Otto's stunning strike leaves then drooling

WHILE hundreds of fans rushed in at the beckon of the opening goal, John Hanson settled for his draw bonus. "He doesn't game like."

"I was very happy to score, especially in my first game here," he said. "But we are all disappointed with the result. We should have won.

"At half-time we were well on top and the boss told us to get back out there and give a better performance.

"Once we gave away silly goals, although Peter Otto's strike was a real beauty."

Albert Rut at least we let it was pleased with everybody in the first half. We moved well and we stopped play well and hitting it stopped passing the ball. We tried hitting it longer.

"The Town had to change their midfield for the game, because converted full-back Dan Linton was ruled out by a hamstring injury.

Scott Dokes returned, and the manager said that it was something of a gamble and he was very defensive player in the midfield.

"It wasn't so noticeable when we were going forward, but we looked a lot better when Southend came into the game," he said. "They were being outplayed but the game went on we lost a little bit of our shape.

"But it was an excellent team performance in the first half. We dominated Southend had nothing to lose and came for us. Ricky Otto became more effective and they picked up a little bit.

"We are good when we are passing the ball around, but we know the first goal should have been disallowed. We should have defended the corner better.

"It's the second goal we let in which was a comedy this season, and we should learn from mistakes. But for the second time we gave the credit to Otto, because it was a wonderful shot."

The Southend star Scott Rogers, who the sponsors may claim to be the award-winning ring player, picked up the award for a very fine display.

Like Linton, Southend have a history of ruling stars, like Sam Collymore, at make-or-break meet, but manager Peter Taylor said he was not aware of Otto's value to his team.

"He's a very special talent," he said. "That strike was good enough to win any game, let alone such a derby.

"At half-time we had a very talk more freely, and we started to dominate the game, and we should have had two or three goals, and we should have had two or three goals.

"The second half they did what we wanted to do, and I think that was as well as I have ever seen in their game.

"And without every one will grin, I feel very good, I am sure that the balance of the overall game, I was very happy about it. The second goal," he said, "It could and should have been prevented."

GOAL . . . The strike that put the Town 2-1 ahead: John Hartson, grounded on the right, had burst into the Southend penalty area and Chris Powell, Southend's No. 2, is also on the deck after his attempted tackle sent the ball to Ceri Hughes, on the left. Dwight Marshall is the Luton man getting out of the way as the low shot slips towards the net.

Hartson gamble pays early dividends

NO GOAL . . . Scott Oakes tumbles after a vain attempt to get a first-half header on target, with John Hartson hoping for a break. The ball ran to Ceri Hughes, who shot over the bar from the edge of the penalty area.

LUTON Town fans were laughing all the way to the bookies at half-time on Saturday, cleaning out the Ladbrokes till when they offered 7-1 on 19-year-old John Hartson scoring the first goal of the game against Southend.

By the end they were crying into their beer as the Town threw away a glorious chance of the first victory of the season.

They should have been well ahead at half-time. The first chance came a-in this minute when Preece tore from clear. He hit a stinging drive which Sansome did well to shove round the.

Southend suffered a blow when Dominic Iorfa, one of their two first-tie lunged off with a knee injuried injury the 34th minute.

Juergen Sommer had to stir himself save Gary Poole's 20-yarder, but he long time both sides failed to hit him.

That all changed in the last five-minutes of the half when the Town sudden in the high spots.

It began with Teffer driving a run pass – it looked as though it might be been an unrushed shot at goal – and from fell to Hartson on the edge of a penalty area.

It an instant he had got it under control shimmied away from Chris Powell attempted tackle, and cracked a right-cross-shot into the far corner.

It was a brilliant piece of finishing at the Southend goal, took a pounding the dying day of the season.

They survived because Hughes gr over the top from a good position after cree John Brandwood missed an elbo

LUTON TOWN 2
SOUTHEND UTD 2
(Half-time 1-0)

LET OFF . . . Ricky Otto leaps high for a header which flew over the bar during Southend's second half comeback. But he had the last word with a brilliant strike for their equaliser.

at the penalty area by Edwards. He used his hands to block a shot by Hartson.

The half-time hamtrain and chocolate were at unwelcome interruption to a team that had just been getting into its stride.

Ireland Southend picked themselves up and studied the second half as sorely as the Town had done the first.

Martin Johnson was unlucky with a volley from a deep corner by Dokes. The drew was deflected for a corner.

And the referee came under fire in the build-up to the 51st minute equaliser.

Trevor Peake was shadowing the ball going out of play, with sub Joe Martin stapping at his heels.

Hone fans yelled for a free kick to the pass – it looked as though it might ha been an unrushed shot at goal – and from the sed-district button was pressed.

Peake's flag kick dropped to the edge of the six-yard area, with Sommer choosing to go for it.

He missed the ball completely, with Hanson accidentally flicking it on, and Keith Dublin was unmarked, at close range, to head a gift for a team that had not scored in three matches since the turning day of the season.

The pattern changed dramatically, with Southend full of confidence. Mark Hone should have scored, but shot wide after he had rounded Ceri Hughes off Sommer's chest following a blistering free kick by Poole, and Ricky Otto headed over from a corner.

The former Orient man, a £100,000 bargain, turned in a man of the match display after that, showing speed and trick-ery, and Otto was the man in the commanding positions.

But Hartson made another telling contribution which should have settled the Town's nerves, with the pressure on. His strength on the ball took him through two defenders, and he put the Hughes area.

Luckless Powell was fall-guy for Hanson again, rushing in a last ditch which knocked the ball square to Hughes.

His shot went through a crowd of legs into the corner of the net, with Sansome making a hash of the attempted save.

Four minutes later manager Pleat made a change which had the opposite effect to the one intended.

Marshall had been tiring after putting in a lot of hard work, and was taken off to allow Mikhelli Thomas to make his first appearance of the season.

He got on just in time to see a poor Gustavo Inzaghi by Johnson fall to Otto, 20 yards from goal.

The Southend man waited for the ball to bounce and then hit a volley of great power and accuracy for a goal that had been some Luton fans on their feet.

For the last 12 minutes the Town rear-guished to allow Kerry Dixon to return, with Julian James going off, and Dixon was out of luck with a header from a corner which was cleared off the line by Keith Jones.

But a better chance had been wasted at the other end, by Otto of all men. Martin Johnson had left the Southend goalkeeper no half-stop the shot and Johnson completed the clearance.

The draw might have been a fair result, but the third in a row was well below expectations. Sides like Southend need to be seen off if the Town are to prosper at Fortress Kenilworth

If not Ladbrokes will soon get their money back after the caning they took on Saturday.

REPORTS BY BRIAN SWAIN
PICTURES BY GARETH OWEN

JOHN HARTSON: His goal stung the bookies

TIT FOR TAT . . . Luton Town goalscorer John Hartson shows Southend's Keith Dublin he can be a bit handy as well.

COCA-COLA CUP

Town lose their cup sparkle

FULHAM 1 LUTON TOWN 1 (AET)
Fulham won 4-3 on penalties

AFTER winning the competition in 1988 and being runners-up a year later, Luton Town have become one of the markers in the whole to now the Coca-Cola Cup.

A penalty shoot-out defeat at Fulham, after being reduced to ten men up for the course – Luton have not won a League Cup game since David Pleat returned as manager!

In 1990 they managed to beat Mansfield, but then went out at Brentford, on penalties, in Jim Ryan's season as manager.

And every year since then they have been dumped at the first hurdle, always by opposition from a lower divi-son.

Third Division Fulham deserved their success on a night of high drama. Rob Haworth headed them into the lead in the 15th minute, and they played with much more fire and enthusiasm.

On 73 minutes Ceri Hughes was sent off, for retaliation after a foul by Michael Moon, but that led to the equalis-er. The free-kick was given against Moon, and Marvin Johnson headed it off for David Preece to send the ball forward. Dwight Marshall timed his header perfectly to leave even the excellent Jan Stannard helpless.

The Town played well, but had probably lost the tie at Kenilworth Road a week earlier when Stannard's heroics denied them.

At Craven Cottage, Fulham got by on passion and hunger for success, and eventually the lucky break when Stannard pounced right to save the crucial shoot-out kick by Dwight Marshall.

There were no recriminations from the manager. "It's terribly disappointing to lose on penalties," said David Pleat. "But before the match I told the players there would be no recriminations if anyone missed. Baggio did, in the World Cup, and it happened to others in impor-tant games.

"What was so disappointing for me was that we did so well tactically, even with ten men. I could not ask for more in terms of effort, but we had a problem in finding some splendid play into goals. We were praying for a goal."

The Town turned up the heat after an hour, by sending on Scott Oakes in place of David Greene; but had a lot of no-ne-ing. The last minute when Marvin Johnson tripped Moon in the 11st minute when Marvin Johnson tripped Moon and Gary Brazil blazed the penalty well over the bar.

The incident underlined a strange refereeing perfor-mance by Mike Peace from Hampshire. The red card for Hughes was justified.

Some of the five bookings were one, and Terry Hurlock got away with a bone-cruncher on Marvin Johnson, which not even called a foul. Johnson had been booked earlier; and was very relieved not to be given at least a second yellow card for the penalty offence.

Having missed the penalty that would have settled it in extra time, Brazil was one of four Fulham men who did not make the same mistake in the shoot-out.

Coca-Cola tie at a glance

FULHAM: Taylor; Green, Peake, Green (Oakes 63 min), Johnson, Teffer, Linton (Skelton 90 min), Preece, Hughes; Marshall, Thomas, Gallagher and Brazil.

FULHAM: Saunard; Jupp, Moore, Thomas, Herrera; Marshall (Hatter 93 min), Moon, Morgan, Brazil; Cork, Haworth (Harbisch 63 min). Goalkeeper sub Harrison.

THE GOALS: 1-0 15 min. Rob Haworth, from Jupp (Moore); 1-1 73 min: Dwight Marshall header from David Preece's aerial through pass. Penalties: 3-3 after first round, with Town misses by Paul Teffer and Scott Oakes and hits by David Preece, Dwight Marshall and Marvin Johnson. Fulham misses Glen Thomas scored for Fulham and Dwight Marshall's right-footer was saved by Jan Stannard. Gallagher hit the deciding shot.

REFEREE: Mike Peetre, Hampshire; FIFA might love him, fans and players won't.

BOOKED: David Greene, Paul Teffer, Marvin Johnson and Aaron Skelton; and Fulham's Dickie Jupp.

SENT OFF: for the third time in his career in League competition, Ceri Hughes, for lashing out with a foot in retali-ation after he had been fouled by Michael Moon.

ATTENDANCE: 5,134 including 800 from Luton.

ENTERTAINMENT: Thrill a minute is the latter stages, but the occasion was wrecked for Town supporters by the result.

HATTERS VIDEO COMPETITION

Snap up a super video

OUR competition to win copies of the Luton Town video, showing all 138 goals from their games last season, reaches the final whistle on Friday, so there is still time to enter.

The video runs for an hour, and we have two copies to give away in a simple competition which is free to enter.

The video shows every goal scored by the Town, and every one conceded, with the highlights the marvellous FA Cup run and the heroics of Scott Oakes.

Masochists can also suffer again the humiliating memories of losing to Cambridge in the Coca-Cola Cup.

But the season ended on a happy note, with a bailing draw at Stoke City, and Town fans will be more than happy to add this video to their sporting film library.

The price in the club shop is £18.99, but two lucky readers will have copies with the compli-ments of ourselves and Luton Town.

All you have to do is answer three questions which are:

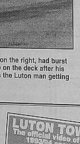
1) Who scored the Town's first goal last season?

2) Who got the last one?

3) And who scored hat-tricks for the Town, and against whom?

List your answers on a postcard, or a sealed-down envelope, and send it to: Sports Desk (Competition), Luton News, Grosvenor House, Alma Street, Luton, LU1 2PL.

The closing date for entries is noon this Friday, and all correct entries will go into the Sports Desk's Wembley hat for two winners to be drawn out. Both will be winners.



Big match facts

TOWN: Sommer; James (Dixon 78 mins), Peake, Greene, Johnson, Oakes, Teffer, Preece, Hughes, Hartson, Dublin (Martin 73 mins). Harbisch. Goalkeeper sub Barber.

SOUTHEND: Sansome; Poole, Edwards, Dublin, Powell, Jones, Hone, Sysco, Otto, Thomson (Hunt 82 mins), Iorfa (Martin 34 mins). Goalkeeper sub Sullivan.

THE GOALS: (1-0 44 mins: John Hartson, sweet turn off his marker and crop low drive after collecting a pass from Ceri Hughes. 1-1 51 mins: Kevin Dublin, neatly header after Hartson got the inadvertent flick-on from a corner by Gary Poole, leaving Juergen Sommer stranded. Hartson's hard shot was missed. 2-1 70 mins: Ceri Hughes, shot under Paul Sansome's body after Hartson cut the Southend defence apart with a surging run to make the opening. 2-2 75 mins: Ricky Otto, stunning angled volley to punish the clearance header by Marvin Johnson.

OTHER ATTEMPTS: Town on saved and four wide. Southend six saved and six wide. Corners: 8-8.

REFEREE: John Brandwood, Lichfield. Had a poor game, with the worst abnormalities of the season. Ignored Southend's hands in clearance, but penalised Johnson for a foul on Kevin Dublin.

BOOKED: Gary Poole of Southend for holding back John Hartson. Johnson James for the second time this season. Ricky Otto, Paul Teffer and David Greene, his third yellow card of the season, for an alleged foul on Ceri Hughes.

ATTENDANCE: 5,918, a drop of 1,600 on the gate when Southend were last here in the league.

ENTERTAINMENT: Awful for the first 40 minutes, when both sides looked Third Division, but exciting after the break, when Southend sub back bird and rather side might have won.