

Sports News

TOWN MATCH VERDICT

Luton Town 5
Barnsley 0
(Half-time 2-0)

Action pictures: John Sherwood

Brian Swain reports

Super-sharp show launches a lift-off

The complete match details

ON a day that saw the launch of a boycott call by some supporters, Luton Town's players delivered a withering answer to those who want them to play in front of empty terraces.

The crowd to see the team that was bottom of the First Division was the smallest for a league game at Kenilworth Road for nearly 15 years.

But they stayed to give a standing ovation to greet the Town's best win for four years, and a long-awaited rise out of the relegation places.

TEN MEN

And it was none the less satisfying for being against ten men for all but the first three minutes.

Barnsley skipper Gerry Taggart was sent off, rightly, for a flying two-footed challenge on Julian James, when he intercepted a pass and barged forward to lead a break.

He was cluttered near the half-way line, so it was not a goal-scoring opportunity, but referee Arthur Smith saw it as serious foul play.

I found it surprising that afterwards both managers had some sympathy with the defender. When the boots flew in, the whole

LUTON TOWN: Sommer; James, Peake, Dreyer, Johnson; Telfer, Hughes (Linton 88 mins); Harper, Oakes; Williams (Houghton 75 mins); Hartson, Goalkeeper sub Patterson.

BARNsLEY: Watson; Fiebert; Rammell, Bryson (Liddell 63 mins); Goalkeeper sub: Butler (Eaden 65 mins); Archdeacon; Hartson, rounding defender and keeper after being put in. THE GOALS: 1-0, 26 mins: John Hartson, rounding defender and keeper after being put in. Hughes put Martin Williams away down the right to pull back a cross; 3-0 50 mins: Julian James solo scorer from edge of the box after Barnsley defenders back-peddled and waited for Hughes; 4-0, 84 mins: Scott Houghton's first Town goal after another slick move by Alan Harper as Hughes; 5-0 88 mins: Oakes again, after Hartson was crowded out by the keeper but Watson laid the ball back.

OTHER STRIKES: Town four saved and six wide; Barnsley five saved, four wide, two hits. woodwork. Corner: 5-6 to Barnsley. SENT OFF: Gerry Taggart, Barnsley's centre-half and skipper, in the third minute for a flying late two-footed challenge on Julian James which resulted in both needing treatment for three minutes.

BOOKED: Julian James and John Hartson, both for fouls. REFEREE: Arthur Smith, Rubery, Birmingham: All credit to him for the Taggart red card — was an awful tackle.

ATTENDANCE: 6,201, lowest league gate at Kenilworth Road since the visit of Bristol Rovers in January 1979 when the Town were then, as now, struggling in the Second Division.

ENTERTAINMENT: Who could ask for more. What a pleasure to see quality passing today, bringing the goals as well. And ten-man Barnsley contributed, without any luck in their finishing.

Luton bench leaped from the dug-out in anger.

Both players needed treatment for three minutes, which gave the referee plenty of time to consider his verdict.

Barnsley did remarkably well in face of that handicap, as it often the case with ten men.

They might even have snatched the lead, with Andy Kermel booking a very classy player against a bunch of more ordinary men. Danny Wilson included.

But the Town held the inevitable defiance of ten men, and Ceri Hughes turned on the best performance I have seen from him since before his serious knee injury three years ago.

He said he was still angry with himself for missing a late sitter at Birmingham when he should have scored the winner.

Luckless Barnsley caught the bookish as Hughes did it all but scored: his tackling was resolute and brave, and the passing was little

short of breathtaking.

The most important aspect was that it took advantage of the little extra space offered by Taggart's second red card of the season. His first was for two bookings at Watford.

John Hartson had the close support he needed, in spite of the continued absence of injured

Kerry Dixon.

It was not when there is away games, he the recall of Mark Williams, more of a winger than James helped to solve his problem.

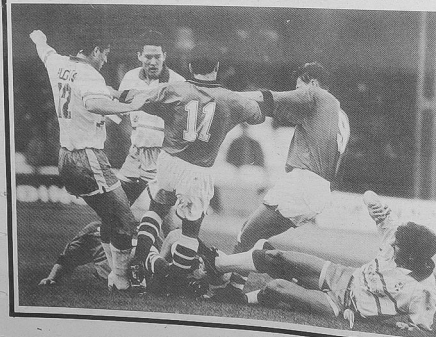
The whole team had one of those days when almost everything went right, with everything passing and running coming



● FLASHPOINT: The moment when Barnsley's Gerry Taggart tackled Julian James, with the studs flying knee-high to earn a red card after only three minutes.

Both players went down and needed lengthy treatment, with the picture below showing the start of a melee as James and Taggart are grounded.

Ceri Hughes and Paul Telfer are the Town men trying to get to the ball, with Barnsley's Owen Archdeacon and Neil Redfean also battling for possession.



The First Division

	HOME	AWAY
	P W D L F A	P W D L F A
Cardiff	9 4 0 10 2 2	3 1 3 10 10
Tranmere	10 4 0 1 10 5	5 2 1 9 10
Leicester City	9 3 1 0 10 4	4 2 1 10 10
Middlesbrough	10 2 1 1 9 4	3 1 0 10 10
Charlton	10 3 0 7 1 10 10	1 1 1 10 10
Derby Co.	9 4 0 10 13 5	0 0 2 10 10
Southend	9 2 1 1 6 3	2 1 2 10 10
Grimsby	10 1 4 0 2 3	1 1 0 10 10
Wolves	10 2 3 9 6 10 10	1 1 0 10 10
Watford	9 2 1 1 7 6	2 1 2 10 10
Millwall	9 1 1 1 7 5	1 2 1 10 10
Birmingham	9 1 3 9 8 10 10	1 1 1 10 10
Bristol City	9 3 1 1 7 4	0 1 1 10 10
Sheff City	9 1 0 3 5 10 10	1 1 1 10 10
Portsmouth	10 2 2 1 7 6	0 0 2 10 10
Dulham Wals	9 2 1 1 7 6	0 1 1 10 10
Nottingham	9 3 0 1 8 4	1 1 1 10 10
Barnsley	10 1 1 3 9 2	0 0 1 10 10
Nottingham Forest	9 1 2 1 9 8	1 1 1 10 10
West Brom	9 2 2 1 10 10	1 1 1 10 10
Luton Town	9 2 4 8 5	0 0 2 10 10
Peterborough	9 2 1 1 9 5	0 0 1 10 10
Sunderland	9 2 1 1 8 4	0 1 1 10 10
Oxford Utd	9 2 1 1 1 1	0 0 1 10 10

● Not including last night's game, Town v Bristol City.

Quiz answers

THE FIRST question in our quiz in Saturday's edition was easy enough. Judging by the response programme was easy enough. Judging by the response from fans around the Presbiterian, Danny Wilson was the Town at Watford in the 1984 League Cup final. More difficult was the identity of the striker who won over Arsenal as well remembered. The game after the Town clinched promotion, and one later played for the Town. His name was Paul Ayton. And the reason some worried about the Town's result in their final game, at Milton Park, was that while the Town were already champions, they needed to win to avoid relegation. In the event, the Town did the business 3-2, with two goals by Ceri Stele and one from Mal Dosogbo. It turned out to be a great relief for Bolton, who finished their programme and would have gone down to the Third Division instead of Cardiff if the game had been beaten. But the Wanderers were relegated 12 months later.



● **FIVE UP:** Scott Oakes places his shot carefully around Viv Anderson for the Town's fifth goal, his second of the game. Above, Oakes and Martin Williams celebrate their first, which put the Town two up. **BELOW:** the build-up to the fifth goal, with John Hartson about to take the ball away from David Watson while Oakes waits for his chance to shoot.

Best in four years

SATURDAY'S victory margin was the Town's best since they beat Mansfield 7-2 in the League Cup in October 1989. The last time they scored five was in a 5-1 trouncing of West Ham in the Zenith Cup in December 1990, a month before the Hammers thrashed the Town 5-0 in an FA Cup replay at Upton Park.

The last time the Town hit five in a league match was in the old First Division, when they beat Southampton 5-1 in January 1989.

Barnley were not as bad as the result might suggest, and the second welcome clean sheet of the season owed a little to luck. Ramsbottom's shot was deflected by John Dwyer, the pick of the defence, against the angle of the woodwork when it might have been an equaliser.

Add in the second half player-manager Viv Anderson rattled the crossbar with a header from a corner.

Ramsbottom, Brendan O'Connell and Ian Bryson all wanted half-decent chances, but in the end the Town could also have had more goals, particularly in the last half hour, when Barnley were tired.

Hartson had a header brilliantly tipped over the bar, Scott Oakes missed a couple and Williams wastefully lobbed over the top when he was set up by Paul Telfer.

But with every Town man playing well, the five that counted were all theirs.

It took 28 minutes to break the deadlock, with Hughes winning a tackle 30 yards from goal, and

powering forward before sliding a delightful pass forward. Hartson collected, went round emergency centre-half Charlie Bishop and goalkeeper David Watson, and fired in the second league goal of his career from an acute angle.

Hughes delivered the best pass of the day for the important second goal, after 40 minutes.

It was a raking 40-yard crossfield ball to Williams on the right wing. He went almost to the by-line, pulled the ball back, and Oakes, coming through late, hit a drive into the roof of the net.

It was 2-0 in the 60th minute, when James ran at Barnley. As they waited for the lay-off, he carried on to the edge of the penalty area and lashed in a left-footed curling drive into the far corner of the net.

The Town used both subs in the late stages, and one of them, Scott Houghton, whose previous absence from the squad had been a bit of a puzzle to some of us, made his point to the manager with his first Town goal.

It started with Alan Harper, on his home debut, putting a pass of perfect weight to Hughes, and his early delivery into the danger area was met by Houghton for in such a goal as you could hope to see.

Two minutes from time the irrepressible Hartson almost got his second, from an incisive pass by Houghton.

Keeper Watson managed to block him out, almost on the goal line and a couple of yards inside the post, but Hartson forced the ball back for Oakes to hit the fifth goal.

The news that the result, which doubled the Town's tally of league goals for the season, had pushed them out of the relegation places, was the perfect end to a day so very different from the previous home game.

Against Bolton, we feared we saw a team on the slide. Saturday's result is not the end of the danger, but at least it built on the hope that had begun to appear at Ayrton Park and St. Andrew's.



Sympathy for man sent off

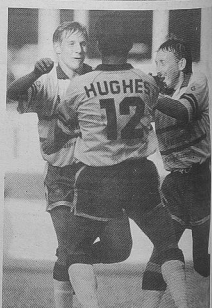
BOTH managers had sympathy with Barnley skipper Gerry Taggart over his third-minute red card.

"It was a genuine challenge for the ball," said visiting player-manager Viv Anderson, who had a close view of the incident.

Town boss David Pegg said: "I know Julian James was there first but I think the red card was harsh. It looked terrible, but you have to judge intent, and sometimes it is not as bad as it looks."

He was delighted with the way the Town used the width of the pitch.

The grass had been too long for the players' liking, he said, but they would benefit later as the growing season ends, and they were delighted with the way they had run smoothly on the surface on Saturday.



The Town's facts and figures so far

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

ENDSLEIGH LEAGUE DIV I

1993

	AUGUST
14 Watford (W) 2-1 (Telfer, Dixon)	9,140
11 Northampton (W) 1-1 (Barnley)	12,240
23 Merton Forest (W) 1-2 (Hartson)	9,738
	SEPTEMBER
4 Brentford (A) postponed	24
11 Northampton (W) 0-2	7,190
14 Truro (H) 1-1 (Barnley)	5,471
18 Middlesbrough (A) 0-4	12,487
25 Wrexham (W) 1-1 (Telfer)	11,061
	OCTOBER
2 Barnley (W) 0-0 (Oakes, Hartson, James, Houghton)	6,201

APPEARANCES (see end in brackets). Ever-present, eight each: Sommer, Pinks, Dwyer, Johnson and Telfer; Hughes 7, James and Oakes 6(1), Preece 6, Ross and Harrison 4(1), Harper 4, Dixon 4, Williams 3(1), Houghton 3(2), Lister 3, Petterson 1(1), Belariz Vazquez, Benjamin 2(1). Number of players used: 18 (23 last season).

GOALS: Oakes, Hartson and Telfer 2. One each by Dixon, Houghton, James and Benjamin.
ASSISTS: Oakes 3, Hughes 2 and one each by Williams, Hartson, Dixon and Harper.

THE COCA-COLA CUP

Round 1 (11 Aug 17 Cambridge (A) 0-1 4,965
Round 2 (21 Aug 24 Cambridge (H) 0-1 3,861
APPEARANCES: Two each by Sommer, James, Johnson, Houghton 1(1), Ross 1, Telfer 1, Campbell 1, Williams 1, Hartson 1(1).

THE ANGLO-ITALIAN CUP

Aug 21 Watford (A) 1-2 (Preece)
Sep 7 Southend (H) 1-1 (Dixon)
APPEARANCES: Two each by Sommer, Hughes, Preece, Pinks, Dwyer, Johnson, Houghton, Dixon and Hartson, Williams 1(1), James 1, Telfer 1, Lister 1. One each as sub by Oakes, Greene and Woolgar.

YOUNGEST

He suggested that the Town had scored five on a day when they fielded their youngest-ever forward line, which was gratifying.

"The problem now is to maintain it," he said. "We have had one or two good performances but I was delighted with this one."

● **CRACKER:** Julian James has just hit his first league goal of the season, and Alan Harper and Ceri Hughes are as pleased about it as he is.