Big match facts

● TOWN: Sommer; James, Peake, Johnson; Thomas, Telfer, Waddock, Oakes, Preece (Williams 74 mins); Marshall, Dixon. Unused subs: Bradley and goalkeeper Davis.

● BRISTOL CITY: Welch; Hansen, Dryden, Bryant, Munro; Rent, Owers, Kuhl; Tinnion; Aitken, Bryant. Munro; Rent, Owers, Kuhl; Tinnion; Aitken, Pluck. Unused subs Baird, Edwards and goalkeeper Kirkham.

● THE GOALS: 0-1, 28 mins: Scott Oakes, thundering 30-yarder over the goalkeeper; 0-2, 53 mins: Oakes again, also from 30 yards, low drive which Oakes again, also from 30 yards, low drive which Sealey's fingers; 1-2, 65 mins: squirmed through the keeper's hands; 1-2, 65 mins: squirmed through the keeper's hands and offside to head in a Gary Owers, unmarked and offside to head in a right wing cross by Robert Preece; 2-2, 85 mins: right wing cross by Robert Preece; 2-2, 85 mins: Junior Bent, shooting into an empty net after Junior Bent, shooting into an empty net after Jurgen Sommer dashed out but failed to collect Jurgen Sommer dashed out but failed to collect the ball in a challenge with Pluck.

● OTHER ATTEMPTS: Town two saved and five wide; City seven saved, including a penalty by wide; City seven saved, including a penalty by Brian Tinnion, and five wide. Corners: 8-7 to the Town.

● REFEREE: Alan Flood, Stockport; had a good game, but was badly let down by linesman Griffiths from nearby Chipperham when City's first goal was allowed to stand. Owers was yards offside.

● ATTENDANCE: 7,939, including 427 from Luton.

● ENTERTAINMENT: Not very good, with an awful tacky pitch no help to either team: hump it, and hope is the style City have learned to use on it, and the Town had to go down a similar road.

Linesman hands

RUBBED OUT . . . This was the moment when the Town nearly went 3-1 up: Scott Oakes leaves Keith Welch helpless from close range, but the offside flag had already waved to deny the Luton star a hat-trick.

FOR AN hour at Ashton Gate on Saturday Luton Town looked like the best crowd pullers in football, two up and cruising against a team failing a tough battle to avoid relegation.

But then, for the second time in a four days, a crucial decision went against them, and the cruel goal conceded smashed their defensive confidence, and eventually they were hanging on for a draw.

Bristol City were lifted by their lucky break, and after being on the ropes so long finished the livelier side, even if their game was energy and enthusiasm rather than class.

The pitch helped to ruin the contest as an entertainment spectacle. Full of mud, and sprouting divots at the touch of a boot, a good no-one the chance to play passing football.

Ashton Gate regulars are used to seeing the hump it and hope method, with precious little attempt to play through the midfield.

Yet to this torrent and cross was the obvious tactic, and the Town adapted their game to that end surprisingly well. When passing, football came from them, but generally it was in short supply.

What was needed was classy finishing, and the Town provided that in the shape of Scott Oakes, who hit two stunning goals from about 30 yards.

Then what nearly Town shots on target in the first 55 minutes, a measure of bright ability

BRISTOL CITY 2
LUTON TOWN 2
(Half-time 0-1)

on an afternoon of much mediocrity.

Neither side had threatened before Oakes smashed in his first goal of 1990 after 28 minutes.

He took a short square pass in midfield from Gary Waddock, the strong man of the Town midfield, and cracked in a shot that made Keith Welch slightly off his line. The pace and placing of the drive, just under 40 mph, stunned the home crowd.

Junior Bent, on the City right, looked like a midget tackling a giant every time he got involved, and Steve Bryant on the left wing should have brought an equalise not long before the interval.

He was swishing and missing at the edge of the penalty area, probably going nuts when Thomas muffed his attempted clearance, the penalty we got even, and Bryant's cross-shot was blocked by the leg of their full-back, and Ian Rent of Scots in the Preston at the top who never missed from the six-yard line.

The stories were soon being rewritten. Jimmy Sommer had to go out to his right, and pulled it on exactly the same

the second half David Preece was on more energetic, ran by tracking Bent, and Gil Dowling replaced by Kuhl and Oakes struck again.

Richard Dryden looked Pat Telfer in a position of six goal danger, but found Sommer in the low kick to Oakes, and he drove the ball through a crowd of penalty area, and then through the hands of a surprised goalkeeper and low into the net.

The way was 53 minutes gone, and while the were not threatening to extend the lead the Town looked a well capable of holding on to their two goals.

But the linesman was not responsible for the 85th-minute defensive shambles that gave City a point that had seemed well beyond them.

They had travelled during gone, assumed the the need to scrap to the bitter end, and when Wayne Allison sent on-half Mark Chamberlain pass on the edge of the box Sommer chose to charge out to challenge.

He failed to collect, the ball ran loose, and Bent was left with an empty net. The finish of the easiest goals he is ever likely to score in the last minute following the Town had chances to the match were on, it gave watch the winner. Sommer had to go Junior Bent, on the City right, looked like a Mitchell Thomas, but the ball was there and midget tackling a giant every time he got should have brought an equaliser not long before the interval.

lucky City a point

PLOUGHING THROUGH . . . The awful state of the pitch at Ashton Gate is illustrated by the flying mud as Kerry Dixon, also pictured inset, tries to battle through it.

short pass

The decision was right – pity the one for City's goal was not.

REPORTS BY BRIAN SWAIN
PICTURES BY GARETH OWEN

How they stand

ENDSLEIGH LEAGUE FIRST DIVISION

	HOME						AWAY						
	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tranmere	31	14	2	1	42	17	6	6	4	12	15	59
Middlesbro	31	10	2	3	25	11	8	6	4	19	15	56
Ipswich	32	12	1	3	32	15	6	4	6	17	19	59
Sheff Utd	33	9	5	2	27	12	5	6	6	29	26	53
Wolves	31	11	3	3	31	13	5	3	7	23	28	51
Reading	33	7	6	3	18	11	8	2	7	19	18	53
Grimsby	33	9	2	5	30	18	4	5	7	20	28	46
Watford	31	8	6	2	21	12	4	5	6	14	17	47
Barnsley	31	10	4	2	30	17	3	3	9	11	24	46
Luton Town	**32**	**5**	**3**	**7**	**22**	**20**	**7**	**5**	**5**	**23**	**23**	**44**
Oldham	32	8	4	2	27	14	3	4	9	17	31	41
Derby Co	31	7	5	3	22	13	4	4	8	15	29	42
Millwall	30	7	6	2	24	14	3	5	7	13	22	41
Portsmouth	32	6	5	5	21	20	4	5	7	16	26	41
Stoke	30	6	4	5	21	15	4	6	5	12	22	40
Swindon	31	6	4	6	24	21	4	5	6	19	26	39
Sunderland	32	7	3	6	16	17	4	4	7	15	14	39
Port Vale	30	8	3	5	23	18	2	5	7	14	22	38
West Brom	33	5	5	7	17	19	3	5	8	17	27	34
Oxford	33	5	8	2	17	10	2	4	10	14	41	33
Bristol City	33	6	6	5	21	17	2	3	9	15	28	33
Sheff Wed	33	5	5	6	20	20	2	4	10	13	28	30
Notts Co	33	5	6	6	20	21	2	3	11	9	30	30
Barnsley	30	3	5	6	19	21	3	4	9	10	27	27

Luton Town's season at a glance

DATE... OPPONENTS... RESULT... TOWN SCORERS... ATTENDANCE... LEAGUE POSITION

		ENDSLEIGH LEAGUE DIV 1			
		August 1990			
13	West Brom	(H)	1-1	Carter	8,540
25	Swindon	(A)	0-0		7,677
27	Southend	(H)	2-2	(Harbron, Hughes)	5,818
30	Tranmere	(A)	2-4	(Hughes, Harbron)	5,409
		September			
3	Port Vale	(A)	1-0	(Marshall)	8,541
10	Barnsley	(H)	0-1		6,911
13	Bolton	(H)	0-3		5,764
17	Watford	(A)	4-2	(Telfer 2, Dixon, Stein)	8,880
24	Millwall	(A)	0-0		7,159
		October			
1	Bristol City	(H)	0-1		6,633
8	Stoke City	(A)	2-1	(Marshall, Preece)	11,792
15	Middlesboro	(H)	5-1	(Marshall 2, Preece)	9,417
22	Sheffield Utd	(A)	3-1	(James, Dixon, og)	13,317
29	Barnsley	(A)	1-1	(Telfer)	7,237
		November			
1	Grimsby Tn	(H)	1-0	(Preece)	5,839
5	Wolves	(A)	3-2	(Preece, Marshall, Dixon)	26,749
12	Oldham Ath	(A)	0-0		7,907
19	Portsmouth	(H)	2-0	(Dixon, Preece)	8,218
26	Swindon	(A)	2-1	(Dixon, Oakes)	9,455
		December			
3	Sheffield Wed	(H)	3-0	(Harbron, Dixon, og)	8,518
11	Derby	(A)	0-1		6,406
19	West Brom	(A)	0-2		14,392
26	Reading	(H)	0-0		10,259
29	Sheffield Utd	(H)	3-0	(Oakes 2, Harbron)	8,953
31	Notts County	(A)	1-0	(Telfer)	8,249
		January 1991			
2	Charlton Ath	(H)	0-1		7,842
14	Barnsley	(A)	1-3	(Dixon)	4,808
		February			
4	Oldham Ath	(H)	2-1	(Marshall 2)	
11	Grimsby	(A)	0-3		4,615
18	Swindon	(H)	3-0	(Marshall 2, og)	6,595
23	Portsmouth	(A)	2-4	(Telfer, James)	7,363
25	Bristol City	(A)	2-2	(Oakes 2)	7,939
		March			
4	Millwall	(H)			
7	Port Vale	(H)			
11	Southend	(A)			
18	Tranmere	(H)			
21	Burnley	(A)			
25	Watford	(H)			
		April			
1	Bolton	(A)			
6	Wolves	(H)			
8	Notts County	(H)			
13	Sunderland	(A)			
17	Reading	(H)			
20	Charlton Ath	(A)			
29	Middlesboro	(A)			
		May			
6	Stoke City	(H)			

Who's who

APPEARANCES... GOALS

League appearances		Goals	
Sub appearances			
Williams	(2)	Williams	(2)
League goals			
Mick Harbron	3	Mick Harbron	3
James	32	Oakes	8
Peake	32	Harbron	6
Johnson	32	Harbron	6
Telfer	31(1)	Preece	2
Preece	29	Telfer	2
Marshall	28(5)	James	1
Thomas	26 (2)	Johnson	1
Waddock	25	Marshall	1 pen
Oakes	25 (6)	Own goals:	
Dixon	21 (3)		**Assists**
Harbron	11 (1)	Hughes	8
Hughes	8	Marshall	8
Stein	4	Preece	6
Allen	1	Harbron	4
Linton	1 (2)	Oakes	4
Skelton	3 (2)	Dixon	3
Biggins	3	Johnson	2
Carter	1	Waddock	2
Hodgson	1	Hughes	1
Woodcock	(4)	Johnson	1
Ampadu	(2)	Waddock	1
Thorpe	(1)	Harvey	1

CUP APPEARANCES... GOALS

Cup appearances		Goals	
Sommer	6	Biggins	2
Peake	6	Linton	1 (1)
Johnson	6	Harbron	1
Telfer	6	Houghton	1
Preece	6	Chenery	1
Oakes	6	Dixon	1
James	5	Williams	(1)
Marshall	5 (1)	Marshall	1
Thomas	5	Oakes	1
Waddock	5	**Cup goals**	
Dixon	4	Marshall	2
Williams	4	Oakes	2
Harbron	3	Harbron	1
Greene	2	Biggins	1

Luton are in a spot of bother again!

THE WEEK'S first spot of bother over a refereeing decision came at Ashton Park.

Keith Lawrence, captain of Bristol City, was booked by a couple of players of falling for a dive in the 18th minute of a match-winning penalty which Scott Oakes duly converted. The point they deserved, instead of their fifth away defeat of the season.

Skipper Trevor Peake, who had an outstanding game against Gerry Creaney, led protests which continued as the Wills left the field, and said later even the Portsmouth man Jimmy Bullard had admitted to him later that the penalty should not have been given.

But what Tranmere Wednesday's Littlewoods Cup tie with Nottingham Forest.

Wednesday's Littlewoods Cup tie with Nottingham Forest.

The goalkeeper charged out of his area to meet the ball, and, clear, lost the contest for the ball, and was relieved to see Creaney hit a 25-yarder

PORTSMOUTH 3 LUTON TOWN 2

Until that goal, in the 75th minute, the Town had looked comfortable and well capable of the eighth away win of the season.

Paul Telfer shot the Town ahead in the 11th minute, and at the end of a sweeping and incisive move rehearsed in training.

David Preece sent Julian James away on an overlap, and Telfer came in from the left to meet the cross with a close-range shot.

Jeremy Sommer made excellent saves against Creaney and Gary Waddock, but was at fault in the build-up to the equaliser.

The goalkeeper charged out of his area to meet the ball, and, clear, lost the contest for the ball, and was relieved to see Creaney hit a 25-yarder against a post instead of into the empty net.

The scramble that followed led to a corner, taken by Clement Everton player Preki and met by the head of Mick McLoughlin to make it 1-1.

The Town responded with top quality football, and Richard Harvey, on as sub for the injured Scott Oakes, had a crisp header saved in the 33rd minute.

Mike James met the half-clearance with a flashing volley from 25 yards for his second goal of the season.

Two minutes later Johnson's free kick allowed Creaney to nick in ahead of him, and the Town defence was cruelly nosed ahead by a goal through to beat Jurgen Sommer in a one-to-one.

The penalty was created in the 79th minute, when Preki ran at the Town defence in the inside left position.

James challenged just outside the box, and the Town will appeal to have the foul that Preki then tripped over team-mate Creaney.

The ref gave a penalty.

Creaney scored, and Portsmouth held on to the points they desperately needed for survival.

And they were let off the hook when Kerry Dixon's run at goal was stopped on the edge of the box. Harvey lost his composure and hit a drive way over the bar.

Said Town manager David Pleat: "We are very disappointed to lose. We had a penalty given because Preki ran into Creaney."

"But it happens, and there were good things. In the second half we looked a very good side."

Unhappy Pleat draws the line

BRISTOL City manager Joe Jordan was well pleased to see his side escape with a point from a match that should have provided them with their second away win of the season.

And he carefully declined to tell the Press if he thought offside should have been given for the goal that led to City's unlikely revival. "Mistakes are made in football," was the nearest Jordan came to acknowledging the possibility the Town might have been robbed.

David Pleat agreed and said in his opinion had little doubts that the linesman booked. The Town manager said: "The goal was yards offside. And I had said before it happened that it was wrong for a linesman to come from Chippenham."

Mr Griffiths, who missed the offside, lives 22 miles from Bristol, and Pleat said his decision was crucial in getting City back into the game.

He added: "We are disappointed, but on the other hand we know it could have been 1-1 at half-time because of the penalty.

"Our disappointment is at going 2-0 up, being the better team, but not winning.

"The pitch was poor and we dealt with the conditions more comfortably than they could be critical of Bristol for. We hooked the ball on as best we could. But I might say it was on-Luton-Butters, Daniel, had to much of the play we should have won.

"We had chances – and don't forget it was our third game in eight days, while Bristol City did not have a midweek match.

Jordan said that at 2-0 to Luton he still felt his side had a chance. "The kind of football I have seen seven in make, and if you look at the four goals that were scored between them you could be critical of the defence for all four. Mistakes were made by both sides.

"I thought that the Luton goals were lucky will be very important to us – every one is precious."

DAVID PLEAT

Big match facts

● TOWN: Sommer; James, Peake, Johnson, Thomas, Telfer, Waddock (Woodstord 84 mins), Preece, Oakes (Harvey, 51 mins), Dixon. Unused subs: Linton and goalkeeper Davis.

● PORTSMOUTH: Knight; Perrick, Symons, Bullard, Awford, McLoughlin; McGrath, Rees (Hall, 70 mins); Creaney, Hall. Unused subs: Doling (75 mins); Creaney, Hall. Unused subs: Hall, Doling and goalkeeper Hall.

● THE GOALS: 0-1, 1 mins: Julian James; 1-1, 49 mins: Creaney; 2-1, 53 mins: Julian James; 3-1, 75 mins: Alan McLoughlin header from a corner; 3-2, Preki; 53 mins: Johnson header; 25-yarder; 2-2, 75 mins: Preki solo effort after Marvin Johnson was dispossessed in midfield; 3-2, 79 mins: hotly disputed penalty by Gerry Creaney with the Town saying he had not dangled; tripped Preki.

● OTHER ATTEMPTS: Town four saved and five wide; Portsmouth three saved, seven wide and one hit a post. Corners: 6-5 to the Town.

● REFEREE: Ken Leach, Wolverhampton. Did well except for the incident over the penalty that angered the Town and Gerry Creaney's win they did not deserve.

● ENTERTAINMENT: 7,363, Including 323 from Luton.

● ENTERTAINMENT: A cracking game, spoilted for Town fans by the result.

HANDY TACKLE . . . Bristol City defender Richard Dryden gets to grips with Dwight Marshall.

TWO GOAL HERO . . . Scott Oakes

JUERGEN SOMMER