd 2; Bedford Utd Rec 2 Chalcots 1 Flitwick 0; Sidlow 2 Ac Rec 1.

The NHC Sunday League

PREMIER DIV.: L. Black Swan 1 Stag 2; Harem 2 Crawley 1; GOL Longmire 1 Enterprise 4; St Joseph's 1 Sacred Heart 5; Cobra 2 Bracke Cross Man 1 Harrison 1 Cowl 2.
DIV ONE: Stopsley WMC 2 Hoverdrive Saints 3; HV Rovers 1 Lutton Rec 4; Stopsley Harriers 1 St Joseph's Rec 3; Liberty 2 Cobra 1.
DIV TWO: Brunswick Valley Spurs 2; TWMS 1 Wheathead 2; Stopsley Harriers Rec 1 The Hunter 4; Wigmore 0 Cobra Smokers 0; Lea Spurs 1 Hoverdrive 3; Chalkhangar 1 Houghton 1.
DIV THREE: Boots Arms 2 O. Mont House 4; Red Star 0 Dog & Duck 0; Stevenhoe 1 Vauxhall 17); Silver Knights 3 Magnum 2; Black Swan 0 Cockney 2.
DIV FOUR: Ac Rec 2 Knights Templar WMC Rec 1; Thames Ltd 1 Dolphin 2; Stopsley Ath 4 Lapwing 2; Brunswick Airways 1 Kenilworth 1.
DIV FIVE: FC Houghton Rec 0 Cross Rhines 5; Royal Mail 2 AFC Stopsley 2; Firmdale Chequers 0 Lea Spurs Rec 1; Wells Bar 0 Overend Swan 1.
DIV SIX: Wellington Arms 1 Woodcock Wdrs 2; Stopsley Rovers 3 Sgt's Old Man Hunter 1; Sun Inn 1 Cross 5; Stopsley Ath 5 Swan Rgn 2; White Hart 1 Iron Duke 1.
DIV SEVEN: Dunstan Cole 4 Lymore 3; Fresh 2 Fish Friends Hom 0; Lindsay 2 Ac Rec 1; Flitwick Thistle 2 Stopsley 2; Spurriers Dunstable 4 Red Lion 1; Berkley CB 0 Luton Rovers 4.
DIV EIGHT: Hoverdrive 2 Ac Rec 1; Stopsley Ath 2 Sedgwick 0; Hitchin Rovers Red Black Swan Rec 1; Second Coming 1 Ac Rec 2; Stopsley Rovers 1 Ac Rec 2; Cherry Rec 1 Stopsley Rovers 0; Houghton Tg Rec 1.
WHITEHEAD CUP: Vauxhall 1 Stopsley Rovers 2.
LUTON NWC CUP SEMI-FINAL: Stopsley Rovers 2 Bracke Cross Man 2; R. Mail 0 Cobra 2.
CHEVENHAM CUP: Enterprise Dunstable 0 Wh's 1.
CRYSTAL CUP: Lowry Sec 1 Poole Rec 0; Magnum 1 Sgt's Old Man 1.
TIRTH SUNDAY CUP: Tinsel 0 Hartwell 1.

South Midlands League

D'Arbo Butchers Premier Division: Ampthill Town Lions UR 2; Bedfordians 2 Wolverton Rov 1; Tring Town 3 Wolverton 5.
Fenalloy Cup: Bedfordians 2 Leighton Tn Rov 1.
PREMIER DIVISION: Bedfordians 2 Wolverton Rov 1; Harpenden 3 Buckingham 1; Hatfield 1 Biggleswade 2.
Houghton 3 Arlesey 1; Letchworth 3 Luton O. Boys 2; Stotfold 2 Ampthill 1; Welwyn 2 Potton Rov 2.
SENIOR DIVISION: 1: Cobbey 2 Ac Rec 1; Flitwick 2 Stopsley 1; Bedford 1 Ac Rec 1; Houghton 2 Stopsley 1; Letchworth 0 Bedford Utd 2; Potton 0 Shefford Town 2; Wolverton 2 Ac Rec 1.
DIVISION ONE: Ac Rec 1 Stopsley 1; Bedford Utd 1 Hartlebud 4; Cobbey 2 Stopsley 3; Flitwrstd 2; Dc Rec 1 Ac Rec 2; Stopsley 2 Scot 4; Wolton Rangers 5 Potton Rec Cons 2.
RESERVE DIV: Ac Rec 2 Stopsley 1; Cobbey 2; Cross 1 Stopsley 2; Hartlebud 2 Ac Rec 1; Stopsley 2 Flitwrstd 2; Flitwrstd 2 Stopsley 2; Stopsley 2 Ac Rec 1; Stopsley 2 Cobbey 1; Stopsley 2 Flitwrstd 2; Cobbey 2 Letchworth 1; Letchworth 4 Ashwell 0; Cobbey 2 Stopsley 1; Letchworth 2 Ac Rec 1; Stopsley 2 Cobbey 1; Stopsley