Rams reduce the

Big match facts

TOWN: Kelvin Davis; James, Steve Davis, Marvin Johnson; Alexander (Peake 80 mins), Gavin Johnson, Oldfield (Thorpe 68 mins), Harvey; Marshall, Taylor, Guentchev (Woodsford 71 mins).

DERBY: Hoult; Webster, Van der Laan, Powell (Wassell HT), Kavanagh; Carsley, Preece, Nicholson, Harkes; Sturridge, Flynn (Simpson 65 mins). Unused sub Trollope.

GOALS: 1-0, 31 seconds: Dwight Marshall at the end of a sweeping move and superb reverse pass by Bonthco Guentchev; 1-1, 15 mins: Dean Sturridge, close range gift, after Kelvin Davis failed to collect a high ball under pressure from Simon Webster; 1-2 63 mins: Sturridge, unmarked for header from a left wing cross by Shane Nicholson.

OTHER ATTEMPTS: Town four saved and ten wide; Derby six saved, two wide and two hit the woodwork. Corners: 4-3 to Derby.

REFEREE: John Brandwood, Lichfield. Town fans thought he was out of order not giving a foul on Kelvin Davis when Derby got their equaliser.

BOOKED: Gavin Johnson for kicking the ball away and Webster of Derby for a foul on Marshall.

ATTENDANCE: 6,427, with barely 500 from Derby.

ENTERTAINMENT: Awful for home fans, with the Town unable to cash in after the perfect start. Derby's goalkeeper had to make only one save between the first and 85th minutes.

EVERYBODY UP: Skipper Steve Davis leads by example, moving out of defence to put on a little aerial attacking pressure

LUTON TOWN 1 DERBY COUNTY 2
(Half-time 1-1)

WE KNOW it takes time for a rebuilt team to bed in after new players have ben introduced, but Luton Town tried the patience of even their best friends on Saturday when Derby mugged them.

The second home defeat out of three attempts so far was self-inflicted by a team that had a marvellous start, should have been two up in the first five minutes, then deteriorated into a bit of a shambles.

I still think Terry Westley's team and tactics are not far away from what we all want, but against Derby there seemed to be a collective nervousness holding back the team.

The difference was Derby's Dean Sturridge, an attacker with pace and an eye for goal that was far sharper than anything the Town could muster.

In the end, the margin of defeat could have been far greater, because Derby hit the woodwork twice, and Sturridge wasted openings that could have yielded a hat-trick.

Long-suffering supporters have been waiting since last April for another home win, and will have to suffer for a lot longer yet if the Town remain so toothless in opponents' penalty areas. Because of that the defence is being asked to perform heroics, and well though Steve Davis is playing you have to wonder if too much emphasis is being placed on the negative, and not enough on the positive.

Derby should have been there for the taking after an excellent opening goal in only 31 seconds. The visitors kicked off and immediately went forward, with David Preece trying his luck from distance with a low shot.

Kelvin Davis saved, with a little difficulty, then punted a clearance upfield. It was route one football, but performed with great style. Taylor flicked the ball on, Bonthco Guentchev took control, and his clever reverse pass put in Dwight Marshall for his first league goal of the season. Within five minutes Marshall returned the compliment, taking Taylor's pass, getting to the by-line, and then leaving goalkeeper Russell Hoult for dead.

Guentchev raced in at the far post, used his wrong foot, and shot wide of the unguarded net. It should have been 2-0, and Derby, without a win in their first four games and still trying to get over a three-goal mauling at Wolves in midweek, would surely have been demoralised.

Instead they fought their way back. Preece was barracked heartily every time he got the ball, and was not as influential as he might have been thanks to the closing down work by Graham Alexander and Gavin Johnson.

But once Derby had equalised, the Town were the team looking ragged and despondent. Sturridge's goal, in the 15th minute, might have been ruled out by some referees.

The Town were put under pressure by a long throw, and claimed that as Simon Webster jumped for a header, he impeded goalkeeper Davis, who was trying to punch clear. Neither made clean contact, and Sturridge was able to net from close range.

It was just about all Derby from then on. When the Town did get forward there was little conviction about their place, and the shooting was awful. Not until the 62nd minute did we see a drive on target, with Gavin Johnson's effort from 25 yards well saved by Hoult.

Then we had to wait for the last five minutes to see Hoult called into action, with a blocking save from sub Jamie Woodsford, and two easy stops from Steve Davis efforts.

Between times, Derby had helped themselves to a winner, and wasted several other opportunities.

In the first half the quicksilver Sturridge went on a solo run and forced Davis to make a top quality tip-over save from a rising drive. Then he set John Harkes free down Derby's left, but the American international's angled drive hit a post.

The winner was almost a slow motion exercise, in the 63rd minute. Robin van der Laan hoisted a free kick to Derby's left wing, Shane Nicholson crossed, and Sturridge was all on his own to send a gentle header into the net.

Derby sent on Paul Simpson as a sub, and with almost his first touch he was close to piling on further agony for the Town, with a lob which left Davis beaten but saved by the crossbar.

Sturridge put a lob over the bar when he should have scored, and not until the last five minutes did the Town show the fighting spirit that was needed. But it was all too frantic and too late.

BOURNEMOUTH 2 LUTON 1
(AET – aggregate 3-2)

COMMUNITY COLUMN

EXCLUSIVE

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

EIGHT-year-old Jonathon Jones has every reason to look pleased in our picture. He was our guest at Kenilworth Road after impressing as one of the 60 youngsters who took part in the last of our summer coaching courses.

He won the prize for showing the best attitude, and that led to him meeting Happy Harry Hatter, and new Luton Town star Darren Patterson. Behind Darren is Jeff Vetere, our community coach.

Scott Oakes attended a question and answer session which was very popular, and later this year we will be running more coaching courses for boys and girls.

We are also thinking of ways to involve ladies in our community programme, and one idea is to put on weekly aerobic sessions.

We'll do it if demand is great enough, and we would like to hear from anyone interested.

HIGH FLYER: Gavin Johnson makes sure he gets the free kick after a tackle by Derby skipper Robin van der Laan. David Preece is the Derby back-up man.

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	–
19	Southend	(A)	1-0 (Thorpe)	4,630	–
26	Leicester	(H)	1-1 (Hughes)	7,612	16
29	Grimsby	(A)	0-0	...4,289	10
September					
2	Derby	(H)	1-2 (Marshall)	6,427	17
9	Reading	(A)			
13	Millwall	(A)			
16	Sunderland	(H)			
23	Wolves	(A)			
30	Portsmouth	(H)			
October					
7	Tranmere	(A)			
14	West Brom	(H)			
21	Ipswich	(A)			
28	Charlton	(H)			
November					
4	Stoke	(A)			
11	Oldham	(H)			
18	Birmingham	(H)			
21	Watford	(A)			
25	Barnsley	(A)			
December					
2	Tranmere	(H)			
9	Wolves	(H)			
16	Portsmouth	(A)			
23	Huddersfield	(H)			
26	C Palace	(A)			
30	Port Vale	(A)			
January 1996					
1	Sheffield U	(H)			
13	Southend	(H)			
20	Norwich	(A)			
February					
3	Leicester	(A)			
10	Grimsby	(H)			
17	Millwall	(H)			
21	Derby	(A)			
24	Sunderland	(A)			
27	Reading	(H)			
March					
3	C Palace	(H)			
9	Huddersfield	(A)			
16	Port Vale	(H)			
23	Sheffield U	(A)			
30	Ipswich	(H)			
April					
2	West Brom	(A)			
6	Charlton	(A)			
9	Stoke	(H)			
13	Birmingham	(A)			
20	Watford	(H)			
27	Barnsley	(H)			
May					
4	Oldham	(A)			

COCA-COLA CUP (First Round)
August 1995

15	Bournem'th	(H)	1-1 (Marshall)	2,728
22	Bournemouth	(A)	1-2 (aet) (M Johnson)	4,844

(Bournemouth win 3-2 on aggregate).

Who's who

APPEARANCES... GOALS

League appearances (as sub in brackets)			
M Johnson	5	Sommer	2
Hughes	3	James	4
Oldfield	5	S Davis	4
Harvey	5	Marshall	4
Taylor	3 (2)	Thorpe	1 (3)
Guentchev	4 (1)	Thomas	1 (1)
Alexander	4	Waddock	1 (1)
		Peake	1 (3)
		K Davis	3
		G Johnson	3
		Linton	2
		Woodsford	(2)

League goals

Guentchev	1 pen
Thorpe	1
Hughes	1
Marshall	1

Assists

Alexander	1
Taylor	1
Guentchev	1

KELVIN DAVIS

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	1 (1)		
Hughes	1		
James	1		

Cup goals

Marshall	1
M Johnson	1

Assists

S Davis	1
Alexander	1

FA Cup dates

Round 3	Jan 6
Round 4	Jan 27

© Football League

GAVIN JOHNSON

Hatters to a shambles

SUB STRIKES: Jamie Woodsford gets away from his marker to fire in a late shot which goalkeeper Hoult saved

How they stand

ENDSLEIGH LEAGUE FIRST DIVISION

	HOME					AWAY					
	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Millwall	5	1	1	0	2	1	3	0	0	4	1	13
Leicester	5	2	0	1	7	5	1	1	0	3	2	10
Ipswich	5	3	0	0	8	1	0	1	1	1	3	10
Charlton	5	3	0	0	7	3	0	1	1	1	2	10
Norwich	5	2	1	0	4	2	1	0	1	4	4	10
Birmingham	5	2	0	0	6	2	1	0	2	8	7	9
Barnsley	5	2	0	1	4	7	1	0	1	6	6	9
Oldham	5	2	0	0	5	1	1	0	2	3	4	9
West Brom	5	2	1	0	4	1	0	1	1	2	3	8
Tranmere	4	1	1	0	5	3	1	0	1	3	2	7
C. Palace	4	1	1	0	5	4	1	0	1	3	3	7
Huddersfield	5	2	0	0	5	2	0	0	3	2	8	6
Reading	5	1	0	1	4	4	0	3	0	1	1	6
Grimsby	5	1	2	0	2	1	0	1	1	2	3	6
Wolves	5	1	1	0	4	1	0	1	2	2	5	5
Derby Co	5	0	2	0	1	1	1	0	2	4	7	5
Luton Town	**5**	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**6**	**1**	**1**	**0**	**1**	**0**	**5**
Southend	5	1	1	1	2	2	0	1	1	2	4	5
Sunderland	5	1	0	1	3	2	0	2	1	1	4	5
Port Vale	5	0	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	5
Portsmouth	5	1	1	1	4	3	0	0	2	3	6	4
Watford	5	1	0	1	4	4	0	1	2	1	3	4
Stoke	5	0	1	2	1	3	1	0	1	4	6	4
Sheff Utd	5	0	0	2	2	5	0	0	3	3	7	0

Boss is pleased by a display of grit

GRIMSBY 0
LUTON TOWN 0

THE POOR performance and result against Derby on Saturday was all the more disappointing for manager Terry Westley after a gritty Town display in midweek.

Satisfaction with a job well done was the reaction of manager and players alike after a point was chiselled out at Blundell Park.

With defence the priority, the match was short of entertainment, but Westley said: "Last year we were rolled over 5-0 here. Luton were notorious for being a soft touch. But we are different now."

The defence, with Kelvin Davis back in goal, had one or two dodgy moments, with Paul Groves shooting wide when he was through and clear in the second half.

But not much else got past Julian James, Steve Davis and Marvin Johnson.

"I am pleased to grind out a 0-0 draw," said the manager. "Now we have to build on that by getting good results at home."

The point was to be rammed home with a vengeance a few days later when Derby all but destroyed his team at Kenilworth Road, on a day when Watford were also grinding out a 0-0 draw at Grimsby.

TOWN: Kelvin Davis; James, Steve Davis, Marvin Johnson; Linton (Peake 82 mins), Alexander, Gavin Johnson, Harvey; Oldfield (Woodsford 72 mins), Marshall (Taylor 87 mins), Guentchev.

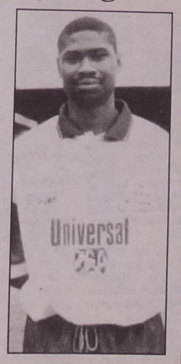
GRIMSBY: Crichton; Laws, Handyside, Lelver, Croft; Dobbin (Ficling 79 mins), Groves, Shakespeare, Southall; Woods, Livingstone. Unused subs Jewell and goalkeeper Pearcey.

GOAL ATTEMPTS: Town six saved and three wide; Grimsby three saved and ten wide. Corners: 4-3 to Grimsby.

REFEREE: Bill Burns, Scarborough.

ATTENDANCE: 4,289.

ENTERTAINMENT: In short supply for the home fans, and the only pleasure for visitors was that the Town proved capable of shutting up a game.



DWIGHT MARSHALL

No excuses for the poor showing

MANAGER Terry Westley made no excuses for the Town before jetting out to Denmark to watch a man who might be the midfield playmaker he wants to replace David Preece.

But perhaps Preece made a valid point when he talked about the team he still hopes does well without him. "I dont know about Luton needing a playmaker," he said. "I feel that since Phil Gray left a couple of years ago Luton haven't had a natural goalscorer. John Taylor is always going to cause problems for opposing defences, but Luton haven't got a player who can score 20 goals a season. Like Dean Sturridge, for instance..."

Westley had dropped Des Linton to give Graham Alexander the job of marking Preece, but admitted one effect was that he reduced the passing ability of his team.

Before the game he reminded his players that Derby would be edgy after their poor start to the season, so the game plan was to hit them hard as early as possible. That worked, with the opening goal in less than a minute, but then the team seemed to lose its way.

"That's the worst we have played," said Westley. "We have got what we deserved.

"But we are better than that. We can be a top six team."

He thought the result would have been better if Bontcho Guentchev had taken the open goal presented to him by Dwight Marshall in the fifth minute.

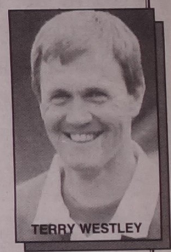
The Bulgarian international accepted that. "I should have scored," he said. "The defender was two yards away but I tried to score with my left foot, when I like to score with the right. I thought I played well, but I know football is about goals."

Preece was welcomed by his old pals, but not by Town chairman David Kohler, who is threatening to take him to court over his free transfer. The 32-year-old midfielder is still on week by week contracts with Derby, waiting for the dispute to be resolved. His fear is that he could end up wearing a price-tag of £200,000 or so.

He felt that on Saturday's evidence, the Town and Derby would both be clear of relegation worries this season.

Derby manager Jim Smith was delighted with the result, but annoyed that his team did not chalk up a bigger win. "We had four situations in the second half where we should have scored," he said.

"It was pleasing to see the number of chances we created, but we didn't put enough of them away. Sturridge could have had four goals. We showed tremendous endeavour, but not a lot of brain. We could have made it a lot easier for ourselves."



TERRY WESTLEY