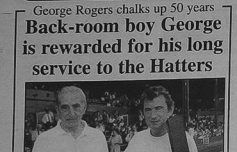
George Rogers chalks up 50 years

Back-from boy George is rewarded for his long service to the Hatters



MANAGER David Pleat led the tributes this week to George Rogers, one of the unpaid, unseen and unsung heroes at Kenilworth Road. He presented a decanter to mark George's 50 years of service in the club.

"Men like him are the real lifeblood of football," he said. "He is always around, always willing, and will get on and do just about anything."

A stalwart of Beds FA, George has worked for the club as a youth team helper, occasional office boy, laundry hand, ball-boy, kit man, tea-maker and driver.

"He is one of the most sincere and hardest-working people I know," said the manager.

Gates are down for third year running

THE PRICE of poor home results early in the season was paid at the turnstiles, with league attendances dropping for the third consecutive season.

Sunday's attendance of 8,252 took the 1994/95 league aggregate at Kenilworth Road to 169,109, an average of 7,352. It was 7,878 last season and 8,212 the year before.

The highest attendance was 9,651 for the visit of Graham Taylor's Wolves for an evening match in early April. The only other gate approaching break-even proportions was 8,953 for the Christmas match against Sunderland.

The lowest home attendance was 5,839 for the midweek visit of Grimsby, and the other teams who attracted fewer than 6,000 were Southend in August and Port Vale in March.

The highest attendance at any Town game during the season was 26,749 at Molineux in November, followed by 23,903 at Middlesbrough. The smallest crowd to see the Town in league action was 4,558 at Southend in March - and 1,033 of them were Town supporters.

Result poops the fans party

A SEASON that was given a kiss of life midway through the campaign died peacefully, and with scarcely a whimper, at Kenilworth Road as Luton Town fans expected party day was wrecked by Stoke.

For the first time in living memory they didn't even bother to stay behind to call for the team to take a bow: the fourth consecutive defeat, and the ninth at home, made a mockery of the play-off dreams that nearly materialised in November.

Since then the team has tumbled from fifth place to finish 16th. Not even the four relegated clubs lost as many at home as the Town have done.

Like the season, the final match promised much more than it delivered.

At half-time Stoke were lucky to be only one down, left off the hook because the Town failed to deliver in the penalty area.

It took 41 minutes, after six efforts had gone wide, to get a shot on target. Ron Sinclair was easily able to save Paul Telfer's effort, but the overdue opening goal two minutes later left him helpless.

Paul Peece, enjoying a virtuoso first half because Gary Waddock was winning everything in that department, swung over a corner from the left. Joe Sandford made a poor clearance straight to Richard Dryden, and the left back fired a crashing drive from the edge of the box.

LUTON TOWN 2
STOKE CITY 3
(Half-time 1-0)

As so often in the latter part of the season, the Town failed completely to build on that. And Stoke made them pay for not taking it before the break.

After an ear-bashing from manager Lou Macari they upped the pace, closed down midfield, and snatched victory in the closing minutes.

Town boss David Pleat experimented with Scott Oakes at right back. He worked at his task, but inexperience in this position showed, particularly when he gave away a silly free kick on the edge of the box.

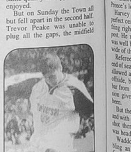
Mitchell Thomas was used in midfield, and did well in the first half before Paul Peece deliver a plentiful supply of good passes to the front.

But in attack 18-year-old Jamie Woodsford, a big success in the reserves, was never able to get into the game in his full debut, and was subbed after 62 minutes.

But there have been bonus points in recent weeks, none more welcome that the return of Harvey after horrendous injury problems. When he first got on the side, nearly two years ago, he was a steady fiddly at the back who seemed to lack the drive to get uplifted and attack. Not any more: his goal was the perfect example to a front foot that never looked at being able to do anything similar.

John Taylor worked with a will, despite a back strain. Occasionally Lee teaches of a Kevin Horlock' about him. He might be the same if he gets the same quality of support Harford enjoyed.

But on Sunday the Town all but fell apart in the second half. Trevor Peake was unable to play all the game, the midfield not the reason for the last day disappointment, nor for the closing sequence of only one win in the last ten games of the season, and that at home to bottom placed Notts County.



JAMIE WOODSFORD got his first taste of league action

THE SEASON's final selection of a player of the year underlined how many Town men have been in contention for the honour this year. The Loyal Luton Supporters Club gave its accolade to defender Julian James at its end of season disco night at Mick Harford's Rumours Club on Sunday. Trevor Peake, Marvin Johnson, Paul Telfer and Kelvin Davis have all collected other player of the year prizes. The LLSC vote had James a clear winner, reflecting the verdict of Mad as a Hatter fanzine - "Ever dependable. His tackles are superbly timed, his attitude is tremendous... a possible future captain."

BRIEF LIFT: A happy fan forgets his place and beats everyone to congratulate Gary Waddock on his first Luton Town goal, the equaliser four minutes after Stoke grabbed the late winner. Waddock had cause to celebrate: it was only the 12th league goal of his long career, and his first since he netted for Bristol Rovers just over a year ago at Wrexham. Rovers lost 3-2 as well.

Big match facts

TOWN: Davis, Oakes, Peake, Johnson, Harvey, Telfer, Waddock, Thomas, Preece, Taylor, Woodsford (Macdaid, 62 mins). Unused subs McLaren and goalkeeper Sommer.

STOKE: Sinclair; Butler, Overson, Sigurdsson, Sandford, Kean, Wallace, Dryden, Cloughen, Scott, Peacock, Peake. Unused subs Stokes and goalkeeper Prudhoe.

THE GOALS: 1-0, 43 mins: Richard Harvey's fifth of his career, being 20 yard left-footer after Stoke failed to clear a corner. 1-1, 52 mins: Teddy Dyrgnoun, from a similar spot and with a similar drive. 1-2, 79 mins: a penalty shot/header after Dyrgnoun and Kevin Kean. Peake was the scorer. 1-3, 83 mins: Gary Kean opened up the Town defence a treat after an Waddock, with his first goal for just over a year, had cut the Stoke lead. Referee Michael Bull showed Kevin Keith Scott leader from a left wing cross by Nigel Gleghorn.

OTHER ATTEMPTS: Town sub Davies saved on the stroke: Stoke four carried, one with the help of the cross bar, one hit the bar as an offside flag waved belatedly and six wide. Corners 8-3 to the Town.

REFEREE: Graham Poxley, Bishop Stortford. Turned in a real end of the season performance.

ATTENDANCE: 8,252, boosted by an unmodiably following of nearly 2,000 Stoke fans. Why do away supporters invariably outshout the Town's 'A' Kenilworth Road?

ENTERTAINMENT: Good value for money. Let Town fans in the first half, except for the odd problem of not turning possession into goals.

REPORTS BY BRIAN SWAIN
PICTURES BY GARETH OWEN

Planning for the start of the next campaign

THE TOWN will go west in their preparations for the new league season, which kicks off on August 12.

And after a trip to the West Country, figures will provide the opposition at Kenilworth Road for the only home pre-season friendly, on Monday August 7.

The league squad's first public appearance of the summer will be at Kettering on Thursday July 27. The party will then go to training camp in Devon, and will play at Plymouth on day 29. The final match before the season proper is at Torquay. The club will be in subject to Football Association - they are in danger of going bankrupt - and if the club finds before the deadline, a special jacket feature, probably against a Torquay side in Devon, will be arranged.

Some of the older players got a little weary

LOU Macari gave his men a rollicking at the interval to speak Stoke's new mood that transformed the game. "Had a bit of a gap," said the manager. "We were settling about in the first half, and you don't do that against Luton. It plays into their hands.

"You have got pressurise them, and we did that for the second 45 minutes. Luton couldn't raise the tempo, but we will do!

He had also pointed out to his team that if they did not get a good result, they would have two extra matches to play early next season.

The final match was not quite a non-event. For the Town and their supporters the target was to end in the top 14 of the table, and they avoid the need to play in the first round of the Coca Cola Cup.

Stoke got there, finishing in 11th place, leaving the Town to think about the prospect of meeting a Fulham side at Craven Cottage in August, with the risk of another upset.

David Pleat was in no mood for lectures, smarting from the run of poor results in the final quarter of the season.

He wondered aloud if some of his senior players were feeling the pace and getting tired, and it is probably about the mystery of why the team fades so badly after the half-time break.

Asked what had gone wrong after the good opening half, he said: "That's so... in the first half we played some very good football. But then Stoke came at us, and we lost composure and got a bit lazy.

He was "not unhappy" with what he had seen of Scott Oakes at right back because that slot was Marvin Johnson's to take if he of energy to rejoined. "He and Gary Waddock were the outstanding men in the first half, and David Preece got the ball. In the second half they didn't," said the Town manager. He added that if Jamie Woodsford had been low key, it was at least a good experience for the 18-year-old. Said Pleat: "He found it difficult, but now he knows the standards that will be required."

Kelvin Davis had learned the same lesson, and there were no complaints about his part in the winning goal. "It was his first mistake," said the manager. "Of course I am very disappointed with the result, but there have been some good things from this season."

DAVID PLEAT

Luton Town's season at a glance

DATE	OPPONENTS	RESULT	TOWN SCORERS	ATTENDANCE
	ENDSLEIGH LEAGUE DIVI			
	August 1994			
13 West Brom	(H) 1-1	(Oakes)		8,640
20 Derby Co	(A) 0-0			13,060
27 Sunderland	(H) 2-2	(Harbon, Hughes)		8,953
30 Tranmere	(A) 2-4	(Hughes, Harbon)		5,460
	September			
3 Port Vale	(A) 1-0	(Marshall)		8,541
10 Burnley	(H) 0-0			8,811
13 Bolton	(H) 0-3			5,764
17 Watford	(A) 4-2	(Telfer 2, Dixon, Oakes)		8,880
24 Millwall	(A) 0-0			7,150
	October			
1 Bristol City	(H) 0-1			6,633
8 Stoke City	(H) 2-1	(Marshall, Preece)		11,712
15 Middlesboro	(H) 1-3	(Marshall 2, Preece)		8,452
	(Harbon, Oq)			
22 Sheffield Utd	(A) 3-1	(James, Dixon, og)		13,317
29 Barnsley	(H) 0-1			7,218
	November			
2 Grimsby Tn	(H) 1-2	(Oakes)		5,839
5 Wolves	(A) 3-2	(Preece, Marshall, Dixon)		26,749
12 Oldham Ath	(A) 0-0			7,907
19 Portsmouth	(H) 2-2	(Dixon, Preece)		8,218
26 Swindon	(A) 2-1	(Dixon, Oakes)		9,455
	December			
3 Sheffield Utd	(H) 3-6	(Harbon, Johnson, og)		8,515
11 Derby	(H) 0-0			6,400
18 West Brom	(A) 0-1			14,392
26 Reading	(H) 1-0			11,623
27 Sunderland	(H) 3-0	(Oakes 2, Harbon)		8,953
31 Notts County	(A) 1-5	(Telfer)		6,249
	January 1995			
2 Charlton Ath	(H) 5-1			7,642
14 Barnsley	(A) 1-3	(Dixon)		4,608
	February			
4 Oldham Ath	(H) 2-1	(Marshall 2)		6,903
11 Grimsby	(A) 0-5			4,615
18 Swindon	(H) 3-0	(Marshall 2, og)		6,585
21 Portsmouth	(A) 2-4	(Telfer, James)		7,363
25 Bristol City	(A) 2-2	(Oakes 2)		7,309
	March			
4 Millwall	(H) 1-1	(Marshall)		6,864
7 Port Vale	(H) 2-1	(Telfer, Dixon)		5,947
11 Stoke City	(A) 0-3			5,558
18 Tranmere	(H) 2-0	(James, Biggins)		6,560
21 Burnley	(A) 1-0	(Marshall)		9,551
25 Watford	(H) 1-1	(Telfer)		7,984
	April			
4 Wolves	(H) 3-3	(Telfer 2, Taylor)		9,651
8 Notts County	(H) 2-0	(Telfer, Oakes, pen)		6,408
11 Bolton	(A) 0-0			13,618
15 Middlesbrough	(A) 1-3	(Taylor)		17,292
17 Reading	(A) 0-1			6,187
22 Charlton Ath	(A) 0-1			10,867
30 Middlesboro	(A) 1-2	(Taylor)		23,903
	May			
7 Stoke City	(H) 2-3	(Harvey, Waddock)		8,252

COCA-COLA CUP (First Round)				
August 1994				
16 Fulham	(H) 1-1	(Oakes)		3,287
23 Fulham	(A) 1-1	(Marshall)		5,134
			Luton lost on penalties.	
FA CUP (Third Round)				
January 1995				
7 Bristol Rov	(H) 1-1	(Harbon)		7,571
18 Bristol Rov	(A) 1-0	(Marshall)		8,218
			(Fourth Round)	
28 Southampton	(H) 1-1	(Biggins)		9,938
			February	
6 Southampton	(A) 0-6			15,075

Who's who

APPEARANCES...GOALS

League appearances (as sub in brackets)			League goals
Johnson	45	(1)	1
Harvey	43		1
Telfer	44	(1)	9
James	41		1
Preece	41		4
Waddock	38		1
Sommer	37		0
Thomas	36	(1)	2
Oakes	35	(2)	5
Thomas	32	(2)	1
Dixon	23	(9)	3
Harbon	11	(9)	3
Hughes	8	(1)	1
Harvey	8	(1)	1
Davis	7		0
Taylor	7	(1)	2
Grabe	7	(1)	0
Matthews	6	(3)	0
Biggins	6	(1)	1
Macdaid	5	(1)	0
Allen	3		0
Skelton	3	(2)	0
Houghton	2		0
Woodsford	2	(6)	0
Thorpe	2	(1)	0
Adcock	1		0

Williams	(7)
League goals	
Swallow	1
Allen	1
Oakes	9
Dixon	7
Harbon	2
Waddock	2
James	3
Telfer	1
Johnson	1
Harvey	1
Own goals	1
Aegis	
Davis	1
Preece	1
Oakes	5
Harvey	1
Thomas	4
Davis	1
Biggins	3
Johnson	1
Waddock	2
Matthews	2
Hughes	1

CUP APPEARANCES...GOALS

Cup appearances			Cup goals
Sommer	6		0
Davis	6		0
Johnson	6		0
Telfer	6		0
Preece	6		0
Oakes	5		0
Thomas	5		0
Harvey	5		0
James	4		0
Thomas	4		0
Waddock	4		0
Harbon	4		0
Grabe	2		0
Biggins	2		0
Allen	2		0
Houghton	2		0
Woodsford	2		0
Thorpe	2	(1)	0
Adcock	1		0
Williams	1	(1)	0
Skelton	1		0
Macdaid	1	(1)	0
Hughes	1		0

SHARP SHOOTER: Richard Harvey, who fired the Town into the lead with the fifth league goal of his career, his first since he netted in a 2-0 home win over Chelsea in December 1991.