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Sports News

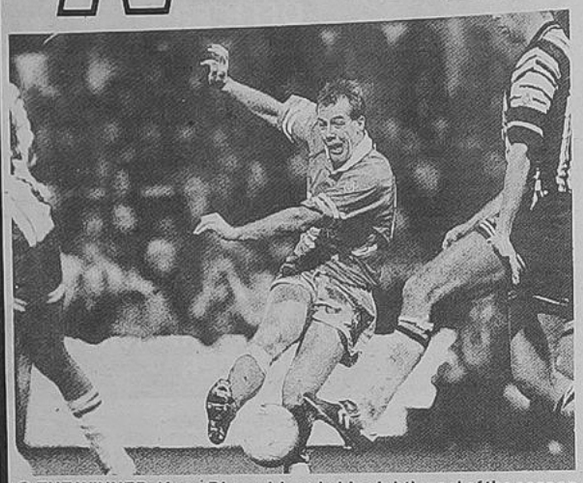
TOWN MATCH VERDICT

Notts County.....1
Luton Town.....2
(Half time 0-0)

★ ★ ★

Brian Swain reports — Action pictures: John Sherwood

Two-goal Dixon snatches victory with late double



● THE WINNER: Kerry Dixon drives in his eighth goal of the season at Meadow Lane, to clinch the Town's second away win.

TEN minutes from time at Meadow Lane on Saturday Luton Town were sliding towards their eight away defeat of the season.

They had played well up to a point, but like Notts County had done almost all the good work between the penalty areas, and not in them.

County had managed to deliver the good final ball once, and looked like sneaking a 1-0 win through Tony Agana's 70th-minute goal.

But suddenly it all changed. In the 81st minute the Town won their first and last corner of the match, and it brought **Kerry Dixon** an equaliser.

STUNNED

And with two minutes to go the home side was stunned as the 32-year-old striker expertly cracked in a 20-yard winner.

'Lucky Luton,' was the cry of the anguished Nottingham men in the Pressbox as the Town took their run to five games without defeat, four of them away from home.

But until the late show by Dixon, it had been lucky County.

The result underlined the Town's new-found ability to make use of the team's fighting spirit: it was the third time in those five games that they had scored twice to come back from the brink of defeat, having done it to save a point at Watford and grab all three at home to Grimsby.

At Meadow Lane the home side had been let off the hook as the Town settled comfortably, despite an enforced change.

At left back **Mitchell Thomas** was out through injury, and **Julian James** returned for his first start in three months.

He was up against County's best flank players, Andy Legg and Paul Devlin, but with skipper **Trevor Peake** in commanding form, and organising things alongside **John Dreyer**, the Town were rarely in much trouble at the back.

They started with a five-man midfield, but improved after the first 20 minutes of dire entertainment when **Scott Oakes** was switched to play closer to Dixon in attack.

The first half was poor value in entertainment terms, with two defences well on top.

Devlin missed an early chance by shooting wide when the offside trap was caught for the only time in the game, and the best chance came at the other end.

Fulback **Des Linton** is beginning to flourish and was desperately unlucky not to give the Town the lead on the only first-half occasion when they showed real penetration.

A cross by **Paul Telfer** from the right was half-cleared by County, and **Ceri Hughes** returned the ball to the far post. Linton stormed in for a downward header which Steve Cherry saved with his legs.

In the second half the Town's passing football gave them the edge, but not the finish.

Hughes, on the left wing, was a rumbustious attacking cavalier, but exasperated some of his by doing so well in the approach to goal, and by badly at producing the final cross.

He forced Cherry into a good save; and **Juergen Sommer** had to out a piledriver by Mark Draper.

The Town looked capable of getting a draw at least, but the old problem was evident as they never got to close quarters despite being the better footballing side.

And their fans found the worst when their growing confidence was almost killed in the 70th minute.

They were caught stretched went upfield and Devlin got into the space behind him to collect a long pass.

Dreyer, suffering from a badly bruised leg from County's earlier bulldozing attempts, was unable to get across quickly enough to stop Devlin hitting a hard low cross aimed at the near post, and Tony Agana steered a close-range shot into the net.

It was a very good goal, perhaps worthy of winning the match.

But after Hughes had been booked for a foul which resulted in Legg being subbed, the Town found the final thrust after making a double subsitution.

They sent on **John Hartson** and **Jamie Campbell** in place of **Oakes** and **David Preece**, and settled into a traditional formation.

County sub Gary McSwegan miskicked when he should have scored the killer, and a header by Draper was beautifully caught at full stretch by Sommer.

It took the Town 81 minutes to win their only corner of the game, but it was the turning point. Hughes took it from the left, and Telfer headed on towards the near post, where Dixon cleverly headed the ball backwards into the net.

That was barely a minute after the two subs had joined the fray, and with two minutes to go Campbell made a strong run from midfield and sent Hughes on yet another run down the left wing.

This time the cross found its target, pulled back via a poor defensive clearance attempt to Dixon on the edge of the area. The striker let rip with a first-time shot which caught a slight deflection off a defender as it whistled into the net.

Itr left County's fans jeering their own team for the final few minutes.

The ref played three minutes of stoppage time, but the Town were never in danger: they had already imposed their better football on the opposition, and County knew it.

The match details

LUTON TOWN: Sommer; Linton, Peake, Dreyer, James; Telfer, Harper, Preece (Campbell 80 mins), Hughes; Oakes (Hartson 80 mins), Dixon. Goalkeeper sub: Petterson.

NOTTS COUNTY: Cherry; Gannon, Johnson, Foster, Dijkstra; Legg (McSwegan 73 mins), Turner, Draper, Agana; Devlin, Lund. Other subs: Sherlock and goalkeeper Catlin.

THE GOALS:

1-0 70 mins: Tony Agana, near-post flick from good hard low cross by Paul Devlin after a right wing run into space behind Julian James, with his pace taking him past injured John Dreyer;

1-1 81 mins: Kerry Dixon header, from left-wing corner by Ceri Hughes flicked on by Paul Telfer;

2-1 81 mins: Dixon again, 20-yard drive slightly deflected by a defender, from pulled-back cross by Hughes, who had been sent clear by Jamie Campbell.

OTHER STRIKES: Town five saved and four wide; County five saved and six wide. **Corners:** 3-1 to Notts County.

BOOKED: Ceri Hughes, for the seventh time this season, for a bad tackle on Andy Legg which saw the County player taken off.

REFEREE: William Burns, Scarborough: unfussy but always nicely in control throughout.

ATTENDANCE: 6,589, including about 400 from Luton.

ENTERTAINMENT: Lifted for Town fans by the remarkable revival in the final ten minutes, after 80 in which they played well up to the point of delivering the final ball.

THE DOUBLE completed at Meadow Lane was the Town's first for nearly three years.

They last achieved it in the old First Division, now known as the FA Carling Premiership, under the managership of Jim Ryan, with a 2-0 home win over Aston Villa in November 1990 and a 2-1 success at Villa Park the following March. The goals in the first leg were scored by Kingsley Black — a spectator at Meadow Lane on Saturday — and Lars Elstrup, and at Villa Park Derek Mountfield put one into his own net and Mark Pembridge got the other, the first league goal of his career.

● THE EQUALISER: Notts County have plenty of defenders in attendance, with goal scorer Kerry Dixon hidden from view, but none can do anything to prevent his header sailing into the net to make it 1-1.

Good show after a poor opening

MANAGER DAVID Pleat's view of the Luton Town performance was more cheerful than the majority veridct from the Pressbox.

But he admitted that the Town's play had been 'horrific' for the first 20 minutes.

"Fortunately it got better when we changed things, pushing the extra man up," he said.

All players deserved credit for the good jobs they had done, with Scott Oakes working hard to do the linking job alongside Kerry Dixon.

The Press view was that Ceri Hughes had run Dixon close for the man of the match honours, for a lot of good work on the left wing, but spoiled by his failure to capitalise.

The manager accepted that: "Had his delivery matched his approach work he would have done very well indeed," he said. "But as a team we have done very well, and we are very pleased to have won."

Dixon, celebrating his first goals since his hat-trick against Stoke six weeks and six games ago, said: "I thought we were the better side and deserved to win, although often the final ball in was not good enough. If we had done better in the last third who's to say how many more goals we might have had.

"The bobbly pitch didn't help, but all the lads are very happy with a nice start to the new year, and the spirit in the dressing room is still very good.

"We have produced good football and we have got our reward."

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 (h)	2-1 (Telfer, Dixon)	9,149	—
21	Portsmouth (a)	0-1	12,248	—
28	Nottm Forest (h)	1-2 (Hartson)	9,788	22
	SEPTEMBER			
11	Bolton Wdrs (h)	0-2	7,199	24
14	Tranmere (a)	1-4 (Benjamin)	5,871	24
18	Middlesbrs (a)	0-0	12,487	23
25	Birmingham (a)	1-1 (Telfer)	11,081	23
	OCTOBER			
2	Barnsley (h)	5-0 (Oakes 2, Hartson, James, Houghton)	6,201	21
5	Bristol City (h)	0-2	5,956	21
9	Derby Co (a)	1-2 (Williams)	15,885	23
16	Notts Co (h)	1-0 (Dickov)	6,366	21
20	Sunderland (a)	0-2	13,760	23
23	Oxford (a)	1-0 (Hughes)	5,161	19
30	Leicester (h)	0-2	8813	21
	NOVEMBER			
2	C. Palace (a)	2-3 (Aunger, Hughes)	10,925	23
7	Charlton (h)	1-0 (Telfer)	6,327	18
14	Southend (a)	1-2 (Dixon)	5,567	18
27	Stoke (h)	6-2 (Dixon 3, Hughes, Oakes, Hartson)	7,384	15
	DECEMBER			
4	Charlton (a)	0-1	7,121	17
11	Tranmere (h)	0-1	7,075	19
19	Watford (a)	2-2 (Preece, Dreyer pen)	7,567	21
27	Peterboro (a)	0-0	9,522	20
29	Grimsby (h)	2-1 (Harper, Hughes)	7,234	18

1994

	JANUARY			
1	West Brom (a)	1-1 (Preece)	16,138	18
15	Notts Co (a)	2-1 (Dixon 2)	6,589	17

APPEARANCES (as sub in brackets): Ever-presents, 25: Sommer and Peake. Hughes 24, Telfer 23(1), Dreyer 22, Harper 20, Oakes 18(3), Dixon and Linton 16(1), Johnson 16, Preece 11, Hartson 10(5), James 8(4), Thomas 8, Rees 7(1), Houghton 6(6), Williams 4(8), Campbell 3(7) Aunger 3, Thorpe (1) Petterson (1). On loan: Dickov 8(7). Before transfer: Benjamin 2(1).

Number of players used: 23, same as last season.

GOALS: Dixon 7. Hughes 4. Telfer, Oakes and Hartson 3. Preece 2. One each by Houghton, Williams, James, Aunger, Dreyer (pen), Harper, Dickov and Benjamin.

ASSISTS: Hughes 7. Oakes 6. Dixon 4. Two each by Johnson and Harper. One each by Williams, Hartson, Linton, Telfer, Houghton and Thomas.

THE COCA-COLA CUP

Round 1 (1): Aug 17	Cambridge (a)	0-1	4,065	
Round 1 (2): Aug 24	Cambridge (h)	0-1	3,861	

APPEARANCES: Two each by Sommer, James, Johnson, Peake, Dreyer, Benjamin, Preece and Hughes. Oakes 1(1), Houghton 1(1), Rees 1, Telfer 1, Campbell 1, Williams 1, Hartson (1).

THE ANGLO-ITALIAN CUP

Aug 31	Watford (a)	1-2 (Preece)	2,854	
Sep 7	Southend (h)	1-1 (Dixon)	1,823	

APPEARANCES: Two each by Sommer, Hughes, Preece, Peake, Dreyer, Johnson, Houghton, Dixon and Hartson. Williams 1(1), James 1, Telfer 1, Linton 1. One each as sub by Oakes, Greene and Woolgar.

Letters to the Sports Editor — Supporters have their say

Conflicting views of fans

Now is the time to give David Kohler a chance in running Luton Town.

So many seem intent on blaming Mr Kohler for the problems the team is having on the pitch and not looking any further for the reasons. I have supported the club since 1959 and have seen all these problems before.

People point to the successes during the chairmanship of David Evans, but what happened to all the money raised from two Wembley finals, many players sold, and the sale of the ground?

When David Kohler was landed with the chairmanship there was no money, massive debts, very few decent players, and a manager intent on hiding the problems on the pitch by criticising the chairman at every opportunity.

Look at the past couple of seasons at players bought and loaned:

Mervyn Day: cost us Premier League football with his appalling displays;

Imri Varadi: not much better;

Brian Stein: great for years, but past it on his return;

Steve Thompson: by far the best player, so he was moved on;

Steve Claridge: a cart horse;

Ian Benjamin: sold after his best game, against Tranmere. Probably his only good game;

Paul Dickov: a waste of time, not even guaranteed a regular place;

Mitchell Thomas: has done reasonably well so far.

Not the best advert for a manager's ability to bring in players, is it?

You cannot blame David Kholer for this problem. Or can you?

Be honest and give credit to Mr Kohler. He has stuck by the club through three years of intolerable abuse and hatred, not really the stance of a man who doesn't care.

To the fans I say this: give him a chance to put the club right.

To Mr Pleat: Put Luton Town first, and not all your other interests, or resign.

I do not know Mr Kohler, nor do I know if he is capable of putting us back in the top division, but I am prepared to give him more time.

But I will be the first to call for his head if the past couple of seasons of hardship are not used for the future success of Luton Town FC.

Ron Hedley,
11 Old Kiln Road,
Tylers Green,
High Wycombe.

WE find ourselves once again questioning David Kohler on his statement "If a buyer comes in with the money I will sell."

Interested parties have come and gone and we can only conclude from this, added to the statement from John Mitchell, that David Kohler is making it as difficult as possible for any sale of the club to go through.

On a radio phone-in a lady came forward to support David Kohler, as the voice of the 6,000 silent majority. If this is so, we urge that lady to come forward and start up her own supporters club, as it would seem our organisation is out of touch with the genuine supporters.

I would also urge the 2,000 or so who will not attend home matches until Mr Kohler leaves to return to the stadium, support the team, and show David Kohler your true feelings.

We the supporters clubs are there for you. Come forward and let's work together to show David Kohler that the only way forward is for him to leave, to work through the differences with the Mitchell/Ellingham consortium, and let someone else have the chance to run it.

Failing this, perhaps the mystery lady will come forward with her silent majority and force the supporters club to give up our campaign.

R. J. Roche
Loyal Luton Supporters Club

I HAVE been a supporter of Luton Town for 45 years, and during that time the club has had many a crisis.

Some of the fans have been spoiled by the last ten years we spent in the top division.

Mr Kohler has tried to run the club as a going concern, and of course has made enemies.

What we want is everyone pulling together, and the three supporters clubs, rather than running down the club, should set an example. What cash have they raised to help the club? To tell people to stay away is misguided. Why doesn't Tom Hunt try some constructive ideas instead of being negative?

A life-long fan
(Name supplied)
Goldington Road
Bedford

THE WEEKEND'S FULL LOCAL SOCCER RESULTS

S. Midlands League

PREMIER DIV: Hoddesdon Tn 1 Letchworth 0; Luton OB 1 Shillington 2.

O'BRIEN PREMIER CUP: Langford 1 Biggleswade Tn 3; Welwyn 1 Hatfield 1; Potters Bar Tn 2 Wingate 0.

SENIOR DIV: Ampthill Tn 2 Tottermoe 6.

SENIOR DIV CUP: Pitstone 2 6 FC 6; Risborough 1 Leverstock Grn 1; Toddington Rov 1 Bedford Utd 1; Winslow Utd 1 Shefford Tn 4.

DIV ONE: Luton Bray 5 Mercedes 2; MK County 0 Emberton 2; Stony 11 Sandy 0; Walden 2 Caddington 0.

RESERVE SECTION

DIV 1B: Caddington 3 Arlesey 3; Hatfield 10 Brache Sparta 2; Leighton Tn 5 Shenley 1. DIV 2: Houghton Town 2 Potters Bar Cty 7; Mercedes 2 Walden 2.

BEDS SENIOR CUP: Brache Sparta 1 Dunstable 2.

BEDS INTERMEDIATE CUP: Cotton End Utd 0 Houghton Tn 5; Lewsey Park 1 Delco 2.

Luton District League

PREMIER DIV: Luton OB Res 4 Singh Sabha 4; Dagnall 4 Stockwood 1; Ebony 1 Flitwick 1; Christian 3 Crawley Grn 0; O Dunstablians 1 Studham 1.

DIV ONE: Monarch 1 Lewsey Pk Res 1; Lea Sports 3 L. Eagles 1; De La Rue 2 Kent Ath 4; Studham Res 2 Markyate 9; Flitwick Res 2 Brickmakers Arms 2.

DIV TWO: Christians A 0 Whitbread 0; First & Last 5 Thistle Res 6; Flitwick A 1 Compasses 5; Harveys 2 Sportsman Dunstable 3; Thresher 1 ODs Res 2.

The NHC Sunday League

PREMIER DIV: Celtic 12 Limbury Black Swan 0; FC Coral 2 Green Man 2; Stag 1 Crawley Sports 4.

DIV ONE: Lewsey 5 Saints 1.

DIV TWO: Houghton Tn 2 Stopsley Harriers Res 4; FC Houghton AFC 4 Wigmore 1.

DIV THREE: Red Star 4 Magnum 1; Black Swan 2 Strawplaiters 5; Siboc 4 Dog & Duck 1; Old Moat House 1 Borough Arms 3.

DIV FOUR: Flint Utd 1 Lewsey Res 1; Laporte 1 AFC Oakley 2; NT Sugar Loaf Res 3 Markyate 4; Thames Utd 12 Roman Legion 0.

DIV FIVE: Borough Arms Res 3 AFC Stopsley 4; Wells Star 1 FC Houghton Res 6; Crescent Social 2 Streatley Overseers 2.

DIV SIX: Houghton Regis 5 Wellington Arms 2; AFC Barn Owl 0 Woodstock Wdrs 11; Houghton Tn Res 2 O. Moat House Res 2; Black Swan Res 2 Stopsley Ath 2; Luton YS 8 White Hart 3.

DIV SEVEN: Postels 6 Bedfordshire OB 2; Sportsman Dunstable 2 Pulicbeat 3; Thameslink 1 Red Lion 7.

BEDS SUNDAY CUP: GIS 3 Carlton 4; AFC Heron 3 Sacred Heart 5.

LUTON NEWS CUP: Stopsley WMC 6 The Vine 2.

RESERVE CUP: Caddington 4 Lea Sports 1.

Luton Sunday League

CHALLENGE CUP: AMC 5 AFC Oakley Res 4; Burn Owl 3 High Town 5; Luton Dukes 2 Icknield 1; Bridge Tavern 0 One Nation 14.

INVITATION CUP: Emerald Utd 1 Lea Sports B 2.

S. Beds Sunday League

PREMIER DIV: Green Man Clophill 0 Coach and Horses 5.

DIV TWO: Engineers 3 Windsor Castle 4.

DIV THREE: Park Town 7 Wigmore 0; Cosmopolitan Res 0 Northside 4.

CHALLENGE CUP: Parley Eagles 4 Nurdin & Peacock 5; Macom Eagles 1 Leicester Arms 2.

SUNDON PARK TROPHY: BG Chiltern 1 Rose & Crown 0; Inter-City 1 Slip End 0.

SUPPLEMENTARY CUP: Suspension Systems 4 Cosmopolitan Juet; Vauxhall Griffin 3 Crown & Keg 0.

PEARCE TROPHY: Leabank 4 NV Ath 3.

Chiltern Youth League

UNDER-18 DIV: Sundon Pk 1 Wingrave 1; Icknield 3 Ampthill 4.

UNDER 17 DIV ONE: N Pagnell 1 Leighton Foxes 6; Rainridge A 2 Downside 3. DIV TWO: Ampthill 3 Downside B 1; Warden Hill 6 AFC Houghton 0; Rainridge B 0 Mandeville 6.

UNDER-16: St. Joseph's 12 Leighton Foxes 1; St. Mary's 3 Putteridge 1; Sundon Pk 2 Valley Pk 1. RESE CUP: Dunstable 4 Sandy 1.

UNDER 15 DIV ONE: Dunstable 1 Aylesbury Utd 7. DIV 2: Sundon Pk 11 Delco Dynamo 0; Rainridge 3 Downside 2.

UNDER-14 DIV ONE: Lewsey Centre 3 Astra 4; St. Joseph's 3 Celtic 1; Flamstead 5 Ampthill 2; Dunstable 1 Sacred Heart 6. DIV TWO: Wdn Hill 2 Houghton Tn 3; Sundon Pk 1 Pin Green 0. DIV THREE: Barton Stars 2 Luton BC 3; WL Saints 0 Flitwick Eagles 4; Copenhagen Colts 7 Downside 4; Delco Dynamo 2 Icknield 9.

UNDER-13 DIV ONE: Leighton Foxes 1 St. Joseph's 4; Warden Hill 5 Sundon Pk 3. DIV TWO: St. Mary's 1 Houghton Tn 0; Ampthill 1 S. Heart B 2; Rainridge B 0 Arrows 1; Selby 10 Icknield 1.

UNDER 12 DIV 1: Dunstable Colts 5 Foxes 3; Barnfield A 0 Ampthill A 4; Limbury B 3 Dunstable 2; AFC Houghton 2 Rainridge 5; Leighton Cor 2 Celtic S 9; St. Joseph's 1 Lewsey 1. DIV TWO: Sundon Pk Rgrs 13 Gliders 0; WL Saints 3 Westoning H 0; Markyate 5 Barnfield B 4; 11 Hatters 1 Redbourn 6.

UNDER 11 DIV ONE: Barnfield A FC 0 Houghton 6; St. Joseph's 2 Ampthill 0; Dunstable 2 Pin Grn 2. DIV 2: Celtic S Dragons 4; Redbourn 0 W. Luton Saints 6; Lewsey B 10 Markyate 1; Toddington Rov 2 Dunstable 5; Colts 5.

UNDER 10 DIV ONE: Dunstable Colts 1 St. Joe's 2; Lewsey 2 St. Mary's 1; Celtic 1 Leighton Foxes 1. DIV TWO: AFC Houghton 1 Sacred Heart 2; Limbury B 1 Sundon Pk 3; WL Saints 0 Dunstable 7.