

Big match facts

- **TOWN:** Sommer, James, Steve Davis, Marvin Johnson, Alexander (Thomas 68 mins), Hughes, Oldfield, Harvey, Marshall (Thorpe 68 mins), Taylor, Guentchev (Waddock HT).
- **SOUTHEAD:** Royce, Griselet, Hone (for 80 mins), Bodley, Lapper, Powell, Gridelet, Hone (for 80 mins), Tilton, Jones (Anash 63 mins), Regis, Thompson.
- **THE GOAL:** Tony Thorpe, 76 mins, at the end of a town break, after John Taylor robbed Julian Hails and crossed low into the path of Thorpe.
- **OTHER ATTEMPTS:** Town two saved and four wide; Southend four saved and nine wide. Corners: 11-4 to Southend.
- **REFEREE:** Graham Pooley, Bishop's Stortford.
- **Some of his decisions looked debatable, but he was spot on with the red card that reduced the Town to ten men after only ten minutes.**
- **SENT OFF:** Carl Hughes, for punching Phil Gridelet after the Southend man's late tackle crunched into his ankle.
- **BOOKED:** Gridelet for a foul on Steve Davis and Julian Michael Bodley for a foul on Chris Powell.
- **ATTENDANCE:** 4,630 - 500 down on Southend's average last season, but 72 more than for the Town's last visit to Roots Hall. And it was a carnival of a major attraction down on the seaford, with a major attraction down on the seaford.
- **ENTERTAINMENT:** Not a match full of attractive football, but the big Town following thoroughly enjoyed seeing the ten men battle hard for 80 minutes. And to pinch the winner was a lovely bonus.



SO CLOSE... Mitchell Thomas, outstanding after being sent on as a sub, powers in a header which had the goalkeeper beaten. But Southend's Chris Powell, guarding the post after Richard Harvey's corner was knocked on by John Taylor, cleared off the line.

Marshall pounces to nick a cup draw

THE FORERUNNER of the battling performance at Southend was a similar performance in midweek, after Second Division Bournemouth almost nicked victory in the Coca-Cola Cup first round.

The players went to Dean Court last night knowing that more of the same was called for, plus more accuracy with the passing.

The brightest features of the first leg were the impressive Town defence of Steve Davis, who was made captain while Trevor Peake sat on the bench, and the instinctive goal poaching ability of Dwight Marshall.

The two combined to fashion a 70th-minute equaliser, which was the least the Town deserved, but more than they looked like getting for a long time as Bournemouth's sweeper system kept the attack at bay.

The Town looked comfortable in the early stages, but poor defending cost them a goal which gave the

LUTON TOWN 1 BOURNEMOUTH 1

Second Division side a huge lift. The defence got away with it when no-one attacked a free kick into the box, and Steve Jones was given the time and space to get in a shot which went over the bar.

But he was on target a minute later. Boro's Guentchev lost possession to end a Town attack, Rob Murray whacked the ball clear and Jones poked past Marvin Johnson and drove his shot past Juergen Sommer.

Davis did his best to get the attack moving, and had a header from a corner cleared off the line. It was his persistence that led to the equaliser.

He hammered in a long-range drive, goalkeeper Ian Andrews fluffed a simple catch and knocked the ball into the air, and Marshall expertly pounced on the rebound.

THE MATCH DETAILS
LUTON TOWN: Sommer, Thomas, S. Davis, M. Johnson, Alexander, Hughes, Oldfield, Harvey, Marshall (Thorpe 85 mins), Taylor, Guentchev, Unused subs: Waddock and Peake.
BOURNEMOUTH: Andrews, Beardsmore, Murray, Mean, Robin Young, Holland, Morris (McElhatton 85 mins), Brissett, Jones, Fletcher (Bailey HT), Unused subs: Rawlinson.
GOALS: Steve Jones for Bournemouth, 16th minute; Dwight Marshall for the Town, 70th minute.
OTHER ATTEMPTS: Town seven saved and ten wide; Bournemouth three saved and five wide. Corners: 13-4 to the Town (11-5 at half-time).
REFEREE: Gurnham Singh, of Wolverhampton.
BOOKED: Steve Davis, foul on John Bailey.
ATTENDANCE: 2,728.
ENTERTAINMENT: Well short of what Town fans were looking for.

THE FOOTBALL was rarely pretty to watch, but there was immense satisfaction in the Luton Town dressing room on Saturday after ten men battled for 80 minutes to carve out the first win of the season.

On a sweltering afternoon, with the temperature well over 100 on the pitch, hot-headed Ceri Hughes was reckoned to have done his team no favours by being sent off.

Or perhaps unwittingly he contributed to a brilliant result on a day when both teams were unable to play much bright football.

Graham Pooley, of Bishop's Stortford, has never been my favourite referee. He has a latter-day Clive Thomas look about him all too often. Hughes may remember being one of five Town men booked by the airport security guard at Oxford a couple of years ago, when everyone thought it was yellow card madness.

This time the ref was right with the red card for Hughes, the fourth in the Welsh international's 135 matches for the Town, spread over five years.

Until the latest moment of madness the Town and Southend had looked well matched, with neither side putting too many passes together.

Richard Harvey's early cross-shot was knocked off the line by Michael Bodley, and David Regis missed a much better chance at the other end, volleying over

SOUTHEAD UTD 0 LUTON TOWN 1 (Half-time 0-0)

from about five yards after recalled American goalkeeper Juergen Sommer chased and missed a far post corner.

The flashpoint came when Hughes was trying to get a Town attack moving from midfield. As he passed the ball away Phil Gridelet's late lunging tackle snatched into Hughes' ankles, which have so often suffered major injury.

Hughes was poleaxed, but responded in a flash and blurt of retaliation, delivering a right hook at his assailant. It was no Mike Tyson punch, but the Southend man sensibly went down for a breather, and the ref ended the brief and unnecessary contact with a yellow card for Gridelet and a red one for Hughes.

The Town player was still on a short fuse as he marched away, tearing off his shirt and hurling it into the dug-out, but returning later after some sharp words by assistant boss Mick McGiven.

To call the midfielder's aberration a blessing in disguise might be giving him more credit than he deserves.

But it had the familiar effect you often see when teams are down to ten men. Each rolls up his sleeves mentally as well as physically, and works that much harder, and that is exactly what the Town did.

Sommer, smarting at being supplanted by a teenager,



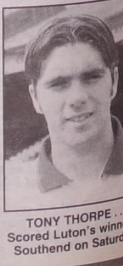
BONTCHO GUENTCHEV

Assists
 Alexander 1
 Taylor 1

CUP APPEARANCES... GOALS

Cup appearances	Cup goals
Sommer 1	Marshall 1
Thomas 1	Assists
M. Johnson 1	S. Davis 1
S. Davis 1	FA Cup dates
Hughes 1	Round 1 Jan 6
Oldfield 1	Round 4 Jan 27
Alexander 1	Round 5 Feb 17
Marshall 1	Round 6 Mar 9
Taylor 1	Semi-final Mar 30
Guentchev 1	Final May 11
Harvey 1	
Thorpe 1	

© Football League



TONY THORPE... Scored Luton's winner at Southend on Saturday

Hughes sent off but Hatters fight on



RISE TO THE CHALLENGE... Dwight Marshall is head and shoulders above the rest, including Phil Gridelet, with the bagged wrist, the Southend skipper involved in the incident that ended with a red card for Ceri Hughes, pictured inset.

was a dependable last line, but even more important Steve Davis, on his Town league debut in place of Trevor Peake, was magnificent.

Julian James returned after injury to strengthen the right back slot in a three-man defence, and Richard Harvey was solid in defence and menacing in attack.

Both teams gave the ball away too often for the football to flow, but of the two Southend were much more predictable, with long ball optimism playing into the hands of the Town, usually to the head or feet of Davis.

He doesn't shout abuse as well as Steve Foster did, but he has the same composure about his play, and the same ability to read the game.

Once Hughes had gone Southend enjoyed marginally more possession than the Town, but they looked very ordinary, and were given a warning of what was to come when John Taylor was inches away from giving the Town the lead just before the break.

His glancing header from Harvey's near post corner only just missed the angle of bar and post on the other side of the goal.

The heat took its toll on everyone, and to try to keep things moving both managers used all three subs.

Gary Waddock was sent on at half-time to replace out of touch Bontcho Guentchev, which stiffened a midfield that was not too imposing.

Taylor worked incredibly hard as a lone central attacker, and when Graham Alexander and Dwight Marshall were taken off with 22 minutes to go the Town seemed to have decided to settle for a draw.

Mitchell Thomas suffered an unhappy start to the season against Norwich and Bournemouth, but when he was sent on as sub at Southend, to play in midfield, he reshaped the double challenge, on behalf of himself and the team.

He became the driving force to keep a tiring formation ahead of the game, and Tony Thorpe, the other sub who went on at the same time, completed the day's hard work with an excellently taken goal.

With 75 minutes gone, Southend were shaken when a corner led to a header by Chris Powell.

But a minute later, Powell and the rest of the home side's rearguard was caught out by the galloping perseverance of Taylor.

Right back Keith Dublin had endured a bit of a stinker before being replaced by Julian Hails five minutes earlier. But

the luckless Hails was the man caught out in desperate circumstances for Southend. Deep in his own half he tried to work the ball forward, and with his team moving upfield he was robbed by Taylor's tackle.

The Town man passed accurately to the far side of the penalty area, and Thorpe was in, a yard ahead of the cover that had to stop and turn. He had little time to capitalise, but used it perfectly, controlling the ball and then drilling in a low shot that finished the contest.

Sommer had to make a late tip-over save from Regis as Southend tried to get back into the game, but even though Mr Pooley unaccountably played nearly five minutes of overtime, the Town looked well in command.

It might not have been a smooth passing display of pretty football, but the drained faces of Southend's players at the end were in stark contrast to the elation that shone through the Town ranks at knowing it had been a professional job very well done.

REPORTS BY BRIAN SWAIN PICTURES BY GARETH OWEN



HOT HANDFUL... John Taylor receiving attention from two Southend defenders.

COLWYN'S COMMUNITY CORNER

EXCLUSIVE

By Luton Town Football in the Community Officer, Colwyn Rowe.

For Junior Hatters we are arranging monthly discos, one for under-10s and the other for over-10s. Admission will be £1.50, or £2.50 for guests who are not Junior Hatters.

Already running are Thursday "Fun Hour" evenings at Stopley Sports Centre, at a bargain admission price of £1 for a lot of entertainment.

Finally, this week, we enjoyed staging an eighth birthday party at Kenilworth Road for David Russell.

And he has guests enjoyed a tour of the ground, including the dressing rooms, saw off a scrumptious birthday tea party, and perhaps the best bit, met Scott Oakes, who popped in to see and talk to them.

If you have a birthday coming up and fancy something similar, give me a ring on Luton 411622.

We are also still taking bookings for our final coaching course of the summer holidays, on August 31 and September 1. It will be at Luton Rugby Club, costing £10 per child, or £6 for Junior Hatters.

When details of his "Boot Room" night are sorted out, they will be published in the Luton News and Dunstable Gazette.



Westley owes it to McGiven

TERRY WESTLEY disclosed after Saturday's match that his assistant, Mick McGiven, had played a major role in plotting the partnership's first victory.

Because the Town's first game of the season had been delayed for Sunday TV coverage, McGiven had been able to watch Southend on the opening day, when they lost at Portsmouth.

And he picked out right back Keith Dublin as the weak link in the Southend defence.

"We decided he was the least positive on the ball, so we decided to let him have it as much as possible," said Westley.

"It worked pretty well, until they replaced him with a player who looked more comfortable. But John Taylor got into that area, behind the player, and did very well to set up Tony Thorpe."

The boss said his view of the incident involving Ceri Hughes and Phil Gridelet was that the red card for the Town man was the right decision.

But he added: "Hughes has been out of football for two years with injury, and he thought Gridelet tried to tap him."

"He was warned his career was under threat. He has worked so hard to get back, but he was impetuous."

"He put his team in trouble, and we have told him that. He lost his head, but the tackle on him was ruthless."

"But everyone worked hard, and the attitude and commitment was first class. And the goal came from a good ball in a marvellous finish."

"I think this was our hardest game of the season so far. But it is lovely to get your first win as a manager, and I am so proud of the players for the way they worked for it."

"To go into our dressing room after the game you would have thought they had just won promotion."

Ronnie Whelan, newly appointed player-manager of Southend, had to leave himself out of the side because of a knee injury, and felt a lot more hurt by the end of his team's first home game of the season.

"Their lad got sent off, and that seemed to kill us," he said.

"We just couldn't break Luton down, and we were too predictable. We had a few chances, but nothing really clear cut. We were scratching and scraping."

"We should have passed more, but played too many long balls, and Luton's centre-backs headed everything away. I found it very frustrating to watch."

Town's long overdue victory at Roots Hall

THE FIRST LEGAL win of the season was overdue on two counts - it was the Town's first success at Roots Hall since March 1964 when John O'Rourke got the only goal of the game in a Division Three match.

And Saturday's win was the Town's first since last April, when they beat relegated Notts County.

They ended last season with a run of six games without a win, then started this campaign with a home defeat and a Coca-Cola Cup draw.



TERRY WESTLEY