# Marshall's ray of sunshine on a wet day

THANKS FOR THE LIFT: Scott Oakes enjoys that winning moment, first to congratulate Dwight Marshall for the goal that gave the Town their first away win since January.

RISING TO THE OCCASION . . . Kerry Dixon is in the thick of the action, with Paul Telfer in close support, as Port Vale clear their lines, with one defender taking a crafty lift-off ride from another

A SMASH and grab raid at Vale Park gave Luton Town their first win of the season, and their first away victory since January.

It broke Port Vale hearts on a cheerless wet afternoon, because the home side, unbeaten at home for nearly a year, created far more attacking opportunities, and hit the woodwork twice.

But while Vale's buffing and puffing only threatened, the Town's more measured approach drew their sting, rode its luck, and struck with devastating effect 21 minutes from time.

It was a goal of real quality, from the moment recalled Kerry Dixon took out two Vale men in midfield with a perfect pass to David Preece, on the left. He made quick progress almost to the goal-line, and Vale men were still back-pedalling when the near post cross was hit with great precision.

Dwight Marshall got to the right place before they did, and expertly powered his header into the net.

Even the losers admired the skill of it all, although Vale fans were hoping for a legitimate moan about losing a game which, on chances created, should have been won.

With rain sketching down it was never a classic, and the Town, with Aaron Skelton recalled in midfield in place of transfer-listed Welsh international Carl Hughes, spent most of it doing a containing job and looking for the rapid counter-attack.

Dixon, back in the side because John Harrison was injured, had the touch to try and hold the ball when the Town broke out, but too often he and Marsh were short of support in the penalty area.

Mistakes were inevitable on heavy, wet surface, and a mistake by the Sommer gave Tony Naylor a chance on edge of the box.

But David Greene closed him in quickly and the Vale fans groaned as they were to do many more times.

Paul Telfer forced a decent save by Paul Musselwhite, and Scot Oakes whipped in a 25-yarder which went over the bar.

From the corner the ball nodded by James and his hook back into the danger area bounced off a post.

But Vale were looking more lively, and Naylor, with a clear run, missed an easy header from a Vaughan cross.

Vale were awarded a free kick just on the hour, Marshall Thomas chipped down, and was booked for excessive zeal. As his caution was recorded by an attempt coaled with Robin Van der Laan, that too often he and Marsh were short of support in the penalty area.

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PORT VALE 0
LUTON TOWN 1
(Half-time 0-0)

THE WINNER . . . Dwight Marshall, centre and inset, watches his bullet header fly into the net. Scott Oakes is the number 11, and on the extreme right is David Preece, whose cross led to the goal.

OH, NO . . . The expressions of Kerry Dixon, extreme left, and Dwight Marshall, are more eloquent than words as they see a cross delivered into the arms of Port Vale goalkeeper Paul Musselwhite.

*THE PLAYERS AND MANAGERS' VIEWS*

## Referee a waste of time in Pleat's book

MATCH-WINNER Dwight Marshall was quick to acknowledge the parts played by Kerry Dixon and David Preece in his first league goal for Luton Town.

The former Plymouth striker said: "Kerry Dixon did well with the pass to David Preece, and his cross was very good.

And he added that the result was down to teamwork saying: "The boys worked hard all over the pitch."

Port Vale manager John Rudge said the goal was superb, but could not believe that his side had lost after having so much play and creating so many chances.

"It just wasn't our day," he said. "We didn't capitalise on our chances, and Luton produced a real quality cross for the goal.

"That kicked us in the teeth, and we just couldn't find a key to unlock the door at the other end."

The Potteries Press corps thought it had been a poor quality game, with neither side near top form in difficult conditions, on a wide rainswept pitch.

But Luton boss David Pleat smiled as he said that he enjoyed it and was delighted with the first win of the season.

"It was all the sweeter for the fact that it had been achieved by a team that had to be changed around, with John Harrison ruled out by an Achilles tendon injury.

He agreed that Port Vale had put on a lot of pressure towards the end of the game, but suggested: "It was our day to get a result, we had some good things, and some not so good.

"And if Port Vale think they have been robbed, I know that we have played well on other days and not got the right result. It happens."

The only complaint from the Town camp was over the way referee Jeff Winter interpreted the laws of the game.

Their view was that Marshall was very harshly treated for throwing the ball in a team mate for a Town throw-in.

And the yellow card for Town goalkeeper Andy Sommer could have been even more cruel.

It gave Vale a free kick on the six yard line, but on a day when the home side would have found it difficult to put the ball into an empty net, let along one guarded by 11 bodies.

Said Mr. Pleat: "I hope the referee would be brave enough to make the same decisions if he could see a cross cup final.

"And I would like to think he would have done the same if the Port Vale keeper had done it.

"Perhaps we should send a circular around to all managers to say that this man is a good referee, but has a thing about time wasting.

But the important fact is that we showed some first-class finishing when it mattered while Port Vale squandered their chances."

PORT VALE: Musselwhite; Sanderman, Griffiths, Dean, Glover, Tankard, Porter, O'Brien, Naylor, Van der Laan, Kent; Lee, Grant, Foyle, Naylor (Van der Laan, 72 mins).

THE GOAL: Dwight Marshall, powerful near-post header from a cross left in the penalty area.

OTHER ATTEMPTS: Town five-yard, two-wide and one-on-one shots. Port Vale four saved, 2 wide and one hit the woodwork. Corners: Town 6, Port Vale 4.

REFEREE: Jeff Winter; Stockton on Tees. Kept very good control of the Town were angry with his interpretation of the rules which led to the game's three yellow cards.

BOOKED: Juergen Sommer and Dwight Marshall, both accused of time-wasting, and Michael Thomas, for using too little time in restarting a charge down a free kick.

ATTENDANCE: 8,541. Vale Park's lowest of the season so far. Only 549 sodden Luton fans included.

ENTERTAINMENT: Patchy, on a miserable wet afternoon. Luton Town delighted their following with a great strength and fitness effort, and could hardly believe it as they went on to a first win since January. Reading beat them in a promotion bottle last October.

## Saturday's match facts

TOWN: Sommer; James (Thomas HT), Peake, Greene, Johnson, Telfer, Preece (Wandsford 72 mins), Skelton, Oakes, Marshall, Dixon. Goalkeeper sub: Baker.

PORT VALE: Musselwhite; Sanderman, Griffiths, Dean, Glover, Tankard, Porter, O'Brien, Naylor, Van der Laan, Kent; Lee, Grant, Foyle, Naylor (Van der Laan, 72 mins). Goalkeeper sub: Van Heusden.

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## Town climb into 15th place

AS the season approaches the end of its first month, the Town are 15th in the Endsleigh League Division One, the highest they have been since last February.

Middlesbrough stayed top after losing their 100 per cent record in a 1-1 draw at Watford.

The only other teams with unbeaten records are new Portsmouth manager Jim Smith's side, the two bottom clubs, Burnley and West Brom, are still waiting their first win of the season.

West Brom have an extra problem. Their ground is one of those because of refurbishing work, so they have played only three games, all away, while most of the others have played five.

And the Baggies have to also play their next two games away, at Millwall on Saturday and Sunday Middlesbrough next Tuesday.

But with so many teams still to play for the struggling clubs' fans can take heart – when the promotion was a similar stage a year ago the bottom two clubs were Sunderland and Luton Town, who both survived.

And Charlton, who were then top, missed promotion, losing the automatic places to Crystal Palace, then second, and Nottingham Forest, who were third. And Leicester, who went into the Premiership via the play-offs, finished in mid-table a year ago. Birmingham City were five places above them, but had to suffer relegation eight months later.

ENDSLEIGH LEAGUE
FIRST DIVISION

| | HOME | | | | AWAY | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | P | W | D | L | F | A | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
| Middlesbro | 5 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 13 |
| Swindon | 5 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 10 |
| Oldham | 5 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 9 |
| Portsmouth | 5 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 9 |
| Millwall | 5 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 9 |
| Reading | 5 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 9 |
| Watford | 5 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 8 |
| Swindon | 5 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 8 |
| Portsmouth | 5 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 8 |
| Bolton | 5 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 8 |
| Barnsley | 5 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 7 |
| Sunderland | 5 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 7 |
| Port Vale | 5 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 6 |
| Grimsby | 5 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 5 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 6 |
| Charlton | 5 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 6 |
| **Luton Town** | 5 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 6 |
| Bristol City | 5 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 5 |
| Watford | 5 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 5 | 4 |
| Sheff Utd | 4 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| North Co | 5 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| Southend | 5 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Derby Co | 5 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 4 |
| Stoke | 5 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 4 |
| Barnsley | 5 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 5 | 2 |
| West Brom | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 |

## Competition winners

THE sports desk's Wembley beaten was overflowing with entries in our free Luton Town video competition.

The vast majority of readers were spot on in their recollections of the glory games last season.

We asked who scored the first and last goals of the campaign, and just about every entrant knew the answer was Paul Telfer both times, at home to Watford and away to Stoke.

The question of who scored Luton Town hat-tricks also produced scores of correct answers: Kerry Dixon against Stoke in the League and Scott Oakes in the FA Cup against West Ham.

The winners each receive a copy of the Town video, showing every goal scored and conceded last season.

The luck of the draw sends the prizes to Tom Gerrard, of Trowbridge Gardens, Luton, and Spencer Jenkins, of Luton Road, Cockernhoe.

Our congratulations to them, and commiserations to the very many who sent in correct entries which lost out in the luck of the draw.

REPORTS BY BRIAN SWAIN
PICTURES BY GARETH OWEN

## Hat-trick hero Aldridge guns down Hatters!

TRANMERE ROVERS 4 LUTON TOWN 2

THE team performance was much better than the result might suggest when the Town went down to their first defeat of the season, at Prenton Park last Tuesday.

Manager David Pleat summed it up: "The first half was very impressive. But in the second we got unto a bit of a twist, with John Aldridge getting a quick hat-trick and John Morrissey and Pat Nevin having marvellous things out wide.

"We scored two goals away from home. Sounds all right. But we got nothing out of the match, so we know we must do better."

The Town had looked comfortable in the first half, with Juergen Sommer having only one serious save to make, from a 20-yard drive by Pat Nevin.

They were controlled at the back, steady in midfield, where Aaron Skelton was given his second start, and dangerous on the wings.

They could have nicked a goal or two before half time, with Danny Coyne deflecting a drive by John Harrison round a post and then getting his angles right to make an amazing save coming from overlapping defender Julian James. He completed a neat passing move by David Preece and Harrison and Scott Oakes with a thundering drive which rebounded off the goalkeeper's chest.

But in the second half Tranmere fit fornit, with the Trans midfield falling. Aldridge's low drive from a through pass by John Morrissey broke the deadlock.

The Town's lead was doubled when through Carl Hughes, after a persistent run at the defence by Scott Oakes; but Aldridge struck again, from a through ball by Liam O'Brien.

And Aldridge's third goal in 15 minutes effectively ended the contest, after a desperate scramble in the Town goalmouth, during which penalty appeals were turned down as Tranmere men insisted. Sommer upended Nevin for appeals which had to be heeded. Aldridge drove in the penalty.

The Town chased the game, with Dwight Marshall sent on as sub for Skelton, and were caught stretched when Morrissey set up Malkin to make it 4-1, with Tranmere rolling three minutes from time. He crossed the rebound after Marvin Johnson's run ended with a shot that was parried.

## The big match facts

LUTON TOWN: Sommer; James, Peake, Greene, Johnson; Telfer, Skelton (Marshall 71 minutes), Preece, Hughes; Oakes, Harrison (Morrissey 64 minutes) and goalkeeper Baker.

TRANMERE ROVERS: Coyne; Thomas, Higgins, McGeal, Branagan; Morrissey, O'Brien, Irons, Nevin; Aldridge; Malkin (Johnson 46 mins). Mungall and goalkeeper Jones.

THE GOALS: John Aldridge hat-trick, 52, 58 and 67 mins, the third a penalty. Chris Malkin for Tranmere, 83 mins. For the Town Carl Hughes made it 1-1 in the 54th minute, with John Hatton scoring the second and last of the match three minutes from time.

OTHER STRIKES: Town five saved and four wide. Tranmere four saved, nine wide, and a header by Aldridge when it was 0-0, early in the second half, hit the top of the bar. Corners: 6-2 to Tranmere.

REFEREE: R. Poulain, of Huddersfield. Kept good control over two teams content to play good football.

ATTENDANCE: 5,480, including 400 Luton.

ENTERTAINMENT: A smashing game except for the result!

## Prized video wanted

LUTON Town's club shop is seeking copy of the Town v Arsenal video of Luton winning the Littlewoods Cup Final in 1988.

Said Lofty Skinner: "We have a customer who is desperate to buy a copy; but we have none in stock.

"We know a lot of people who have them, but naturally they want to keep them.

"If anybody has one for sale we would be delighted to hear from them."