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# Sports News

## TOWN MATCH VERDICT

Luton Town.....1
Southend Utd.....1
(Half time 0-0)

★ ★

Brian Swain reports. Action pictures by John Sherwood

# Disputed goal earns justice

●FLASHPOINT: David Preece is among the first peace-makers as Paul Telfer comes under attack from Mick Bodley.

ALTHOUGH the goal that saved a point was disputed by Southend, Luton Town were well worth the valuable point they prised out of the seasiders on Saturday.

Nineteen-year-old **John Hartson**, deputising for hamstring victim **Kerry Dixon**, headed his sixth goal of the season, in off a post, to complete a spirited recovery after Southend had looked capable of nicking their first win at Kenilworth Road since 1935.

The Town's nerves were showing, with a frantic desire to get into the penalty area all but wiping out the patient and measured football that is the **David Pleat** hallmark.

Players knew they were in a scrap as the relegation dogfight hotted up, and the game was as much about battle and bottle as skill.

It did not make for great entertainment, but at the end we were grateful for a point on a day when Lady Luck threatened to make it another blank.

A nightmare suffered by experienced referee Terry Holbrook did not help, and the Town were glad that linesman Gerry Lee was on the ball to spot that Hartson's 80th-minute header had crossed the line.

Poor Mr Holbrook was caught out time and again by his own errors, and could have used some help from the linesman in the first half, when the Town had strong claims for a penalty.

The main stand saw clearly that Gary Poole handled to keep out a cross by **David Preece.** Mr Holbrook was unsighted, and the linesman chose to see nothing.

The attack continued, and ended with Hartson cracking a drive against the bar.

Before that the woodwork had come to the Town's aid as Southend, with no pressure on them, looked the sharper attacking side for most of the first half.

In Ricky Otto they had the quickest player on the pitch, and even the excellent **David Greene** found him a handful.

In a jittery first half performance the Town were forced back from the start, with Otto whipping a dipping 25-yarder just over the bar.

Goalkeeper **Juergen Sommer** saved with his legs when Phil Gridelet's header from a far post corner might have brought the opening goal and the keeper scooped a shot by Otto off the line after choosing not to compete for the free kick played into the box by Poole.

The Town slowly got into the game, and Greene was unlucky with a shot which was deflected wide after going up for a corner.

### LOOKED SUSPECT

But the Town defence looked suspect to Southend's quick attacks on the break, and had a lucky break when Joe Hunt delivered a powerful header which hit a post.

The Town midfield was not controlling that department, and to illustrate the nerves and tension even **Paul Telfer**, normally so composed and phlegmatic, got involved in a fracas that could have led to a double sending off.

He had competed with Mick Bodley for a through ball, and was grabbed by the centre- back after the ball went clear to the goalkeeper.

In a second or two the two players were squaring up. Bodley certainly lashed out with a fist, and as Telfer reacted a group of players from both sides got involved, mostly trying to keep the peace.

When it died down Mr Holbrook settled for a pair of yellow cards. Bodley should have had a red, and on another day, with another ref, Telfer might have suffered the same fate.

Fortunately for Mr Holbrook both sides got on with the game after that without any malice, with little of the credit due to him.

Southend should have been ahead at the interval, but Andy Ansah hit a screaming cross-shot against the top of the bar and Otto was denied by a very good save from Sommer after breaking through on his own.

And the Town were lucky just before the break when Ansah's lay- off from a deep cross dropped to Sussex, two or three yards from an open goal, with Sommer out of position. He shot wide for as bad a miss as we have seen all season.

The Town looked more positive in the second half, which started with **John Dreyer** having a header cleared off the line from one of the Town's 14 corners.

Hartson had a header well saved and Southend escaped when Chris Powell's back pass was collected by Sansome. With the Town bench joining the calls for an indirect free kick, Mr Holbrook ruled that Powell had used his knee to steer the ball back to his keeper, not his foot.

### TYPICAL

And it was typical of the way things have gone this season when the Town's efforts at one end came to nothing, and they were caught stretched at the other.

With the defence too far forward Sussex played a pass beyond them and Otto raced clear and expertly netted his 14th goal of the season.

He was through in a similar position moments after that 58th- minute strike, but this time shot wide.

Hartson had looked the Town's most promising attacker, with **Scott Oakes** decidedly rusty in his first game back after a three-match injury lay- off.

But he nearly produced a surprise equaliser when a header from a cross by Hartson hit the bar.

The Town committed themselves to all-out attack, with **Mitchell Thomas** and **Tony Thorpe** going on as subs for Oakes and **Des Linton**, who had played despite not being 100 per cent fit.

And Thomas, marauding down the wing, played a major role in the well deserved equaliser. He sent **Ceri Hughes** clear down the left, and from his cross Hartson's header was ell wide of Sansome's dive.

The ball hit a post, spinning wildly, and Hartson said it went about a foot over the line before Sansome scooped it away.

The goalkeeper was just as sure it was not a go al, but Mr Lee said it was and for once Mr Holbrook was a popular man when he accepted that judgement.

The pit was that the equaliser did not come before the 80th minute, because it led to the Town being solidly on top for the first time in the game.

The point was welcome, and could turn out to be the one that keeps the Town in the First Division, but it was nearly a famous victory because with eight minutes to go Hartson fired in another good shot from a cross by Thorpe, with Sansome making the save.

The draw was fair reward for both sides. But some of us are still worrying: when you are grateful for a draw against Southend at home your team is not doing all that well, is it?

## The full match details

**LUTON TOWN: Sommer; Linton (Thomas 7 mins), Greene, Dreyer, James; Telfer, Harper, Preece, Hughes; Oakes (Thorpe 75 mins), Hartson. Goalkeeper sub Petterson.**

**SOUTHEND: Sansome; Poole, Edwards, Bodley, Powell; Ansah, Gridelet, Tilson, Hunt, Sussex, Otto.**

**GOALS: 0-1 58 mins: Ricky Otto, crisp drive after his pace took him clear in pursuit of a through ball by Andy Sussex;**

**1-1, 8-0 mins: John Hartson, header in off a post, from a cross by Ceri Hughes, with Southend claiming in vain that the goalkeeper had scooped it away before it crossed the line.**

**OTHER ATTEMPTS: Town six saved, six wide and Hartson and Scott Oakes both hit the woodwork; Southend five saved, six wide and two h it the woodwork. Corners: 14-5 in the Town.**

**REFEREE: Terry Holbrook, Staffordshire: had a nightmare, with both sides unhappy about vital decision. If Southend thought they were robbed when the equaliser was given, so were the Town when they should have had a first-half penalty and a chance to take the lead.**

**ATTENDANCE: 7,504, slightly more than for Southend's last league visit.**

**ENTERTAINMENT: Very poor in the first half, when Southend looked the better side, but improved after the interval when the Town got going, even if they were a little too frantic in their determination to score.**

## LUTON TN 1 MILLWALL 1

# The long famine ended at last

THE three points the Town wanted for safety should have been gathered against the promotion-chasing Londoners.

But while the result did not reflect the Town's superiority, the first goal in 10hrs 19mins of football removed a mental barrier that was threatening to assume outrageous proportions.

It came from man of the match David Preece, to put the Town ahead in the 66th minute.

Millwall manager Mick McCarthy denied it, but until then his side looked as though it had come to Kenilworth Road trying not to be beaten.

They had been very defensive in the first half, with the Town having plenty of possession without threatening to embarrass Kasey Keller.

Ironically, the Millwall, keeper is competing with Juergen Sommer for a place in the USA World Cup squad. At the New Den a month ago Sommer dropped a clanger which cost the Town a goal. This time Keller was at fault, as he and Neil Emblen both went for the ball, but left it to each other.

Tony Thorpe was in pursuit of a quick throw- in by Paul Telfer. By the time Keller decided it was his duty to clear Thorpe was on him, and as the ball ran loose from Thorpe's tackle Preece carefully steered in his sixth goal of the season.

That roused Millwall, and after Mitchell Thomas failed to head clear from a long punt by Keller Ken Cunningham pulled back a perfect low pass for John Kerr to equalise in the 72nd minute.

The Town returned to the attack, but a combination of bad finishing and bad luck foiled them.

They hit the woodwork twice, with Julian James and Kerry Dixon the unlucky men, and Keller made some very good saves, with Preece and Ceri Hughes denied when a Town winner looked inevitable.

### Match details

**LUTON TOWN: Sommer; James, Greene, Dreyer, Thomas; Telfer, Harper, Preece, Hughes; Thorpe (Hartson 80 mins), Dixon. Unused subs: Houghton and Petterson.**

**MILLWALL: Keller; Cunningham, Emblen, Stevens, Thatcher (Berry 74 mins); Roberts, Hurlock, Kerr, Rae; Moralee, Allen. Unused subs Barber and goalkeeper Carter.**

**GOALS: 1-0, 66 mins: David Preece, low shot after Tony Thorpe hustled Kasey Keller into a poor clearance attempt; 1-1, 72 mins: John Kerr, low shot from a pulled-back cross by Ken Cunningham.**

**OTHER ATTEMPTS: Town six saved, eight wide and two hit the woodwork; Millwall three saved and six wide. Corners: 8-4 to the Town.**

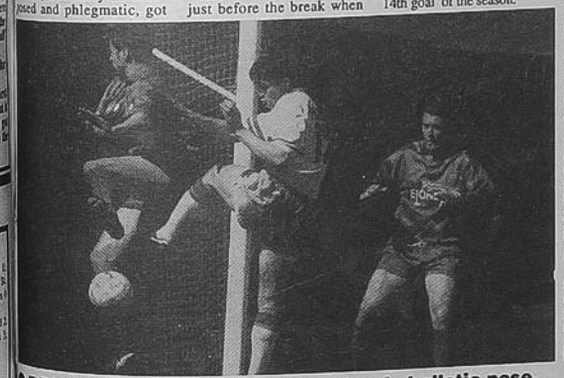
**BOOKED: Paul Telfer, Ceri Hughes, Andy Roberts and Terry Hurlock.**

**REFEREE: Martin Bodenham: Nothing like as good as he has been on previous visits.**

**ATTENDANCE: 8,257, fourth consecutive attendance over the break-even figure.**

**ENTERTAINMENT: Pretty good, with the Town turning on some good attacking soccer and Millwall lucky to go home with a point.**

● TAKE COVER: Mike Bodley takes evasive action from John Hartson .



● BEST FEET FORWARD: Ceri Hughes in balletic pose.

# All a little bit too frantic

WHILE he had wanted three points from the game, Town manager David Pleat was happier than Southend's Peter Taylor on Saturday night.

Mr Taylor was sure that Luton had gained a point from a goal that never was, and so was goalkeepr Paul Sansome.

John Hartson was equally certain that the ball was well over the line before Sansome got to it.

Mr Pleat was more relaxed in the Press room than his players had been on the pitch.

He joined the admiration for the outstanding pace of Ricky Otto which was Southend's major attacking threat.

"I suppose there is a little bit of tension in our team because of the league table position," he said.

"But I was pleased that we were making chances throughout the game.

### NERVOUS IN DEFENCE

"The problem is that we are getting more frantic than we like to be.

"Bodies go piling into the penalty box, and then there is no space to work in.

"Southend were dangerous on the break, but there chances arose because of our nervousness in defence.

"We could have had more goals, and our lads are sure we should have had a penalty for handball in the first half.

"Some of our players are jiggered. We were trying to play too fast, and it was too tense and too physical. But the effort was there, and it is hard to be com posed when you are playing with so much determination. We have got to try to play more patiently, but it's difficult in our situation, even though we are all right and have no need to panic."

## THE WEEKEND'S FULL LOCAL SOCCER RESULTS

### S. MIDLANDS LEAGUE

**PREMIER DIV:** Biggleswade Tn 1 Welwyn GC 0; Buckingham Ath 2 Langford 4; Harpenden Tn 1 Letchworth GC 0; Hatfield Town 1 Luton OB 2; Milton Keynes 0 Bedford Tn 3; Shillington 2 Potters Bar Tn 0; Wingate 0 Arlesey Town 4. **Monday:** Bedford Tn 1 Harpenden 1; Biggleswade 2 Shillington 0; Brache 1 Hoddesdon Tn 1; Langford 1 Luton OB 1.

**SENIOR DIV:** Ampthill 1 Shenley 1; Leverstock 1 61 FC Luton 0; London Colney 0 Toddington Rov 1; N. Bradwell 1 Bedford Utd 3; Risborough 1 Totternhoe 1; Tring Ath 6 Pitstone 1; Winslow 4 Shefford 0. **Monday:** Ampthill 0 Tring Ath 2; Risborough 2 N Bradwell 1; Toddington Rov 3 Shenley 1; Totternhoe 4 Leverstock Green 3; 61FC Luton 1 London Colney 2.

**DIV ONE:** Ashcroft 4 Potters Bar Crusaders 3; De Havilland 1 Delco 4; Houghton Tn 1 E. Bray 2; MK County 3 Mercedes 3; Sandy 0 Cranfield 7; Scot 0 Walden 6; Stony 4 Flamstead 1. **Monday:** Cranfield 5 MK Co 0; E. Bray 1 De Havilland 5; Emberton 1 Flamstead 3; Mercedes 0 Delco 3; Walden 3 Ashcroft 0. **CUP FINAL:** Houghton Tn 3 Stony Stratford 5.

### RESERVE SECTION

**DIV 1A:** Barton Rov 0 Toddington Rov 3; Bedford Utd 3 Buckingham Ath 1; Cranfield 1 L. Colney 4; Pitstone 0 Shillington 9; Potters Bar Town 5 Milton Keynes 0; 61FC Luton 3 Tring Ath 1; Totternhoe 0 Bedford Town 1. **Monday:** Tring Ath 1 Bedford Utd 3.

**DIV 1B:** Arlesey 1 Brache Sparta 1; Caddington 2 Harpenden Tn 2; Leighton Tn 3 Welwyn GC 2; Leverstock 2 Oxford City 0; Shefford Tn 3 Ashcroft 2. **DIV 2:** Ampthill 0 De Havilland 2; Mercedes Benz 3 Scot 0.

### LUTON DISTRICT LEAGUE

**PREMIER DIV:** Singh Sabha 4 Dagnall 2.

**DIV ONE:** Luton Eagles 2 Thrasher 2.

**DIV TWO:** Harlington 13 61FC 2; Hockwell Ring 0 Old Dunstablians Res 8; Whitbread 0 Harveys 11; Flitwick A 0 Sportsman Dunstable 6. **Midweek:** E. Bray Res 0Thresher Res 7; The Compasses 9 61FC Luton 0; Markyate Res 2 Thistle Res 1; The Compasses 0 Thresher Res 3.

### NH COUNTIES SUNDAY LEAGUE

**PREMIER DIV:** St. Joseph's 1 The Enterprise 2; Sacred Heart 4 FC Coral 1.

**DIV ONE:** Horseshoe Saints 0 S. Heart Res 2; Crawley Sports Res 1 Stopsley WMC 1.

**DIV TWO:** TRW 1 Houghton Town 4.

**DIV THREE:** GIS 3 Strawplaiters 5; Borough Arms 1 FC Coral Res 2; Dog & Duck 5 First & Last Parkside 3; Silsoe 4 Red Star 0; Black Swan 4 Caddington 3.

**DIV FOUR:** Stopsley WMC Res 1 Vine OB 0; AFC Oakley 0 Laporte 4.

**DIV FIVE:** Lewsey Social 2 Lea Sports Res 3; Chalton Strollers Res 3 Streatley Chequers 3; AFC Stopsley 3 Barbarians 5. **Midweek:** Lea Sports 0 Lewsey 3.

**DIV SIX:** Toddington 4 Swan Rgrs 1.

**DIV SEVEN:** Pulsebeat 1 Limbury Utd 5; Markyate Res 0 Red Star Res 1; Luton Rover 2 Fidus French Horn 1.

### CHEF & BREWER LEAGUE

**STEVE SMITH TROPHY FINAL:** One Nation 2 Barn Owl 1.

**INVITATION CUP FINAL:** High Town 1 Lea Sports 0

### S.BEDS SUNDAY LEAGUE

**PREMIER DIV:** Nurdin & Peacock 1 Eaton Bray 0; Coach & Horses 7 Sundon Park 0.

**DIV ONE:** Painters 2 Beds Yeoman 2.

**DIV TWO:** Suspension Systems 6 Vauxhall Griffin 3; Sportsman 1 Emerald 2.

### CHILTERN YOUTH LEAGUE

**UNDER-18 CUP FINAL:** Limbury 2 Park Tn 1.

**UNDER-17 DIV ONE:** Foxes 6 Wootton 3.

**DIV TWO:** Manor Youth 0 W. Hill 1; Griffin Brache 3 Houghton Town 0. **Midweek:** Manor Youth 2 Barton Stars 3.

**UNDER-16:** Leighton Cor 7 St. Mary's 0; Dunstable Town 2 W. Hill 4.

**UNDER-15 DIV ONE:** Astra 2 Aylesbury 4; Scot 4 Leighton Foxes 2.

**DIV TWO:** Ampthill 7 Tring 1; Beaudesert 1 Icknield 3.

**UNDER-14 DIV ONE:** Fairlands 6 Ampthill 0; Aylesbury Utd 5 Lewsey 2; Dunstable Town 2 Leighton Foxes 4; Flamstead 6 Celtic 4. **Midweek:** Leighton Corinthians 0 St. Joseph's 5; Ampthill 6 Leighton Foxes 2; Dunstable Town 0 Fairlands 5; Leighton Cor 3 Aylesbury 1.

**DIV TWO:** P. Green 1 Markyate 2; Ramridge 4 W. Hill 2. **Midweek:** Markyate 3 W. Hill 7; S. Heart B 0 Leighton Houghton 1 Pin Green 1; Ramridge B 1 Sundon Pk 5.

**DIV THREE:** WL Saints 3 Flitwick 4.

**UNDER-13 DIV ONE:** Ramridge A 1 Sacred Heart A 0; Warden Hill 1 Leighton Cor 3; Foxes 2 Celtic 3; Stony Stratford 12 Sundon Pk 2; Lewsey 3 St. Joseph's 1. **Midweek:** Ramridge 1 Sacred Heart A 0; Warden Hill 1 Leighton Cor 3; Foxes 2 Celtic 3; Stony Stratford 13 Sundon Park 2; Lewsey 3 St. Joseph's 3. **Midweek:** Stony Stratford 1 Foxes 0; Leighton Cor 1 Dunstable Town 1; S. Heart A 1 Celtic 2.

**DIV TWO:** Sacred Heart B 2 St. Mary's 2; Ramridge B 1 Selby 1; The Arrows 3 Icknield 4. **Midweek:** Markyate B 5 Mary's 0; Ramridge Rgrs B 4 Pioneer 1.

St. Joseph's 5 AFC Houghton 0; Dragons 3 Leighton Corinthians 2; Limbury B 5 Ramridge 0; Lewsey 4 Foxes 1. **Midweek:** St. Joseph's 5 Limbury B 2; Dunstable Town 1 Barnfield A 0.

**DIV TWO:** Barnfield B 5 Barton Stars 0; Lewsey 4 Leighton Foxes 3. **Midweek:** Sundon Pk 0 Redbourn 3; Flamstead 4 Barnfield B 8; Markyate 4 W. Luton Saints 1; Westoning A 2 Gliders 2; Westoning 1 Jets 0; Wind Lane Saints 7 Hillborough Hatters 0.

**UNDER-11 DIV ONE:** Lewsey 2 Leighton Cor B 5. **Midweek:** Dunstable Tn 1 Lewsey 4; AFC Houghton 11. **Midweek:** Dunstable Tn 1 Lewsey 4.

**UNDER-TEN DIV ONE:** Leighton Cor 3 Ramridge 4. **Midweek:** St. Mary's 0 Leighton Cor 7.

THE North Home Counties Sunday League will meet the Leighton Sunday League at Kenilworth Road tomorrow (7.30) in the final of the Beds Centenary Trophy.

The manager will be Graham Langan and the NHC team will be chosen from: Dean Blackett, Chris Campbell, Michael Connelly, Paul Covington, Nigel Crampsie, Tommy Doyle, Stuart Fitzsimmons, Gordon Guile, Neil Kane, Darron Lelliot, Gary Marshall, Paul Marshall, Andy McKay, Michael Sweeney, Chris Tubbs, Paul Neufville, Steve Hunt and Michael Thomas.