



**Goal... John Hendrie fires home Middlesbrough's first goal against Luton**  
Picture: TED DITCHBURN

# Hendrie provides the cheer

94/95

By Ian Ross

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IF ALL runs smoothly Middlesbrough have played their last game at Ayresome Park, their home for the past 92 years.

Fittingly, what may have been their final performance at a traditional, if obsolete venue was sufficiently composed to earn the victory which may well be enough to lift them back up into the Premiership.

A spanking new stadium awaits and Bryan Robson's first season in management could end with tangible success as early as Wednesday night, for if Bolton Wanderers should fail to defeat Stoke City at the Victoria Ground the First Division Championship — and automatic promotion — will be Middlesbrough's.

If Bolton should win, Middlesbrough may be required to take a point from their final fixture against Tran-

mere Rovers at Prenton Park next Sunday.

Certainly, Ayresome Park will welcome only the demolition team in the days ahead unless Middlesbrough are restricted to a place in the play-offs.

Mercifully, the game itself held a good deal more fascination than had the rather laborious early afternoon parade of former Borough players, men from the club's near and distant past who seemed rather embarrassed by all the fuss.

In purely technical terms, Luton Town may just be a better team than Middlesbrough. The problem is they lack the passion and extraordinary vibrance of their hosts of yesterday.

Pretty football is always to

be applauded but if Middlesbrough's admirable progress this season has proved anything, it is that the very special demands posed by Division One are invariably met by sides sustained not by belief but by adrenalin.

Despite the artistic flourishes they contributed to a ferociously-paced game it was astonishing Luton held on for as long as they did.

The number of criminally squandered chances was edging towards double figures when Middlesbrough finally beat down the door upon which they had violently pounded for so long.

Even full-back Neil Cox was intent on joining in the fun, driving his 34th-minute penalty kick fractionally too close to goalkeeper Kelvin

Davis after referee Paul Vanes had spotted a handball.

There is usually a price to be paid for profligacy but when it mattered the most Middlesbrough got away with it. Even so it was a close-run thing, for once John Hendrie's deflected 44th-minute goal had been cancelled out by John Taylor's precise header 18 minutes into the second half, the nerves began to jangle.

Hendrie it was who ensured a day of celebration and poignant reflection was not spoiled with a simple tap-in just 19 minutes from the end.

**Middlesbrough:** Miller; Cox, Vickers, Pearson, Whyte; Blackmore, Robson, Pollock, Moore, Fjortoft, Hendrie. **Subs:** Fuchs, Moreno, Pears (g). **Booked:** Blackmore 53.

**Luton Town:** Davis; Linton, Johnson, Peake, Harvey; Telfer, Oakes (Thorpe 80), Waddock, Preece; Taylor, Marshall. **Subs:** Thomas, Margetson (g). **Booked:** Peake 32.

**Referee:** P. Vanes (Warley).