Home malaise a com-pleat mystery!

THE SEASON SO FAR

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

		ENGLISH LEAGUE DIV 1			
		August			
13	West Brom	(H)	1-1 (Oakes)	8,840	-
20	Derby Co	(A)	0-0	5,060	-
27	Southend	(H)	2-2 (Harlson, Hughes)	9,818	17
30	Tranmere	(A)	2-4 (Hughes, Harlson)	5,480	20
		September			
3	Port Vale	(A)	1-0 (Marshall)	8,541	-
10	Burnley	(H)	0-1	6,911	18
13	Bolton	(H)	0-3	5,764	20
17	Watford	(A)	4-2 (Telfer 2, Dixon) (Oakes)	8,880	16
24	Millwall	(A)	0-0	7,150	16
		October			
1	Bristol City	(H)	0-1	6,633	20

GOALS: Harlson, Hughes, Oakes and Telfer two each, Dixon and Marshall one each. **ASSISTS:** Telfer and Preece 2, Marshall, Harlson, Oakes and Johnson 1.
APPEARANCES (as sub in brackets): Ever-present: 10 each, Sommer, James, Peake, Johnson, Telfer and Preece; Oakes 9, Marshall 7 (3), Dixon 7 (1), Greene 6, Waddock 5, Harlson 4 (2), Thomas 4 (2), Hughes 3 (1), Skelton 3, Linton 1 (2), Wandsford (1). **Before transfer:** Houghton 1. **Number of players used:** 18. **Last season:** 26

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

Luton lost 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).

OUTNUMBERED . . . David Preece fires in a shot, watched by Dwight Marshall and five City defenders between Preece and their goalkeeper.

SPOT THE BALL . . . City's covering suffocates another Town attack, with Paul Telfer, on the left and also pictured inset, and Kerry Dixon hoping to find a way through. Dwight Marshall is the man hidden by a bulky defender, with Julian James on the overlap hoping for a sniff of goal.

Osman loves playing Town

BRISTOL CITY manager Russell Osman must love Luton Town: he got the job at Ashton Gate in January 1993, a few days after Denis Smith was sacked following a 2-0 FA Cup defeat for City at Kenilworth Road.

And the former centre-half, who was a member of David Pleat's side at Leicester City, has yet to lose to Luton as a manager.

He guided City to the double over the Town last season, and match-winner Ian Baird said the latest success was down to the manager's insistence that the team should go back to last year's style and concentrate first on keeping a clean sheet.

Said Mr Osman: "We got the result through determination and attitude. They were both spot on. All we needed was a break, and we got that too."

After five straight defeats he had asked for a high work rate by every man, and was delighted to get it. He added: "We have not played a lot different today than in recent games, except that we took our chance. And we battled for the whole 90 minutes.

"First and foremost I asked the whole team to defend, and that gives you the foundation."

Town boss David Pleat seemed edgy when he finally went to the Press room nearly an hour after the final whistle.

He recalled that a week previously when the teams battled for a 0-0 draw at Millwall, the same manager, Mick McCarthy, spoke of visiting teams sitting back, living off scraps, being patient.

The inference was that this was a case of the boot being on the other foot. Mr Pleat said: "We have dominated the game and got nothing. We are going to write a book. It will be entitled 'How to dominate a game without trying and without scoring.'"

Keith Welch made a couple of excellent saves from Kerry Dixon, and there could have been two penalties in the first five minutes, one for each side:

"I do not have to kick ourselves for having so much of the play and failing to make it count. I'try forward thinking."

David Preece, who did his best to spark the Town attack, confessed that he thought City should have had a second-minute penalty saying: "I pushed Fitzroy Simpson in the back.

But he added: "A couple of minutes later, I had an open goal when I was fouled. It was a definite penalty, but they got away with that one."

"Bristol City didn't have a shot at goal until they scored, and I was the only worry while shot they had in the whole match.

"We played good football up to the edge of the box. But we were not breaking them down, and not getting clear-cut chances. We will just have to work a little bit harder.

"I shark not wonting at home is getting to us. We need a little more support from our fans. They are not on our backs because we are playing good football. They want us to win, I know, and so do we.

OUTNUMBERED AGAIN . . . Four Bristol City men converge on Luton striker Dwight Marshall.

PLAYERS are as mystified as fans by the strange phenomenon that is taking over Kenilworth Road

Once upon a time, Luton Town, with one of the best away records in football, did more than enough in every aspect of the game but the most important: one to end the home doubt. And once more, it became a B feature instead of the star attraction we wanted to bring City became the latest Bs to follow the example of Bolton and Burnley by soaking up pressure and pinching the points.

The reaction from the stands at the end of the third consecutive home defeat, at the hands of a side that had lost its five previous games, was as mixed as the Town's performance.

There were a few jeers and boos, and some slow handclapping. But there was also an undercurrent of sympathetic applause. This is not a bad Luton Town side. Some of the football was splendid.

Bristol City were determined and defiant in defence, with every man under orders to concentrate on that part of the game first and foremost.

They did, and for all the Town's attacking possession, notably through David Preece, stalemate was the likely outcome. City did to the Town what the Town did to Millwall a week earlier.

In 90 minutes they managed three half-decent chances and took advantage of a defensive lapse to nick the winner.

LUTON TOWN 0 BRISTOL CITY 1

That boosted City's confidence, which Town's ebbed, and even the introduced fresh subs, John Harlson and Colin Hughes, failed to make much difference.

Referee Peter Foakes was no help either attack. In the second minute Fitzroy Simpson, on loan from Manchester City, was knocked over by Preece, and he Town veteran admitted later it should have been penalty.

REFUSING

Mr Foakes decided otherwise, the evened it up by refusing the Town a penalty.

Paul Telfer's cross was headed down Mitchell Thomas and Preece at the ofth end of the field, was lining up the ens a open target when Mark Shail foiled him.

Few disagreed with Preec that it was the off's worst major boob.

"As a team the Town wer not all on top form. Sol Oakes was unable to get up the game, and at the right mom back to cover for Ian Dixon, who was a lone in the visitors defence"

When they did, Keit Welch made a few pot saves, and Shail dealt wit with crosses as the Tow became more and more stereotyped in their approach

Preece missed th chance when he shot wi from a pulled-back pas Oakes, and Welch's best m was to block a header f Dixon over the bar.

But for the most part it a case of the Town trying into a deep defence barric with not enough pacey ness to find a way through.

City cheerfully conceded 13 corners, with only one the other end, as part of t price of blunting the pensalty area with bodies.

Telfer seized a chance of t of turnover, but the Town did not getting round the bo often as they needed to.

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