Toothless Lions blunted by Town

THE SEASON SO FAR

Chart shows Luton Town score first, Town scorers, attendance and league position.

	ENDSLEIGH LEAGUE DIV 1		
	August		
13	West Brom (H)	1-1 (Oakes)	8,640 -
20	Derby Co (A)	0-0	13,060 -
27	Southend (A)	2-2 (Harrison; Hughes)	5,318 17
30	Tranmere (A)	2-4 (Hughes; Harrison)	5,480 20
	September		
3	Port Vale (A)	1-0 (Marshall)	8,541 15
10	Burnley (H)	0-1	6,911 20
13	Bolton (H)	0-3	5,764 20
17	Watford (A)	4-2 (Telfer 2; Dixon; Oakes)	6,880 15
24	Millwall (A)	0-0	7,150 16

GOALS: Harrison, Hughes, Oakes and Telfer two each, Dixon and Marshall one each.
ASSISTS: Telfer and Preece 2, Marshall, Harrison, Oakes and Johnson 1 each.
APPEARANCES (as sub in brackets): Ever-present, none each: Sommer, James, Peake, Johnson, Telfer and Preece. Oakes 8, Marshall 5 (3), Dixon 8 (1), Greene 6, Harrison 4 (1), Waddock 4, Thomas 3 (3), Hughes 3, Stadton 2, Linton 1 (2), Woodstord (1). **Before transfer:** Houghton 1. **Number of players used:** 18. Last season: 26.

	COCA COLA CUP		
	(First round)		
	August		
16	Fulham (H)	1-1 (Marshall)	3,287
23	Fulham (A)	1-1 (Marshall)	5,134

Lost 3-0 on penalties.
APPEARANCES: Two each by Sommer, James, Greene, Peake, Johnson, Telfer, Preece, Hughes and Dixon. Houghton 1, Oakes 1 (1), Linton 1 (1) Marshall 1 (1), Skelton (1).

SO NEAR . . . Luton striker Dwight Marshall makes space for a shot which rose inches over the Millwall bar at the end of a Town counter-attack.

DETERMINED and defiant, Luton Town unveiled a new attribute in South London when they prised a point out of a grim football match played in a hostile environment.

Millwall play in a superb new stadium, but have by same old bookies on the always terraces. But on Saturday, after dishing out stick to the ref and most of the Town players, they eventually turned on their own as they watched the Lions reduced to a team of toothless pussy-cats.

It was not very pretty to watch, but the Town following enjoyed seeing the team buckle down to do a difficult professional job to become the first visitors to keep a clean sheet at the New Den this season.

It was all about working hard and giving total commitment, and the whole team responded to the demands of the day.

ROBBERY

They might even have carried out another Pear Vale robbery job, because although Millwall had much more possession and did a lot more attacking, the Town created the clearer chances.

Sadly, they were wasted by inaccurate finishing. Millwall keeper Kasey Keller was not forced into a single save, while at the other end Dwight Sommer had to make a few rare occasions when he had to, that he was rightfully preferred to Keller when the USA goalkeeper was dropped.

MILLWALL 0 LUTON TOWN 0

chose its international squad.

It was the third match in which ex-Man David Pleat's latest tactical brainwave based on three at the back with two wingmen pushing upfield to support attack.

But this time, after swopping a pay Watford side a week earlier, it was up against a team with far more determination. Paul Telfer on the right and Mitch Thomas on the left had to be tireless and they joined Trevor Peake, Mark Johnson and Julian James in a last line that was rarely breached.

Frantic and often desperate, Millwall simply could not work their way through and had to settle for long-range target practice.

Gary Waddock is former Millwall captain recently boosted by a loan spell, and got stuck in just in front of the Town defence, and when David Preece got his passing right, a goal on the break always looked possible.

But the Town could not add that final ingredient which would have made it a real Pleat feast.

Kerry Dixon had a nasty bump with the massive Pat Van den Hauwe, but recovered once he power in a header which flew wide.

That was after Preece and Dwight Marshall broke up the Millwall attack on defence the cross after a good move.

Lee Chapman and Marshall have punished Millwall in the end of previous meetings.

Scott Oakes seen hard and run in the middle of Town attacking. An early shot suggested he have been produced, but he tried to set up Dixon for a more central position and Millwall cleared.

We had to wait 24 minutes for either side to produce a shot on target, with Sommer dealing cleanly with a long range effort by Jason Kennedy.

Later in the first half he keeper had to be more alert and assertive when Peake fed

GONG FOR GOAL . . . Dwight Marshall, also pictured inset, is outnumbered, but still manages to fire in a drive in the attempt to break the deadlock.

McCarthy left with egg on his face

MILLWALL manager Mick McCarthy was left with egg on his face at the post-match Press conference.

He wrote in his programme notes: "We've got to feel that we're capable of beating Luton at our place."

He added he would settle for another 2-1 result, which Millwall had achieved a few days earlier against Sunderland in the Coca Cola Cup.

David Pleat chuckled when he was asked about that. "I wonder who he thought would score the Millwall goal . . " he said.

There was a hint of bitterness in McCarthy's voice over the stick his team got from their own fans.

"You really want that, don't you?" he said.

"I have told our players that I have no arguments with them. They gave 100 per cent.

"It's difficult when teams come to make it hard for you to play. But Luton had cute players in midfield, Preece and Waddock.

He was asked why Millwall had overtaken a long-ball soccer instead of the passing game he has asked for.

"It happens when teams sit back," he said. "Some teams are parasites — they sit back and feed off your mistakes. You get frustrated, and try to get the ball forward quicker. And I know this was a dour old game."

Luton manager Ray Lewington, and Mr Pleat said: "We worked hard, and we had more pace on the break.

"If we had passed and finished well enough we might even have won. We were through them more often than they were behind our defence.

"We made the cleanest chances, but perhaps the score was about right.

"I was pleased with the way we coped with the game, because this is a difficult place to come to.

"I thought we looked the more dangerous side, although Millwall had a fair share of the play. But their shots all came from in front of our defenders."

Stuart Addicott, who was used to be a Millwall player, enjoyed hearing the criticism of the home fans.

They jeered every Luton man at every opportunity, but eventually turned their attention to derisding Millwall players.

"It proves we were doing our job," said the ex-loan midfielder.

And skipper Trevor Peake was delighted with another clean sheet, the third away from home in five league matches.

"Millwall applied a lot of pressure, but we had chances on the break," he said. "We might have got all three points, but that would have been a bit of an injustice on Millwall."

HANDY CHALLENGE . . . Look closely, and you can see Pat van den Hauwe is using a crafty forearm to make sure he shows Town striker Kerry Dixon.

The big match facts

● **TOWN:** Sommer; Telfer, James, Peake, Johnson, Thomas; Oakes, Waddock, Preece; Marshall, Dixon (Harrison 74 mins). Unused subs Skelton and goalkeeper Barber.

● **MILLWALL:** Keller; Cunningham, Van Den Hauwe, McCarthy, Thatcher; Savage, Rae, Roberts, Kennedy; Mitchell (Van Blerk 86 mins), Goodman (Kerr 78 mins), Goalkeeper sub Carter.

● **GOAL ATTEMPTS:** Town none saved and seven wide; Millwall six saved and nine wide.

Corners: 7-6 to Millwall.

● **REFEREE:** David Orr; Iver. Had a good game despite the attempts of one linesman to drop him in the cart occasionally.

● **BOOKED:** Mitchell Thomas for a foul on Dave Savage.

● **ATTENDANCE:** 7,150. Millwall's lowest of the season so far. The Town had 628 fans there.

● **ENTERTAINMENT:** Town fans gave their team a splendid reception after a battling performance that frustrated Millwall and their supporters even more — they booed the Lions off the park at the end. They knew the Town might even have sneaked a win, if the attack had been as sharp as the defence was solid.

DAVID PLEAT

Transfer-listed Hughes poised for Hatters return

BRIAN SWAIN reports

MANAGER David Pleat disclosed this week that he had been ready to bring transfer-listed Cen Hughes back into the First Division fold at Millwall, and he might put him in the Luton squad for Saturday's home game with Bristol City.

"He was going to be on the subs' bench at Millwall until he got a shin injury in a reserve match last Wednesday," said the Town boss.

He had a straight-talking one-to-one meeting with the Welsh international on Monday, and ended it with a challenge: "Prove you are good enough to win back your place in the team, and then show others that you are worth buying."

Hughes, having served a three-match suspension, has recovered from the injury, and is set to play at a reserve game against Portsmouth at Kenilworth Road this afternoon (Wednesday).

Only after watching that will the manager decide if he wants to change his side for Saturday's First Division match at Kenilworth Road.

Striker John Hatton, sub in place of Kerry Dixon for the last 16 minutes at Millwall, will also play today, looking for the chance to supplant the former England striker.

The manager is concerned that the good work done in Hughes travels — the Welsh international matches that of top of the table Wolves — must not be undone by another home failure.

Barnsley and Notts County, both in the relegation places, are the only other sides in the division with not a home win to their name so far.

And the lack of home goals is on the manager's mind – three in four league games is the desperate tally so far.

Hughes and Hatton have each notched one of those, which is why they have a chance of forcing their way into the side to face Bristol City.

The boss was asked at Millwall why he had waited until the 74th minute before sending on Hatton.

He said: "While we were keeping it level, we were all right and I did not have to rush into a change. Now it is up to John Hatton to prove himself, and force his way into contention."

And the manager is happy to stick with the same overall tactical plan which has now seen a poor home defeat against Bolton, a delightful win at Watford, and a battling draw at Millwall.

He said: "I think the style we have suits our players. It worked over so well at Watford, perhaps not so well against Millwall.

"But we must get our passing game going if we are to get a good result against Bristol City."

Lucky Captain Morgan 16 win Luton tickets

SIXTEEN lucky Luton Town fans had an extra reason to raise a glass to celebrate the hard-earned point at the New Den. They were guests of Millwall club sponsors Captain Morgan, thanks to the competition we ran on these pages last week.

The contest provoked a huge response, and the Sports desk's Wembley Mouse did everything in we pulled out the right lucky winners, who received two tickets each.

They were: Lewis Carter, Stuart Addicott, Markyatt, Susan Hargreaves, of Avington, Great Holm, Milton Keynes; Bryant of Paddock Close, Lewsey Farm; Lancer, Ray Dilley of High Street, Arlesey; Mrs J Grummitt, of Dunsby Road, Luton; D J Lloyd, of Cow Lane, Ridgmont; Reprendre; D Mawson, of Stockingstone Road, Luton; and Ron Lemprierc, of Swifts Green Close, Stopsley.

We have another competition this week for cricket lovers. See Sports Page 5.

Terry's delight

LUTON Town's Youth team delighted much Terry Westley with the style as well as the result in a 2-0 win over Norwich in the South East Counties League Cup last week.

He said: "Norwich were a strong side, but we were solid at the back and finished the ball well."

Gary Issott got both goals, from rebounds at close range.

The regular venue for youth team games is now at Luton Rugby Club, at Newlands Road.

How they stand

DIVISION ONE LEAGUE FIRST DIVISION

	HOME					AWAY					
	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Wolves	9	4	0	0	10	0	2	2	1	6	5	20
Middlesbro	9	4	0	1	7	2	2	1	2	6	5	19
Swindon	9	4	2	0	8	5	1	0	2	3	4	17
Charlton	9	3	2	0	13	6	2	0	2	5	5	17
Leeds	9	3	2	0	5	0	2	1	2	7	5	15
Derby	9	2	1	1	7	5	1	1	2	5	5	14
Charlton	9	2	1	2	5	4	1	2	2	5	12	12
Ipswich	9	3	0	1	8	4	1	1	2	3	12	13
Sheffield	9	2	1	2	6	5	1	1	2	3	5	13
Southampton	9	3	0	2	10	7	1	0	3	5	7	12
Bolton	9	2	1	2	5	5	1	1	2	3	5	12
Sheff Utd	9	1	3	1	6	3	1	1	3	8	9	11
Millwall	9	2	1	2	4	5	1	1	2	3	6	11
Bristol City	9	2	1	1	10	6	0	3	2	6	8	10
Luton Town	9	0	2	1	11	7	0	2	2	2	5	10
Barnsley	9	2	1	2	6	6	0	1	2	7	6	10
Watford	9	3	0	2	6	6	0	1	2	3	4	10
Notts County	9	1	2	2	5	7	0	1	2	3	6	6
Bristol City	9	1	2	2	5	7	1	0	2	3	2	10
Port Vale	9	2	1	2	5	4	0	1	2	0	6	9
Tranmere	9	1	2	1	3	4	1	1	3	4	7	9
West Brom	9	1	1	2	4	4	2	1	2	4	8	9
Sunderland	9	1	2	2	3	6	1	0	3	2	4	7
Sheff Wed	9	0	2	3	5	10	1	1	2	6	6	6

DEFENDER ON THE ATTACK . . . Mitchell Thomas gets up from the back to give the Town attack support, and have a pop at goal.