Sports News

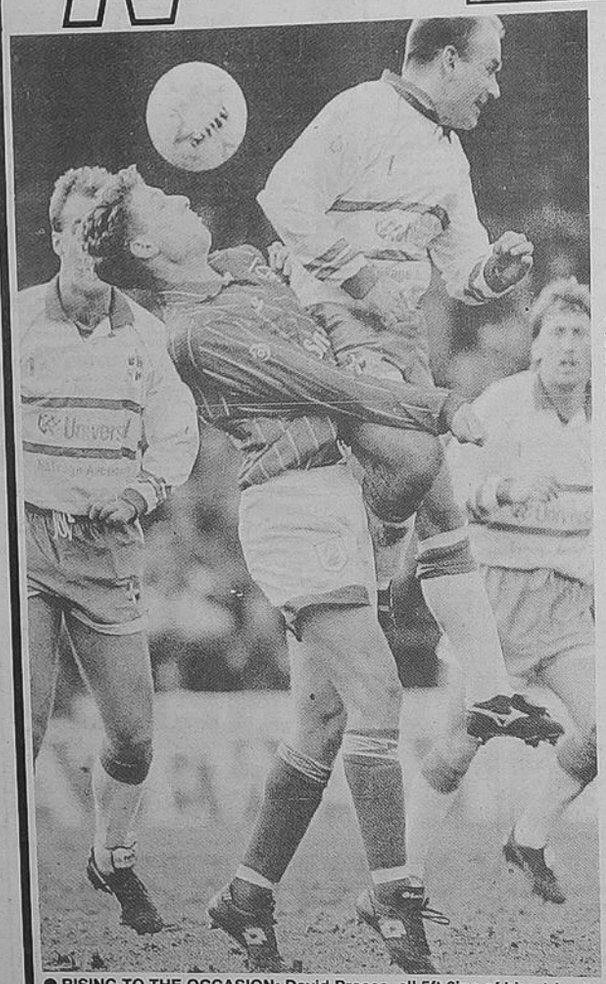
TOWN MATCH VERDICT

Nottm Forest.....2
Luton Town.....0
(Half time 0-0)

★★

Brian Swain reports. Action pictures by John Sherwood.

Red card deals final blow to a reshuffled side



● RISING TO THE OCCASION: David Preece, all 5ft 6ins of him, tries to give the Town attacking penetration that was lacking at Nottingham.

A RED card for **Juergen Sommer** was the main talking point as Luton Town suffered their second consecutive away defeat in the First Division.

The goalkeeper was rightly sent off for a foul on Steve Stone, who looked like scoring when he got clear ten minutes from the end.

The penalty was smashed past sub keeper **Andy Petterson**, and Nottingham Forest had completed a win that did not look as difficult from the Pressbox as from the home manager's seat in the dugout, judging by Frank Clark's comments after the game.

'The damage had been done before Sommer's 'professional foul.'

With skipper **Trevor Peake** missing for the first time this season, the reshuffled defence was not as confident as it has been recently.

And without **Scott Oakes**, also injured, the Town had little pace and no invention in attack.

Both sides played with five in midfield, and although the result put Forest back up into third place in the league table they hardly looked Premiership quality.

But they were more than a match for a Town side that stuttered throughout, and never put Forest goalkeeper Mark Crossley in serious trouble.

As a spectacle it was poor entertainment, with neither side able to beat a bumpy pitch on a windy afternoon.

But Forest always looked the more likely side to score, and it was all credit to Sommer that the Town kept them out for nearly an hour.

And it was all the more cruel on the big New Yorker that after doing so well for so long he should be the main cause of the goals just when it looked as though the Town might battle their way to a 0-0 draw they hardly deserved.

The enforced team changes did nothing to help.

Julian James switched to centre-back and did well as a basic stopper. But the return of **Marvin Johnson** for his first league appearance in four months, was a mixed blessing.

As always he looked good going forward, but defensively he had a problem or two with Stone, on the right of Forest's midfield, and the man who turned out to be the instigator of both goals.

Tony Thorpe came into the side in place of Oakes, but his first start in the league ended after 58 minutes, when **Mark Burke**, on loan from Wolves, replaced him.

Forest's committed front man, the lanky Jason Lee, was keen to impress after a £200,000 move from Southend to deputise for injured Stan Collymore.

It was not the Forest side old, but when the ball was humped to Lee he looked good in the air.

He almost scored in the 20th minute, when Stone, doing a lot of damage to the Town's left flank, fed Lee with a ground pass. He turned away from James and hit a screaming shot which Sommer did well to block, and he saved Lee's second drive from the rebound as well.

The keeper made other good first-half saves from Stuart Pearce and Stone, and with the Town unable to get their passing game together the contest became painful to watch.

Early in the second half Sommer was on top form again to deny Scott Gemmill twice, but the team was living too dangerously to survive indefinitely.

With 59 minutes gone, Stone attacked down the right, and was brought down by the combined attentions of **Ceri Hughes** and **John Dreyer**.

The free kick, three or four yards from the angle of the penalty box, was touched off to Pearce, who hit a screaming low drive. Sommer went down, got his chest behind the ball, but could not hold it, and Colin Cooper tapped home.

Burke had gone on a minute earlier, and either through that change, or perhaps from being stung by the goal, the Town looked a better side for a while.

They even threatened Crosley once, when Burke set up Hughes for a run at the defence. The goalkeeper did well to get to the edge of the box quickly to half-stop Hughes, but just as the path to the net seemed to be open Des Lyttle got in a saving tackle.

SAVED

Johnson made a good attacking run and cross for **Kerry Dixon** to lay off the ball to Burke, who volleyed over the bar.

A crossfield ball from right to left by **Paul Telfer** set up Hughes for another shot, which was well saved despite a deflection which almost wrong-footed the goalkeeper.

But the threatened revival petered out, and was killed off by the 80th-minute incident that ended with Sommer being sent off.

Midfielder Lars Bohinen, a Norwegian international whose goal helped to dump England out of the World Cup, caught the Town on the break as they tried to chase the game.

His perfect through-ball sent Stone clear down the middle. Luckless Sommer, left completely exposed, had little option, raced out quickly, and flung his feet at the ball.

He missed, but got the man, about a yard inside the penalty area.

Sommer had to go, despite recent televised incidents where other keepers got away with it.

Petterson was sent on as sub for Johnson, and his first touch of the ball was to retrieve it after Pearce blasted home the penalty.

And home was all most of us were thinking about after that, knowing that the Town had been a long way short of doing themselves justice.

The match details

LUTON TOWN: Sommer; Linton, Dreyer, James, Johnson (goalkeeper Petterson 80 mins); Telfer, Harper, Preece, Thorpe (Burke 58 mins), Hughes; Dixon. Unused sub: Williams.

FOREST: Crossley; Lyttle, Cooper, Chettle, Pearce; Stone, Phillips, Gemmill, Bohinen (Webb 81 mins), Black; Lee. Unused subs Bull and goalkeeper Statham.

THE GOALS: 0-1 59 mins: Collin Cooper close-range tap-in after Juergen Sommer blocked but failed to hold a rasping shot by Stuart Pearce from a 20-yard free kick;

0-2 81 mins: Pearce penalty after Sommer brought down Steve Stone, and was sent off.

OTHER ATTEMPTS: Town three saved and four wide; Forest eight saved and four wide. Corners: 4-2 to Forest.

REFEREE: Roger Dilkes, Lancashire: had another good game, and was right to send off Juergen Sommer, just as he was right to allow David Prece's goal in the FA Cup-tie at Cardiff a fortnight earlier.

BOOKED: Colin Cooper for a second-minute foul to prevent Tony Thorpe breaking clear in midfield.

SENT OFF: Juergen Sommer for bringing down Steve Stone when he was through on his own, just inside the penalty area.

ATTENDANCE: 22,249, easily the highest at any Town league game since they were at Newcastle in September 1992.

ENTERTAINMENT: Dreadful for Town fans, with their team never showing its true form with Trevor Peake and Scott Oakes, two of its best players, missing through injury.

● REGROUPING: David Pleat gesticulates, John Moore listens, and Juergen Sommer can only look on after his sending-off.

● DEBUT: Tony Thorpe, who started a league game for the first time, before making way for new loan signing Mark Burke.

The First Division

	HOME						AWAY						
	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	P
C. Palace	33	11	4	1	32	14	7	4	6	25	23	62
Charlton	32	11	3	3	25	10	5	4	6	18	20	55
Nottm Forest	32	8	7	2	27	15	7	2	6	24	19	54
Leicester City	32	10	5	1	37	20	5	4	7	15	19	54
Millwall	31	10	5	1	26	11	4	5	6	16	23	52
Derby Co	33	11	1	4	33	19	4	5	8	18	28	51
Stoke City	33	11	2	3	26	14	3	7	7	17	30	51
Notts County	33	12	1	3	31	18	3	3	11	17	36	49
Tranmere	32	10	2	4	31	18	4	5	7	13	21	49
Wolves	32	8	6	3	28	15	3	7	5	18	17	46
Bolton Wdrs	33	8	5	2	27	17	4	5	9	16	23	46
Bristol City	33	7	5	4	19	15	5	5	7	15	22	46
Southend	33	7	4	6	26	21	6	1	9	21	26	44
Middlesbrough	30	7	5	3	23	11	4	5	6	17	20	43
Sunderland	32	10	2	4	23	13	2	4	10	10	25	42
Luton Town	31	10	0	5	29	16	2	5	9	13	24	41
Portsmouth	33	7	5	4	20	14	3	6	8	16	31	41
Grimsby	31	3	10	1	17	11	5	4	8	21	26	38
West Brom	33	6	7	4	28	22	3	3	10	17	28	37
Watford	33	7	4	6	31	29	2	3	11	18	36	34
Barnsley	31	4	3	8	16	21	5	4	7	24	27	34
Peterborough	32	6	7	4	20	14	1	3	11	10	26	31
Birmingham	34	6	6	6	19	22	1	3	12	14	32	30
Oxford Utd	32	6	3	7	20	27	1	5	10	14	32	29

● Not including last night's games, Luton v Middlesbrough and Grimsby v Peterborough.

Bosses agree ref was right

JUERGEN SOMMER, an easy-going, very polite and articulate footballer, was for once almost speechless as he left the City Ground at Nottingham.

He signed autographs for fans, but was crestfallen in the extreme about the first sending off of his career.

"I thought it was harsh," he said. "But I want to see the video replay to see exactly what did happen. I'm sorry, but I don't want to talk about it."

Both managers thought referee Roger Dilkes was right to send off the goalkeeper. He was the ref who upset Cardiff in the FA Cup by playing to another official directive, over the offside law, when David Preece scored the winner.

But David Pleat made the point that Sommer was unlucky in transgressing in front of a ref who got it right while others, like Mark Bosnovich of Aston Villa, had got away with similar offences, and stayed on the field to become match-winners.

The Town boss was more concerned about a poor team performance.

"We were winder than the wind, and more uneven than the pitch," he said. "I would have liked to give Forest a harder game."

Their manager, Frank Clark, said: "It was a hard-earned win, but I thought we deserved it. Conditions, with a bumpy pitch and a strong wind, were difficult.

"Luton are a good side and were on the crest of a wave, and we had to work very hard to win the game."

● BACK IN BUSINESS: Marvin Johnson in league action for the first time in four months.

THE WEEKEND'S FULL LOCAL SOCCER RESULTS

S. Midlands League

PREMIER DIV: Biggleswade Tn 1 Hoddesdon 3; Bedford Tn 0 Arlesey 0; Buckingham Ath 3 P. Bar Tn 3; Harpenden 1 Hatfield 1; Letchworth GC 2 Langford 2; Shillington 1 Brache Sparta 2; Welwyn GC 1 Milton Keynes 1; Wingate 1 Luton OB 2.

SENIOR DIV: Totternhoe 6 Winslow 1. **CUP:** Leverstock Gn 2 61FC 0; L. Colney 0 Tring Ath 1; Risborough 5 Pitstone 3; Bedford Utd 4 Ampthill 1; Toddington 4 Shefford 1; Shenley 0 N. Bradwell 1.

DIV ONE: Sandy 2 Stony 6; Scot 1 Cranfield 3; Walden Rgrs 2 Emberton 0. **CUP:** E. Bray 1 Ashcroft 2; Caddington 5 Flamstead 0; P. Bar Cru 3 De Havilland 5; Deleo 0 Houghton Tn 4; Mercedes Benz 1 MK County 1.

RESERVE SECTION

CHALLENGE TROPHY: Flamstead 1 Buckingham 2; Hatfield 2 L. Colney 0. **DIV 1A:** Cranfield 1 Shillton 3; M. Keynes 1 Totternhoe 0; Pitstone 1 Barton 4; P. Bar Tn 3 Bedford Utd 1; 61FC 2 Toddington 5; Tring Ath 1 Bedford Tn 2. **DIV 1B:** Arlesey 1 Leighton 1; Ashcroft 0 Letchworth 3; Brache 0 Harpenden 1; S. Stratford 1 Caddington 7; **DIV 2:** De Havilland 4 Scot 2; MK Co 3 Deleo 5; Winslow Utd 3 Sandy 0.

Luton District League

WILLIAM PEASE TROPHY: Christjans 1 Luton OB Rcs 3; Markyate 1 Old Dunstablians 2.

PREMIER DIV: Ebony 1 Stockwood Ath 4; Cadoza 0 Kent 3; Dagnall 1 S. Sabha 2; Lewsey Pk 1 Studham 2; Crawley Green 5 Flitwick 4.

DIV ONE: Flitwick Res 4 De-La-Rue 1; Kent Res 3 Crawley Gn Res 3; Thistle 1 Brickmakers Arms 3; Studham Res 1 Thresher 3; Luton OB A 1 Lea Sports 3; Lewsey Pk 4 Luton Eagles 1.

DIV TWO: Thresher Res 0 Harveys 4; Old Dunstablians Res 1 E. Bray Res 1; Christians A 1 Sportsman Dunstable 1; Harlington 4 Flitwick A 0; First and Last 6 Hockwell Ring 0; Thistle Res 2 61FC 2.

BEDS JUNIOR CHARITY CUP: Compasses 2 Caldecote 0.

The NHC Sunday League

PREMIER DIV: Enterprise 3 St. Joseph's 1; Stag 0 Brache G. Man 5; GIS 2 Hexton 2; Celtic 0 S. Heart 1; Heron 1 Coral 4.

DIV ONE: Stopsley Hrrs 3 Favourite 0; Heron Res 0 Celtic Res 3; Stopsley WMC 1 Crawley Sports 1; S. Heart Res 10 Lilley 1; Horseshoe 0 St. Joseph's 0; New Town Sugar Loaf 1 Lewsey 1.

DIV TWO: Stopsley Hrrs Res 1 FC Houghton 3; The Brewery 2 Wigmore 1; Chalton Str 2 Hooter 0; Houghton Tn 4 Wheatsheaf 1; TRW 1 Lea Sports 1.

DIV THREE: Dog & Duck 2 Vaux High Tn 1; Black Swan 4 GIS 1; Coulter 1 Magnum 1; Coral Res 2 Borough Arms 2; First & Last Parkside 3 Strawplaiters 1; Caddington Res 3 Red Star 0.

DIV FOUR: NT Sugar Loaf Res 1 Roman Legion 2; Stopsley WMC Res 2 Oakley 5; Vine OB 4 Wigmore Ath 6; Lewsey Res 4 Flint Utd 0; Laporte 7 Markyate 3; Thames Utd 1 Britannia Airways 0.

DIV FIVE: FC Houghton Res 5 Royal Mail 1; Lewsey Social 3 Barbarians 1; Casa Bianca 1 Borough Res 0; Streatley Chequers 2 Wells Star 4; Lea Sports 3 AFC Stopsley 2.

DIV SIX: Swan Rgrs 5 Luton YS 4; OMH Res 1 White Hart 3; Toddington 2 Wellington Arms 2; Houghton Tn Res 4 Houghton Regis 0.

DIV SEVEN: Bedco OB 4 Lynmore 11; Magnum Res 1 Pulsebeat 5; Fidus 1 Limbury Utd 1; Luton Rover 3 Thamelink 1; Markyate Res 0 Sportsman 2; Hansom Cab 5 Postels 3.

Luton Sunday League

DIV ONE: First & Last 2 Barn Owl 6; Lea Sports A 4 Oakley 1; Luton Dukes 0 Meds 4.

INVITATION CUP: Round Green 1 Lea Sports B 2; GML 2 Hibbert Arms 6 aet; Icknield 0 High Tn 6.

DIV TWO: Luton Dukes B 2 AMC 7; One Nation 4 Emerald 0.

STEVE SMITH TROPHY: Purley Tav 6 Dukes 5.

S. Beds Sunday League

PREMIER DIV: Leicester Arms 2 Moor Pk 3; Nurdin & Peacock 5 Macom Eagles 1; Bricklayers 1 Sundon Park 3.

DIV ONE: Britannia 5 Painters 1; Slip End 3 Beds Yeoman 7; Lea Utd 1 Inter-City 5; EG Chiltern 1 Rose & Crown 3.

DIV TWO: Sundon Pk 0 Cosmopolitan 3; Suspension Systems 3 Crown & Keg 2; Tophill 1 Emerald 2; Robin Hood 2 Vauxhall Griffin 2.

DIV THREE: Air Express 0 Wigmore 2; Bromley 0 Lea Bank 2; Northside 1 Park Town 7.

BEDS CENTENARY CUP: W. Horse 4 Lea Bank 6.

Chiltern Youth League

UNDER 18: St. Joseph's 1 Leighton Tn 2; Wingrave 2 Sundon Pk 1.

UNDER 17 DIV ONE: Newport Pagnell 1 Downside A 3; Limbury BC 3 Hitchin Tn 0; Leighton Foxes 1 Ramridge Rgrs A 1. **DIV TWO:** Ampthill 5 AFC Houghton 15; Griffin Brache 3 Barton Stars 1; Downside B 5 Leighton Cor 4; Tring Colts 2 Mandeville 2; Ramridge B 0 Warden Hill 7.

UNDER-16: Leighton Foxes 2 Leighton Cor 6; Sundon Pk 0 St. Joseph's 4; Valley Pk 0 Dunstable Tn 0; Warden Hill 6 St. Mary's 1.

UNDER 15 DIV ONE: St. Joseph's 4 Aylesbury 0; Dunstable Tn 0 Astra 8; Lewsey 0 Ramridge A 2; Sot 0 Beech Hill 1. **DIV TWO:** Beaudesert 1 Sundon Pk 9; Deleo 3 Tring 3; London Colney 12 Icknield 4.

UNDER-14 DIV ONE: Ampthill 1 St. Joseph's 3; Sacred Heart A 1 Aylesbury 2; Leighton Foxes 0 Eaton Bray 4; Flamstead 7 Dunstable Tn 2; Lewsey 2 Celtic 0; Leighton Cor 3 Astra 3. **DIV TWO:** Dragons 2 Pin Green 0; Houghton Tn 2 Ramridge Rgrs 2; Lea Sports 2 Markyate 1; Sacred Heart B 0 Sundon Pk Rgrs 8. **DIV THREE:** Barton Stars 3 WL Saints 4.

UNDER-13 DIV ONE: Foxes 0 Dunstable Tn 0; Sundon Park 2 Warden Hill 7. **DIV TWO:** Houghton 1 Arrows 1; Icknield 1 Kempston Rurals 10; Pioneers 2 Markyate 4; Selby 5 Sacred Heart B 2; St. Mary's 4 Ampthill 2. **EAST ANGLIA CUP:** Chiltern Youth League 1 Cambridge Colts League 2.

UNDER 12 DIV 1: Ampthill A 4 AFC Houghton 1; Barnfield A 0 Dunstable Colts 9; Ramridge 3 Limbury BC B 1; Leighton Foxes 2 Lewsey 4; Dragons 6 Celtic 4; Leighton Cor 1 Dunstable Tn 0. **DIV TWO:** Bushmead 2 Ampthill B 2; Jets 8 Barnfield B 0; Westoning A 2 Redbourn 3; Flamstead 0 Westoning B 0; Barton Stars 0 WL Saints 5; Parkside 0 Sundon Park 3; Markyate 7 H. Hatters 2.

UNDER 11 CUP: Dragons 0 Lewsey 3; Leighton Cor A 0 St. Joseph's 2. **DIV ONE:** Dunstable Tn 0 Foxes 3; Pin Gn 2 Ampthill 1; AFC Houghton 8 Barnfield 0; S. Heart 1 Ramridge 6. **DIV 2:** Barton 4 Leighton Cor B 1; Kensworth 2 WL Saints 10; Redbourn 3 Markyate 1; Dunstable Colts 4 Celtic 2; Lewsey B 1 Limbury 3.

UNDER-TEN DIV ONE: Celtic 1 St. Joseph's 1. **DIV TWO:** Ampthill 1 AFC Houghton 6; Barnfield 2 Sacred Heart 4; Limbury 1 Flitwick 4; Sundon Pk 0 Dunstable Tn 3. **CUP:** Lewsey 1 Aylesbury 4; Leighton Foxes 1 Ramridge 2; Dunstable Colts 5 Leighton Cor 0.