Sports News

TOWN MATCH VERDICT

FA Cup Quarter Final

West Ham.....0
Luton Town.....0

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Brian Swain reports. Action pictures by John Sherwood.

Every player on song to set up a second chance

THE script that most of football had written for Monday night was for West Ham to become the fourth FA Cup semi-finalist to set the record straight on behalf of the Premiership.

Except that Luton Town were determined to write a different story, a new chapter in fact, which could yet lead to Wembley for a semi final against Chelsea next month.

In a season where many of the big clubs have been embarrassed by their Endsleigh League 'poor relations' it seemed to be everything to type when Bolton, Charlton and Millwall went out to Premiership clubs at the weekend.

But Luton Town not only backed the trend. They played so well, in front of a big partisan home crowd, that even Premiership manager Billy Bonds was glad to get a home draw.

The Town's measured control of much of the game reduced West Ham to hoofed clears down the middle, looking for Ian Chapman to produce something special.

He was unable to do so, because Dennis David Greene, is on his brief, smart pin. He was magnificent.

He and John Dreyer worked in the strong route so complete by Leroy Rosenior that it was hardly made out that it was not all the part Greene played.

And so midfield Dreyer was outstanding, easily the best player on view.

The passing was sweet as ever, but it also showed hard tackles, and the ability to take the ball West Ham's forwards targets on behalf of route to goal.

There were a step of dodgy moment in the defence, with Hammers starting to gain a little poise.

But in the first 90 minutes Greene gives solid as ever on the left.

A lot of the action was made in attack without delivering the goods.

Time and again they broke smoothly without producing the telling shot or header.

But they came closer than West Ham to breaking the stalemate at the height of their second half superiority.

The teams shared 20 corners, and the Town always had more variety and invention about them.

In the 61st minute Preece swung over an other right on the button. Telfer got in a back-header to expose the Hammers defence, and Linton's header looked like finding the bottom corner before Breacker scrambled it away.

Just before that Preece had skipped through the middle to get in a shot which saw Miklosko saved at his feet, and shortly afterwards the keeper was stretched to hold a hot shot by Telfer.

The play of the Town fans was that much in tune with the team performance, in which every player contributed handsomely, if not and even better than the draw.

The sadness was that the Town threatened so much in attack without delivering the goods.

Dreyer's poke headed a ball past goal from left of goal. Jurgen Sommer advanced like a mountain on wheels and Morley was failed just as he put the header towards goal.

The Town escaped, and their only other worrying moment was just before half-time when Mike Marsh stole on the blind side to hit a drive against the outside of a post.

Otherwise, the Town's five-man midfield set problems West Ham could not cope with.

Cerit Hughes did a real job, not only as an attacker, but in giving the opportunity for Tim Breacker to go on the overlaps.

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The match details

LUTON TOWN: Sommer; Linton, Dreyer, Greene, Jones; Telfer, Harper, Preece, Oakes (Burke 86 mins), Hughes; Dixon (Harkins 81 mins). Goalkeeper subs: Patterson.

WEST HAM: Miklosko; Breacker, Potts, Martin, Barrows; Marsh, Bishop, Martin Allen, Holmes; Chapman (Clive Allen, 83 mins); Hirst. Goalkeeper subs: Roffey.

GOAL ATTEMPTS: Town five saved and five wide, West Ham four saved, two wide, and angled drive by Mike Marsh hit a post. Corners 10-10.

BOOKED: Julian James for a foul on Trevor Morley.

REFEREE: Brian Hill, Leicester. Hill was unlucky when he was up under pressure by the home crowd, and occasionally by both teams.

ATTENDANCE: 27,381, West Ham's biggest of the season, and lacking 3,834 from Luton.

ENTERTAINMENT: A cracking cup-tie, with the Town contributing a full measure, and well worth the second chance.

● TOP HATTER: Paul Telfer well above the rest in a Town attack at Upton Park.

● MIDFIELD BATTLER: David Preece, right, gets stuck in.

● FLASHPOINT: West Ham appeal in vain for a penalty after Juergen Sommer flattened Trevor Morley.

'It's still half-time'

MANAGER DAVID Pleat disagreed with a Fleet Street view suggested that Luton Town had achieved a moral victory at Upton Park.

He said: "I don't see it as that. It's half-time now, and the second half is at Luton!"

Hammers boss Billy Bonds expressed a mixture of disappointment at his side's performance, adding an acknowledgment of the very good job the Town had done.

"We can play a lot better than that," he said, when he was asked if he expected the West Ham task to be more difficult at Kenilworth Road.

He added: "Luton made it very difficult for us. We didn't get the early goal we wanted, and after that we got a bit edgy.

"Luton's five in midfield blocked us off and the longer it went on the more I thought they might do us on the break.

"Ten minutes from the end I thought I would settle for the draw."

The Town boss agreed that David Greene had been impressive in only his third senior game, and that David Preece had been the man of the match.

But when people recalled that Newcastle had been beaten in a replay, and that the Town had not lost at home this year, he added: "We would be crazy to start believing that we have done most of the hard work now. And we won't be over-confident in the replay."

He thought that the Town had enough of the play at Upton Park for the away side, heads well, and strong and comfortable in defence.

Juergen Sommer's early error when Trevor Morley had been crucial, and apart from that the goalkeeper had not been put under great pressure.

Penalty saves proud record

LUTON TOWN.....1
MIDDLESBRO.....1

THE PROUD 1994 unbeaten home record was given a severe testing in the final warning before the cup-tie.

It survived thanks to a penalty six minutes from time, after six uneven displays by the Hatters.

They made a bright start, but Kerry Dixon missed three good chances, and Middlesbrough were worthy opposition.

John Hendrie raced down the left wing to force Peter Beadle to put the ball over, and Hendrie broke into the second half.

Andy Pearson's free kick was by Cerit Hughes to enable John Dreyer to convert his second penalty of the season for the Hatters' small group.

In defence David Greene made his second huge appearance as deputy for Jason Drysdale, and Julian James returned to left back, where he battled courageously after suffering a gashed ear which required stitches, just to enable the game went on.

Manager David Pleat agreed it was a case of two points dropped, but was pleased with the way his team responded when they had to fight back.

Middlesbrough's Lennie Lawrence had no complaints about the result, and conceded the Town's attacking play.

"They created more chances against us than any other team has done for ages," said the Aytoonsey Park manager.

Luckless Kerry Dixon was at the end of many of them, but had one of those games when nothing would go right for him.

He had his chances, and he had his chances, but he partnered and was still doing it when others might have called it a day and going into hibernation.

The match details

LUTON TOWN: Sommer; Linton (Williams, 37 mins), Dreyer; Greene, Jones; Telfer, Harper, Preece, Burke (Beadle, 71 mins), Hughes; Dixon. Goalkeeper sub: Patterson.

MIDDLESBROUGH: Pears; Fleming, Vickers, Whyte; Cooper, Pearson, Pallister, Kernaghan, Wilkinson; Sabia and Mark Snodgrass. Goalkeeper sub: Mowbray.

THE GOALS: 6-1 at mins.

Penalty: Cerit Hughes was felled by John Dreyer.

Bookings: John Dreyer penalty after Andy Peake handled a cross by Cerit Hughes.

OTHER ATTEMPTS: Town right saved and wide; Middlesbrough four saved and nine wide.

REFEREE: Mike Pierce, Portsmouth. Played well, but marred by the fact that both teams wanted to play football.

ATTENDANCE: 6,746.

ENTERTAINMENT: Patchy with an undertrength Town side looking very good in the first 20 minutes, then fading away before a late revival. The determination not to be beaten worth the occasion.

A bit naughty

● OUR quiz in the match programme seems to have been more of a tester than intended, in response to readers' requests these are the answers.

Luton Town chased Middlesbrough for the championship in the last three years runnerup champions of the old Second Division, and the Town were also relegated, as runner-up. The reference to Charlton was to the former Luton Town manager that season was Jack Charlton.

The Tottenham player who went on to manage Middlesbrough was Bryan Robson.

Middlesbrough's Wembley wizard who played for Luton Town was Gordon Jones, who played for Luton at Aytoonsey Park on loan three years ago from Manchester City.

THE WEEKEND'S FULL LOCAL SOCCER RESULTS

S. Midlands League

O'BRIEN TROPHY: Shillington 1 Biggleswade 2; Ashcroft 0 Langford 2.

PREMIER DIV: Arlesey 2 Wrayton 0; Hatfield 3 Hitchin 0; Stotfold 0 Letchworth Garden City Town 1.

SENIOR DIV: Ampthill Tn 2 AFC Lions 3; CUP: Ampthill Tn 2 Lions 3; Cockernhoe 2 Kensworth Ex 1; Cutler 2 Totternhoe 3; Sheffford 2 Stotfold Utd 2; New Bradwell 0 Shefford 3; Wrayton 1 Toddington 1.

DIV ONE: Enderby 1 Dukes 3; Marcopolo 0 Stot 1; Sandy 1 PB Cross 4; CUP: Cranfield 1 Houghton Tn 5; Caddington 2 E Bros 3; Waden 0 Dc Hartford 1; Mk Cowys 0 Sons 5.

RESERVE SECTION

CHALLENGE TROPHY: Harlington 1 Ampthill Utd 1A; Bedford Tn 2 Tring Tn 1; Bedford Utd 1 Kempston Rockingham 2; Cranfield 1 Ampthill Town 5; KPC 1 F. Bar Tn 2; Toddington 1 Pinnacle 0; Totternhoe 0 Ev Hag Arb 5; DIV 1B: Biggleswade 1 Caddington 1; Harpenden 0 Ashwell 1; Leverstock 2 Bracknl 1; Oxford City 1 Leighton 0; Stanley 1 Letchworth 1; Stony 1 Arlesey 2; Wolvers 1 Hatfield 0; DIV D: Dc Hartford 1 Cockernhoe 0; Nomad Sports 0 Flamstead 2; Ampthill 1 Houghton 7; Wrasslow 0, P. Bar Cntr 1; Wolvers 1 Stot 2.

Luton District League

PREMIER DIV: Dregnall 1 Linton OB Rec 1; O Dunstablians 2 Chalkhill Blue 3; Singh Sabha 1 Pilnick Tn 1.

Lowery Pk 2 Kent Ath 2; AC Cubins 1 Stadium 5; Stockwood Ath 1 Dregnall 2.

DIV ONE: Cowley Utd 3 Marlowe 4; Lewsey Rec 0 Thornber 2; Flitwick Rec 1 Leo 5); Southam Rec 1 Dec 1; Luton OB A 1 Kent Rec 2; Thurle 0 Monarch Aethlon 1; Leighton Linslade Reserves 1.

DIV TWO: E Hoy Res 3 Thurle Res 0; Flitwick A 2 Wardown 4; Harlowes Christians 2 Hockwell Kng 1; Dunstable A Mockyne Res 4; Thornber 6; Sportsman Dunstable 1; Crempsonb 6; Hadrington 1 Cdn Res 1.

The NHC Sunday League

PREMIER DIV: Colney 1 Coral 1; Tetsche G. Man 4 Enterprise 1; Dog 5 Lantsey B. Sports 1; Z. Hoyt 2 Crawley 1; Hemnel G 15; St. Joseph's 1 Mac 1.

DIV ONE: Swanlake Sports 3 Sunrise Wed 1; Sp Sugar Loaf 0 Lilley 1; Lowey 2 Crawley 0; St. Joseph's A Crawley 1.

DIV TWO: Simplex Hrts Res 3 Brewery 0; Lea Sp 1 FC Hedgerow 2; Sunrise Wed 2 Hedgerow 0; Wed 1 Sunrise 1; Chalfont 1 Houghton 5.

DIV THREE: Venn HT 1 Bowl 4; Silver 2 GB 2; Hampton 14 Coddington Rec 8; Sac Enterprises 2; Great Rec 1 First & Last 2; Dog & Duck 0 Black Horse 0; Chalfont Old Boys 2.

DIV FOUR: Brilmatch 2 Thames Utd 3; Vine 1 Sugar Loaf Res 1; Lowey 2 Tennant Lego 0; Oakley 1 NT Sports 1; Lea Sp 1 Stanley SMC Res 1; Lowey Res 0.

DIV FIVE: Bell Hotel 0 Hampton Chequers 1; Boss Arms Res 1 B. Mall 0; PC Houghton Chequers 1; Boss C; Binnie 2 AFC Sunpoly 0; Lowey Res 1 Wolfe Star 2; Swallowfield Grosvenor 0; Lea Sports 1 Chalfont 1.

DIV SIX: Swan 4 Woodstock 6; Wellington Rgrs 1 Sunrise 2; Wed 1 Hampton 0; Houghton Regis 4 Hampton Tn 2; Sunrise 2 Boss Bird 2; OMH Res 5.

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S. Beds Sunday League

INVITATION CUP: Leverstock Aztec 1 Nordic A; Chawick 2 Sportsman 1; Kings Arms 1 Bowlers 2; Bowlers 2 Leverstock 1; Bowlers 2 Kings Arms 1.

PREMIER DIV: Bowlers 2 Stotfold 1; Bowlers 2 Chawick 1; Hemnel G 15; St. Joseph's 1 Mac 1.

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Luton Sunday League

DIV ONE: AFC Oakley 8 Bum Ord 4; Leo Sports A 2 Medo 1; Luton Dukes A 1 Fort 4; Lea 2.

INVITATIONAL CUP: Bowlers 2 Tideswell 1.

DIV TWO: GMI 1 Round Oak 2; Bideofd 2 Dukes B 3.

DIV THREE: Dukes C 2 Bowlers 2 Tideswell 1.

DIV FOUR: GMI 1 Round Oak 2; Bideofd 2 Dukes B 3.

Chiltern Youth League

UNDER 18 DIV ONE: Fenny 2 St. Joseph's 1; Hitchin 0 Bletso Town 4; AFC Houghton 1 Linsbury 1; UNDER 18 DIV TWO: Bletso Town 0 Hitchin 2; Houghton 22 Hanscomb 0; Tring Tn 0 Colle Brack 12.

UNDER 16: Sandon PS 0 Dunstable Tn 1; Vicker HHS 1 Leighton Buzz 2; St. Mary's 1 B. Amphill 0.

UNDER 14 DIV ONE: Fenny 2 St. Joseph's 1; Bletso Town 4 Hitchin 0; AFC Houghton 1 Linsbury 1; UNDER 14 DIV TWO: Bletso Town 0 Hitchin 2; Houghton 22 Hanscomb 0; Tring Tn 0 Colle Brack 12.

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