Big match facts

● TOWN: Sommer; James, Peake, Johnson, Thomas; Taylor, Waddock, Oakes, Matthews; Marshall; Dixon (Biggins 64 mins). Other subs: Barnard, goalkeeper Davis.

● SOUTHEND: Royce; Hone, Bodley, Edwards, Powell; Sussex, Whelan, Tilson (Perkins 73 mins); Powell; Sussex, Whelan, Tilson, Dublin. Unused: goalkeeper sub Sansome.

● THE GOALS: 1-0, 28 mins: Gary Jones, shot through Juergen Sommer's legs after the keeper came but failed to collect a through ball by Steve Tilson; 2-0, 76 mins: Andy Thomson, off after Sommer chased a cross and failed to get it; 3-0, 89 mins: Keith Dublin, when the Town were chasing the game, with only three at the back.

● OTHER ATTEMPTS: Town six saved; two wide and cracking drive by Dwight Marshall clipped the top of the bar; Southend five saved and four wide.

Corners: 3-4.

● REFEREE: John Holbrook, Ludlow: had a better game than the Town did.

● BOOKED: Andy Edwards for tripping Dwight Marshall in full flight, 30 yards from goal; Gary James for the eighth time this season, for handball to cut out a pass in midfield.

● ATTENDANCE: 4,556, including 1,033 from Luton.

● ENTERTAINMENT: Very poor for visiting fans, with Southend playing like the away team, and filling harder on the break than the Town did. They deserved to end their run of four consecutive home defeats.

Sommer-time blues again for Town's keeper!

THE AWAY DAY special that once looked like giving Luton Town a chance of steaming to promotion contention was driven into the buffers at Roots Hall.

Goalkeeper Jurgen Sommer sent the wrong signals and the Town, almost across away from home this season until the turn of the year, were left still looking for their first success on the road in 1995.

Southend are fighting for their First Division lives, and it showed. They looked sharper, more determined, and more positive.

They also had a little luck, with crucial second turning points going in their favour.

The Town, with David Preece sidelined by an ankle injury, promised to lay a hard achieved little, and could not cope with the home side's tactic of using three strikers, including converted centre-half Keith Dublin.

Preece's passing ability was missed, but Rob Matthews, on his full debut, added some strong attacking running to the left flank.

And there was a little consolation for Town fans to know that Dwight Marshall was the player of the match by a street, even though the home side's sponsors gave the award to goalkeeper Simon Royce.

Kerry Dixon partnered Marshall for the first 64 minutes, and when the former England man went off so he replaced by Wayne Biggins the Town were still in with a shout, and unlucky not be level after a Southend goal in 76 minutes.

In many ways Southend played like an away side, allowing the Town plenty of possession, but counter-attacking with pace, spirit and enthusiasm.

Veteran Kenny Whelan pulled the strings as the defensive midfielder, and it was able to dictate the tempo of play and ensure there pick the right pass to break or into attack.

Two half-decent chances were created in the first 15 minutes, with Royce quick and quickly to tackle Marshall, after he had been put through by Scott Oakes, and Sommer making a good save when Gary Jones was sent clear by Andy Thomson.

Royce made another blocking save against Marshall, whose pace and power the ball made him the Town's prime threat throughout. But within a minute Southend were given the goal that looked to boost their confidence.

Since Preece played a hopeful pass into the inside left channel Trevor Peake was shepherding the ball in Sommer came off for it.

Either Town man could have given it the best but neither did, and Jones ripped it to the net a shot through the goalkeeper's legs into the net.

The Town came back well, and Paul Telfer had a well-taken effort from a free kick.

Sommer's mistake, which gave Southend their second goal, was the week's crossing.

Gary Peake, a good defensive tackler, had not been signing Rob Matthews to give the side more emphasis on attack.

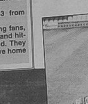
Matthews was first class, and is setting a very well," said Peast, after the Town's Jurgen Sommer had delighted a 2-2 with a "fantastic" save.

Disappointed Yeovil manager John Sainsbury said he had no real complaints about the result, but felt that his team had enough chances to have got something out of the game to boost their confidence against relegation.

"We've had two points, which the start of the season would have been satisfied with," said Peast, after the Town had beaten Southend 3-0 at Roots Hall.

Peast was in a stalemate bore, with Vale content to sit back and

SOUTHEND UTD 3
LUTON TOWN 2
(Half-time 1-0)



ROYCE ROLLS . . . Southend's man of the match,keeper Simon Royce, throws himself at the feet of Dwight Marshall to prevent the Town grabbing the first goal they needed.

JUERGEN SOMMER . . . At fault for two of Southend's goals on Saturday

BEST FEET FORWARD . . . Southend defender Michael Bodley gets in a last-ditch block tackle to halt Dwight Marshall's run for goal.

DIVING IN . . . Gary Waddock powers forward from midfield to help the Town attack.

The game after Andy Sussex tripped Gary Jones as the Town got men forward on the half.

Soon afterwards Andy Edwards was only of a more typical foul. Marshall collected and had and set off from midfield on ran that took him past two opponents.

Edwards was going to be the third until it tripped the striker, and was rightly ruled.

The other yellow card of the day, in the second half, was the eighth of the season for him, for handball in midfield.

Tremendous

But before the interval Marshall sliced tough all the corner and hit a tremendous one that was inches too high to be the realise that must surely have made a size difference to the game.

Another crucial decision came just before Dixon was subbed: his last touch, after being on the field for Marshall. Thomas, level header to make a thrilling save, ensure the lead of the game.

Five minutes later Marshall was out of and, with a curling 25-yarder that clipped the top of the bar with the goalkeeper well beaten.

Sadly, that was the last threat the Town could pose, and with 14 minutes to go Sommer handed the points to Southend United.

Sussex played a high ball into the box, and Sommer elevated to collect. But under pressure from Dublin he palmed the ball weakly down to Declan Perkins.

He crossed before Sommer could regain his ground, and Thomson netted.

The Town never looked like getting back into it after that blow, and the third goal was a mistake the irrelevance.

The Town were pressing upfield in numbers, caught stretched by Tony Scott and Dublin converted a cross by Julian Hails in the last minute.

The three-goal margin was not as convincing as it looked. Hail on the big Southend looked the side that really wanted the points.

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	36	15	2	1	44	17	4	6	8	13	21	65
Millwall	36	14	2	2	30	11	6	6	7	19	16	62
Bolton	34	14	3	1	39	11	3	6	7	18	24	60
Wolves	35	13	2	2	34	14	5	3	9	23	28	56
Sheff Utd	36	10	6	2	30	13	5	6	7	30	28	51
Reading	36	8	6	4	22	15	5	5	8	19	27	50
Barnsley	33	11	4	2	32	15	4	3	9	14	24	52
Watford	34	8	6	3	22	14	5	3	9	14	24	51
Grimsby	36	9	6	3	31	16	3	7	8	20	30	49
Derby Co	34	8	4	5	25	15	5	4	8	23	28	48
Luton Town	**35**	**6**	**4**	**7**	**25**	**22**	**7**	**5**	**6**	**23**	**28**	**48**
Millwall	34	9	4	4	29	15	4	3	9	10	26	48
Charlton	34	8	4	6	26	21	3	4	9	14	27	45
Oldham	34	8	6	3	27	19	2	4	9	19	29	43
Port Vale	33	9	3	5	27	19	2	6	8	16	23	42
Southend	35	8	3	6	29	21	3	4	11	16	44	42
Sunderland	35	3	10	3	17	18	6	3	8	16	15	42
Stoke	36	6	4	7	19	21	4	6	7	11	23	41
West Brom	35	9	3	5	27	17	3	4	9	14	27	40
Portsmouth	34	6	5	6	22	22	4	5	7	9	16	38	40
Bristol City	36	7	3	8	21	23	3	4	11	13	27	37	33
Crewe	33	6	6	4	21	21	2	4	11	17	34	34	31
Notts Co	33	6	4	6	21	21	2	4	11	17	37	34	31
Burnley	33	4	6	6	22	23	3	4	10	10	29	33	31

* Not including last night's matches

Luton Town's season at a glance

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

ENDSLEIGH LEAGUE DIVISI

		August			
13	West Brom	(H)	1-1 (Oakes)	8,540	
20	Derby Co	(A)	0-0	13,002	
27	Southend	(H)	2-2 (Thomson, Hughes)	5,811	13
30	Tranmere	(A)	2-2 (Hughes, Harrison, Dyer)	5,480	20
		September			
3	Port Vale	(A)	1-0 (Marshall)	8,541	15
10	Burnley	(H)	0-1	5,811	19
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	7,159	16
		October			
1	Bristol City	(H)	0-1	6,633	20
9	Stoke City	(A)	2-1 (Marshall, Preece)	11,712	18
15	Middlesbrough	(H)	5-1 (Marshall 2, Preece)	5,811	15
			(Harrison 2, Dixon)		
22	Oldham	(A)	3-1 (James, Thomson, Dixon)	13,317	7
29	Barnsley	(H)	0-1	7,212	10
		November			
1	Grimsby Tn	(H)	1-2 (Oakes)	5,836	12
5	Wolves	(A)	2-2 (Marshall, Marshall)	26,742	14
12	Oldham Ath	(A)	0-0	7,907	8
19	Portsmouth	(H)	2-0 (Dixon, Preece)	8,218	8
26	Swindon	(A)	2-1 (Dixon, Oakes)	9,455	6
		December			
3	Sheffield Utd	(H)	3-6 (Harrison, Johnson, og)	8,516	8
11	Derby	(H)	0-0	6,400	10
26	West Brom	(A)	1-3 (Dixon)	16,891	10
26	Reading	(A)	0-0	11,623	12
31	Sunderland	(H)	1-1 (Oakes 2, Harrison)	8,953	8
31	Notts County	(A)	1-0 (Telfer)	6,249	8
		January 1995			
14	Charlton Ath	(H)	0-0	7,642	8
4	Barnsley	(A)	1-3 (Dixon)	4,808	8
		February			
4	Oldham Ath	(H)	2-1 (Marshall 2)	6,903	10
11	Grimsby	(A)	0-5	6,615	10
18	Swindon	(H)	3-0 (Marshall 2, og)	6,595	9
25	Birmingham	(A)	2-4 (Telfer, James)	7,383	10
25	Bristol City	(A)	2-2 (Oakes 2)	7,939	10
		March			
4	Millwall	(H)	1-1 (Marshall)	6,864	10
7	Port Vale	(H)	2-1 (Telfer, Dixon)	5,847	9
11	Southend	(A)	0-3	4,556	11
18	Tranmere	(A)			
21	Burnley	(H)			
25	Watford	(H)			
		April			
4	Wolves	(H)			
8	Notts County	(H)			
11	Bolton	(A)			
15	Sunderland	(A)			
17	Reading	(H)			
22	Charlton Ath	(A)			
29	Middlesboro	(A)			
		May			
7	Stoke City	(H)			

Who's who

APPEARANCES... GOALS

League appearances		Goals	
Up sub in brackets		**League goals**	
Sommer	35	Marshall	10
Davis	1	Dixon	7
Peake	35	Oakes	4
Thomson	35	Telfer	3
Telfer	34 (1)	Hughes	2
Preece	31	Preece	2
Marshall	29 (5)	Harrison	2
Thomas	29 (2)	James	2
Waddock	29	Thomson	1 pen
Oakes	28 (6)	Own goals	
Dixon	25 (5)	**Assists**	
Harrison	21 (1)	Dixon	8
Johnson	19 (1)	Marshall	7
Grimmer	6	Preece	6
Biggins	5 (1)	Oakes	5
Hails	5	James	4
Linton	3 (2)	Thomas	3
Taylor	3 (1)	Telfer	3
Matthews	3 (1)	Hughes	3
Harvey	1 (1)	Hughes	1
Houghton	1	Waddock	1
Woodford	(4)	Waddock	1
Allcock	(2)	Harvey	1
Thorpe	(2)	Matthews	1

CUP APPEARANCES... GOALS

Cup appearances		Goals	
Sommer	6	Linton	2
Davis	1	Biggins	2
Peake	6	Harrison	1
Telfer	6	Houghton	1
Preece	6	Marshall	1
Oakes	5 (1)	Williams	1
Thomson	5 (1)	Dublin	1
Dixon	5	Allcock	(1)
Thomas	4	**Cup goals**	
Marshall	2	Marshall	2
Williams	2	Oakes	1
Hughes	2	Harrison	1
Grimmer	2	Biggins	1

FA CUP (First Round)

4	Oldham Ath	(H)	2-1 (Marshall 2)
11	Grimsby	(A)	0-5
18	Swindon	(H)	3-0 (Marshall 2, og)
25	Birmingham	(A)	2-4 (Telfer, James)
25	Bristol City	(A)	2-2 (Oakes 2)
		March	
4	Millwall	(H)	1-1 (Marshall)
7	Port Vale	(H)	2-1 (Telfer, Dixon)
11	Southend	(A)	0-3
18	Tranmere	(A)	
21	Burnley	(H)	
25	Watford	(H)	
		April	
4	Wolves	(H)	
8	Notts County	(H)	
11	Bolton	(A)	
15	Sunderland	(A)	
17	Reading	(H)	
22	Charlton Ath	(A)	
29	Middlesboro	(A)	
		May	
7	Stoke City	(H)	

COCA-COLA CUP (First Round)

		August 1994	
16	Fulham	(H)	1-1 (Oakes)
23	Fulham	(A)	1-1 (Marshall)

Luton lost on penalties.

FA CUP (Third Round)

		January 1995	
7	Bristol Rov	(H)	1-1 (Thomson)
18	Bristol Rov	(A)	1-0 (Marshall)
		(Fourth Round)	
28	Southampton	(H)	1-1 (Biggins)
		February	
8	Southampton	(A)	0-6

4	Oldham Ath	(H)	2-1 (Marshall 2)
11	Grimsby	(A)	0-5
18	Swindon	(H)	3-0 (Marshall 2, og)
25	Birmingham	(A)	2-4 (Telfer, James)
25	Bristol City	(A)	2-2 (Oakes 2)
		March	
4	Millwall	(H)	1-1 (Marshall)
7	Port Vale	(H)	2-1 (Telfer, Dixon)
11	Southend	(A)	0-3
18	Tranmere	(A)	
21	Burnley	(H)	
25	Watford	(H)	
		April	
4	Wolves	(H)	
8	Notts County	(H)	
11	Bolton	(A)	
15	Sunderland	(A)	
17	Reading	(H)	
22	Charlton Ath	(A)	
29	Middlesboro	(A)	
		May	
7	Stoke City	(H)	

One place still to fill

HAVING reduced their squad of seven to the eight new trainees to be taken on Tuesday, the club now "are the limit they can employ staff are still looking".

To fill the final trainee place, Kenny Waddock said he was happy if the club signed the 16-year-old at Millwall, who played at Luton Town's youth side while from Brentford on 2-2 with Blackburn and scorer from Blackburn and is to be in the Millwall side next week's training.

Waddock said Gary Wooder had a go at his back at half time when they were two goals down against Sam Ellis's side. He got in, and Ron Greenwood, back after injury, scoring a brilliant solo goal to pull the game back to 2-1.

"The Boys Are Green" is British City on Saturday.

Super sub Rob sparks Luton to life

LUTON TOWN 2 PORT VALE 1

DAVID Pleat's tactical change at the half-time in the Town's second doubtless saved the season, or at least, the first, flickering hopes of a promotion play-off chance.

The change took off Gary Waddock, a good defensive tackler, but one to see signing Rob Matthews to give the side more emphasis on attack.

Matthews was first class, and is setting a very well," said Pleat, after the Town's Jurgen Sommer had delighted a 2-2 with a "fantastic" save.

Disappointed Vale manager John Sainsbury said he had no real complaints about the result, but felt that his team had enough chances to have got something out of the game to boost their confidence against relegation.

"We've had two points, which the start of the season would have been satisfied with," said Pleat, after the Town had beaten Southend 3-0 at Roots Hall.

Pleat was in a stalemate bore, with Vale content to sit back and defend in depth, and hope for some breaks on the Town side. The breakthrough could come, and with 14 minutes to go Sommer handed the points to Southend United.

Sussex played a high ball into the box, and Sommer elevated to collect. But under pressure from Dublin he palmed the ball weakly down to Declan Perkins.

He crossed before Sommer could regain his ground, and Thomson netted.

The Town never looked like getting back into it after that blow, and the third goal was a mistake the irrelevance.

The Town were pressing upfield in numbers, caught stretched by Tony Scott and Dublin converted a cross by Julian Hails in the last minute.

The three-goal margin was not as convincing as it looked. Hail on the big Southend looked the side that really wanted the points.

Town had an almighty let-off when Vale sub Joe Allen was left unmarked in front of goal in need of a cool, two-yard finish. He headed into the small hand of visiting supporter Andy Thomson, who scored on Saturday.

Matthews was providing good attack, and Vale's Mark Wright was almost his first touch he had crossed a high ball to get in for a shot which was brilliantly saved by Paul Musselwhite.

But the keeper was helpless in the 42nd minute when Matthews burst into prominence again. He took a pass from Julian James and hit a rocket of a shot which almost demolished Musselwhite.

The ball rebounded, and in a scramble almost into the net, Dwight Marshall sub for Biggins, but Peake was Marshall to it to make it 2-0.

Vale came back with a goal by Andy Porter two minutes later, after a big gap appeared in the centre of the Town defence, and they mounted a furious but was onslaught for the last five minutes.

Thompson's just the job

CARETAKER manager Steve Thompson of Southend was the apprentice delighted to top one over a master at Roots Hall.

In charge of Southend on a temporary basis after the dismissal of Peter Taylor a month ago, he spoke of his respect for David Pleat and the football philosophy he teaches.

But he wasn't the top job at Roots Hall, which means he needs results to keep Southend out of the relegation zone, and his second victory in five days gave him immense satisfaction.

The Town boss chose his words carefully when he was invited to give his views on Juergen Sommer's performance.

He agreed the keeper was down for the second goal, but would not say who he felt was most at fault for the first.

His comment was that the result had made it very much more difficult for the Town to get into the play-off frame.

Thompson, in track suit and jaunty peaked cap, said: "David Pleat always puts out footballing teams and Luton had a lot of possession.

"But they didn't get enough of their shots on target, and when they did they couldn't finish them well.

"Kenny Whelan had a lot of influence, and I am delighted for him and for all the players with this result.

"They had goal chances, and we were worried about where the next win was coming from.

"Luton played some good stuff. But it's not about how they play, it's all about results, and I believe we deserved this one.

"We were pointed, and hit them on the break. We had a bit of pace up front, and after playing it a bit too prettily in the first half we moved more in the second half.

"It was about how badly our players wanted it, and they showed that they want it."

Town boss Pleat said: "We dominated a lot of the game football-wise, but it's about scoring goals.

"Southend used three forwards, and frustrated us. They rolled us.

"The second goal was from a mistake by the goalkeeper, and there was a mistake over the first one too.

"But although we lost we had the best forward on the field by a mile in Dwight Marshall. In terms of performance, we had a lot of the play."

Pleat agreed that the most important moments for the Town after the second goal came in the first half when the two near-things at the other end, Marshall slave that came just into high, and Kerry Dixon's effort that produced a marvellous save by Simon Royce.

The manager added: "If we had scored first, I think we might have won.

"But we didn't, and we know now that we have got to win one next three games to have any chance of being up there in the play-off zone."

DAVID PLEAT

THE MATCH DETAILS

● TOWN: Sommer; James, Peake, Johnson, Thomas; Taylor, Waddock, Oakes, Matthews; Marshall; Dixon (Biggins 71 mins). Goalkeeper Sub: Davis.

● PORT VALE: Musselwhite; Mountfield, Aspinall, Porter, Foster, Porter; Van Der Laan (Sorrell 71 mins), Walker, Aizlewood, Foyle (Allen 78 mins); Rodgerson sub Van Heusden.

● REFEREE: Peter Foakes, Clacton: Had a good game.

● THE GOALS: 1-0, 50 mins: Paul Telfer, sent run and shot from the left, set up by David Preece; 2-0, 62 mins: Rob Matthews, cutting over Valley by Rob Matthews, shot into the bottom corner; 2-1, 80 mins: Andy Porter, after run and shot by Martin Foyle caught from a long break.

● OTHER ATTEMPTS: Town six saved and five wide. Port Vale three saved and four wide. Corners: 7-6 to the Town.

● REFEREE: Peter Foakes, Clacton: Had a good game.

● BOOKED: Marvin Johnson for a late tackle on Bradley Aizlewood, and Lee Glover with almost identical tackle, sub for tripping Kevin Oakes.

● ATTENDANCE: 5,347, on a cold night after heavy rain, lowest of 1995 so far.

● ENTERTAINMENT: Remarkably good on a gluepot pitch, with the Town looking to the after Port Vale's goal forced Port Vale to be more adventurous.