

Endsleigh League soccer

Sport 2

Big match facts

● **TOWN:** Sommer; James (Peake 78 mins), Steve Davis, Marvin Johnson; Linton, Gavin Johnson, Hughes, Oldfield (Guentchev 79 mins), Harvey; Marshall, Taylor (Thorpe 53 mins).

● **LEICESTER:** Poole; Hill, Willis, Walsh, Whitlow; Joachim, Taylor, Parker, Corica; Robins (Lowe 84 mins), Roberts. Unused subs: Lewis and Grayson.

● **GOALS:** 1-3, 20 mins: Ceri Hughes, strong run from just inside his own half followed by cracking 20-yard right foot shot; 1-1, 64 mins: Gary Parker against his old club, lucky to see a free kick deflect into the net off Tony Thorpe to wrongfoot Juergen Sommer.

● **OTHER ATTEMPTS:** Town four saved, eight wide and shot by David Oldfield hit the outside of a post; Leicester seven saved and three wide. Corners: 4-2 to Leicester.

● **REFEREE:** Mike Bailey, Cambridge. Both sets of fans thought he was poor, and several decisions were difficult to understand. At least he was even-handed, and declined to hit either side with bookings.

● **ATTENDANCE:** 7,612, including nearly 2,000 from Leicester.

● **ENTERTAINMENT:** Reasonable while the Town were leading, but wrecked by the inability to turn the screw and get a second goal that would probably have brought the first home win since April.

Hughes hits back



FEET FIRST... David Oldfield launches himself in a vain attempt to score against his former club.

THE TEAM performance showed that Luton Town were more than a match for former Premiership side Leicester City at Kenilworth Road.

But the result suggests otherwise, because the Town were not ruthless enough to turn the screw when they should have tortured the visitors. They had the benefit of a very good opening goal from Ceri Hughes, failed to build on that, and then conceded a free equaliser to Luton old boy Gary Parker.

It took the shine off a reasonable display, but left fans wondering how much longer it will take for the new-look formation to bed in. But at least it is getting closer each game.

Leicester, trying to bounce back to the top flight at the first attempt, admitted they were fortunate to go home with a point.

The Town's shortcoming so far is clear: an average of one goal scored per game will not be good enough unless the defence is able to produce a long succession of clean sheets.

Manager Terry Westley wielded the axe after the Coca-Cola Cup defeat at Bournemouth. Gary Waddock and Graham Alexander were dropped, and Bontcho Guentchev was relegated to the

subs' bench, to make way for Hughes, De Linton and Gavin Johnson.

The formation looked much better for a match that saw several reunions - Linton and David Oldfield were up against their former club, while Parker, now Leicester's skipper, started his career at Luton.

Referee Mike Bailey, from Cambridge, did nothing for the flow of the game with some weird decisions, but the Town might have been fortunate in the 17th minute when Steve Corica went down in the box under a challenge by Marvin Johnson, and instead of the penalty Leicester expected, the Town were given a free kick.

The officials' other major job was to combine to check offside against Leicester.

With Parker trying to defend them on, despite the attentions of man of the match Hughes, they were caught in the trap time and again.

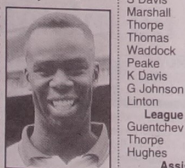
Town's three-man back line is beginning to look capable of good things, releasing wide defenders to push upfield, and Linton and Marshall both made fair contributions to attacks.

John Taylor and Dwight Marshall threatened more than they achieved, and it was hard to see where goals might come from as the Town had the lions' share of possession.

They popped away with a will, but mostly to lift

Who's who

APPEARANCES...	GOALS
League appearances (as sub in brackets)	
M Johnson 3	Taylor 2 (1)
Hughes 3	Guentchev 2 (1)
Oldfield 3	Alexander 2
Harvey 3	Sommer 2
	James 2
	S Davis 2
	Marshall 2
	Thorpe 2 (1)
	Thomas 1 (1)
	Waddock 1
	Peake 1 (1)
	K Davis 1
	G Johnson 1
	Linton 1

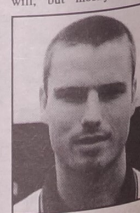


MARVIN JOHNSON

CUP APPEARANCES...	GOALS
Cup appearances	
Sommer 2	Waddock 1
M Johnson 2	Thorpe (2)
S Davis 2	Matthews (1)
Oldfield 2	
Alexander 2	
Marshall 2	
Taylor 2	
Guentchev 2	
Harvey 2	
Thomas 2	
Hughes 1	
James 1	

FA CUP dates	
Round 3	Jan 6
Round 4	Jan 27

© Football League



STEVE DAVIS

Sport 3

Hatters lack killer touch again

with stunning blast



MASTER BLASTER... Ceri Hughes, also pictured inset, lets fly with his right foot to put the Town ahead.

blanks, and once again Steve Davis looked as likely as anyone to do the business at the sharp end as well as playing his part in blunting Leicester's thrusts.

The opening goal, after 20 minutes, eased the crowd's anxiety on a day when Hughes was much more like his old self.

He spirited the ball away from Parker a few yards inside the Leicester half, ran at a retreating defence, then smashed in a powerful 20-yarder with his right foot, onto the bottom corner of the net.

Leicester seemed to sense they were on a hiding to nothing, but Taylor was out of luck with a diving header which just missed the target after an incisive move instigated by Oldfield and Harvey.

One problem was that while Gavin Johnson did well on his Luton debut, the Town had no-one able to boss the midfield defensively - and there is still no player capable of the slide-rule precision passing David Prece used to provide.

Even so, Leicester were made to look second best over the 90 minutes, and they were lucky early in the second half when Hughes powered down the left, got to the byline and pulled back a sharp low cross.

Oldfield did wonderfully well to meet it at the near post, but his shot hit the outside of the woodwork.

Taylor limped off with an ankle injury eight minutes after the interval, and Tony Thorpe, another man playing against his old club, went on in time to see Leicester enjoy their only spell of domination.

It was brief, but the Town were indebted to Juergen Sommer for two good saves from headers by Welsh international striker Iwan Roberts.

And Thorpe was the luckless and involuntary fall guy when Leicester grabbed a break 54th minute equaliser.

Parker tried his luck with a free kick from about 25 yards, and as Sommer moved to cover the shot the ball hit Thorpe and was deflected into the opposite side of the goal.

And that was just about the end of the action, despite two more substitutions by the Town, Trevor Peake replacing Julian Jones, and Guentchev taking over from Oldfield.

Significantly, the Town man who looked most likely as an attacker was Davis, rampaging upfield in a bid to get a winner. It is already obvious that he has been an inspired buy, even at a price that David Kohler thinks is too much.

Perhaps he should have changed



NUMBER ONE... Hughes delivers his happy verdict, with David Oldfield spreading two arms to acclaim the goal.

Hatters picked off by the Cherries!

With the gift of hindsight, manager Terry Westley wondered if he should have taken some of the blame as the Town endured their traditional Coca-Cola Cup exit at the hands of supposedly inferior opposition.

Bournemouth had half done the job with a 1-1 draw at Kenilworth Road, and they completed it at Dean Court with an extra time winner.

In a high-speed contest Bournemouth deserved to win.

Worst of all for the Luton faithful was that the Second Division team looked the more likely lads - they played with a commitment and belief in themselves that was far above the Town's.

No-one in the Town midfield could hold the ball and spray out accurate passes, and Bournemouth's greater energy enabled them to overcome the gap in class that should have been apparent, but wasn't.

Perhaps said a distraught Westley, the effort in the heat of Southend, when ten men had to play for 80 minutes, had taken out more than he realised.

The Town held on to force extra time, but there was no way back, nor

any sign of any real fight, after Mark Morris headed the winner after 97 minutes, from a right wing cross by Scott Mean.

THE MATCH DETAILS

● **TOWN:** Sommer, James, S Davis, M Johnson; Alexander, Waddock, Oldfield (Matthews 84 mins), Harvey (Thomas 84 mins); Marshall, Taylor (Thorpe 84 mins), Guentchev.

● **BOURNEMOUTH:** Andrews; Bealmore, Murray, Mean, Morris; Young; Holwell, Pennock (Victory 77 mins), Brisset (Town 88 mins, in turn replaced by Rawlinson 116 mins); Jones, Bailey.

● **GOALS:** Steve Jones for Bournemouth, 12 mins; Marvin Johnson for the Town, 43 mins; Mark Morris for Bournemouth, 97 mins.

● **OTHER STRIKES:** Town four saved and eight wide; Bournemouth five saved, eight wide, and one netted by Jones, but ruled out for offside by the ref after the linesman said it was a goal.

● **REFEREE:** David Orr, Iwer.

● **BOOKED:** Julian James and Graham Alexander, and Bournemouth's Neil Young, all for fouls.

● **ATTENDANCE:** 4,844

● **ENTERTAINMENT:** Great for the locals and neutrals, but painful for the Town's following.

Managers are united

THE TWO managers were united in their view of the game. Terry Westley said it was not the right result, but he was pleased that on the run of play the Town were the better side.

Leicester's Mark McGhee was delighted because his team got away with a point from a poor performance.

The Town boss said: "Overall we deserved to win on chances made and the amount of attacking play. We got in a lot more crosses, and got round the back of their defence much more than they did to us. And I thought we stroked the ball about quite well."

Ceri Hughes inevitably came in for praise in the Pressroom, and Westley agreed that the Welshman had gone some way to reinstating himself after being sent off a week earlier.

"Today he showed us what he can do," he said. "I was delighted with him, and not just for his goal. We gave him a specific job, to get all over Parker, and he did. And he robbed him for the goal."

The manager described Steve Davis as "looking like a mountain, a magnet for the ball."

He added: "He ought to be in the Premiership. He's five foot tall and nine foot when he jumps."

The centre-half, who looks set to be a cult figure in the tradition stretching back to Terry Branstetter through to Steve Foster, took the compliment modestly. He shared the disappointment that only one point had been taken from a performance good enough to deserve all three.

"I think we were the better team over the 90 minutes," he said. "And we are pleased that we did not get beaten."

He has no doubts about the formation with three at the back, plus two wide men tracking up and down the flanks. "We are getting better at it every game," said Davis. "It takes time to get used to it."

The Leicester manager was relieved man at the final whistle. "I am delighted with the point, but disappointed with the performance," said McGhee.

Like Luton, Leicester's first three games amounted to one win, one defeat, and one draw, which is hardly promotion form, and McGhee announced that he is looking to bring in two more players fairly rapidly.

He said: "This was the poorest we have played in any of our games so far. If you don't get good individual performances, you don't get a team performance, and that was our problem."

"We were standing still too long, and were caught on the ball too often. We didn't look right. Two men stood off Hughes when he started the run for the goal, and when he got forward no-one got at him."

Moore's not impressed

JOHN MOORE's youth team collected a second successive victory in the South East Counties League at Luton Rugby Club, without impressing the coach too much.

Goals by Andrew Fotiadis and Gary Willmott (penalty) saw off Colchester, but Moore said: "It was unconvincing, although the bumpy bobbly pitch was no great help."

"After the dry summer it is very hard and uneven, and it was very difficult to pass the ball accurately."

Luton Town's season at a glance

DATE...	OPPONENTS...	RESULT...	TOWN SCORERS...	ATTENDANCE...	LEAGUE POSITION
ENDSLEIGH LEAGUE DIV I August 1995					
13 Norwich	(H) 1-3 (Guentchev, pen)	7,848 -			1 Sheffield U (H)
19 Southend	(A) 1-0 (Thorpe)	4,630 -			13 Southend (H)
26 Leicester	(H) 1-1 (Hughes)	7,612 16			20 Norwich (A)
29 Grimsby	(A)				
September					
2 Derby	(H)				3 Leicester (A)
9 Reading	(A)				10 Grimsby (H)
13 Millwall	(A)				17 Millwall (H)
16 Sunderland	(H)				21 Derby (H)
23 Wolves	(A)				24 Sunderland (H)
30 Portsmouth	(H)				27 Reading (H)
October					
7 Tranmere	(H)				3 C Palace (H)
14 West Brom	(H)				9 Huddersfield (A)
21 Ipswich	(H)				16 Port Vale (H)
28 Charlton	(H)				23 Sheffield U (H)
					30 Ipswich (H)
November					
4 Stoke	(H)				2 West Brom (A)
11 Oldham	(H)				6 Charlton (H)
18 Birmingham	(H)				9 Stoke (H)
25 Birmingham	(A)				13 Birmingham (A)
28 Barnsley	(H)				20 Watford (H)
					27 Barnsley (H)
December					
2 Tranmere	(H)				4 Oldham (A)
9 Wolves	(H)				
16 Portsmouth	(A)				
23 Huddersfield	(H)				
26 C Palace	(A)				
30 Port Vale	(A)				
COCA-COLA CUP (First Round) August 1995					
15 Bournemouth (H)	1-1 (Marshall)	2,728			
22 Bournemouth (A)	1-2 (aet) (M Johnson)	4,844			
	(Bournemouth win 3-2 on aggregate)				