Big match facts

TOWN: Feuer; Peaks, Steve Davis, Johnson; Alexander, Vilstrup (Waddock 80 mins), Marshall, Guentchev, Taylor (Oldfield 89 mins). Unused sub James.
WOLVES: Stowell; Rankine, Young, Richards, Thompson; Daley, Atkins (Cowans 69 mins), Ferguson, Wright (Williams, 76 mins); Goodman, Bull. Unused sub Venus.
GOAL ATTEMPTS: Town three saved, four wide, and header by John Taylor hit the bar; Wolves four saved and five wide; Corners: 3-2 to Wolves.
REFEREE: Neil Barry, Scunthorpe. Awfully finicky at times, but the Town were pleased he and his linesmen understood the offside law far better than home supporters, who got more and more frustrated as Bull and Goodman transgressed like schoolboys.
BOOKED: Ceri Hughes and Steve Davis for fouls, and Wolves' Don Godman for dissent and Mark Atkins for a foul on Johnny Vilstrup.
ATTENDANCE: 23,659, second lowest league gate of the season at Molineux.
ENTERTAINMENT: Home fans thought it was awful as the Town set out to do a good controlling job, and so nearly nicked all three points. On chances made they should have. They never let Wolves look like a multi-million pound promotion side.

Glimmer of hope

● THUNDERBOLT: The Wolves defensive wall cracks as Town skipper Steve Davis lets fly from a free kick, but the ball went straight into the arms of the keeper.

● BOOTED OUT: Dwight Marshall races through the Wolves defence, but Mike Stowell is about to stick out a large left foot to stop the striker's shot, and one of the game's best chances has gone.

WOLVES 0
LUTON TOWN 0

A GLIMMER of hope shone with the sunshine at Molineux as Luton Town responded to the gathering crisis that would have got worse if they had lost to multi-million promotion candidates Wolves.

A thoroughly professional performance, to be admired for its character and determination if not for its flair, stopped the rot after five defeats.

And if the fans get behind a team that needs all the help it can get, the well-earned draw at Molineux could be the platform for the long-awaited first home win since April when Portsmouth come to Kenilworth Road on Saturday.

After the dire performance in the last home game, manager Terry Westley got almost everything he asked for at Molineux:– plenty of bottle, and a willingness to scrap and battle in every part of the field.

At the end, it was the Wolves' fans who gave their team the bird, having seen Graham Taylor's expensive side forced to run into a warren of blind alleys.

Town supporters had reason to fear the worst before the game, and if they had been offered the away draw most would have taken it with deep gratitude.

In the event, the Town were unlucky not to win, with the woodwork coming to the rescue of Wolves once, and a mixture of good goalkeeping and poor finishing and refereeing spoiling other promising Town moves.

Lack of striking power was again costly, because while the Town and Wolves were firing blanks Port Vale were drawing 2-2 at Reading, which lifted Vale above the Town on goals.

Bottom place in the First Division is the lowest the Town have hit since they came out of the old Third Division 25 years ago.

But given the spirit and endeavour we saw at Wolves, with the addition of the final punch, we can look forward to happier days.

Westley shook up his team again, with four changes – Des Linton was injured and Gary Waddock, Julian James and David Oldfield relegated to the subs' bench.

Back into the side came Marvin Johnson, Graham Alexander and John Taylor, and they all looked hungry for action. So did the rest of the team, and it was a shame that the decision to use three strikers, with Dwight Marshall and Bontcho Guntchev beside Taylor, did not produce the goods where they were needed most.

Taylor did brilliantly: he is playing through pain because of a back injury that needs surgery – but it was Wolves who were close to real agony when the striker rose beautifully to a magnificent near-post corner by Johnny Vilstrup in the 15th minute. Taylor's header came back off the bar, for one of three escapes that kept Wolves in the game in the first half.

The other two were down to Marshall, who gave us a lift by showing that he can dart into scoring positions. Unfortunately, he put the first shot into the side netting, and the second, made by Steve Davis's surging run and through ball, was saved by Mike Stowell's outstretched leg in a one-on-one situation.

The Town needed to be tight at the back against a team that played a lot of

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)	8,427	17
9	Reading	(A)	1-3 (Marshall)	3,550	20
13	Millwall	(A)	0-1	7,076	22
16	Sunderland	(H)	0-2	6,955	23
23	Wolves	(A)	0-0	23,659	24
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).

ANGLO ITALIAN CUP

September 5 1995

Perugia (h) 1- 4 (Guentchev pen) 2,352

Who's who

APPEARANCES... GOALS

League appearances (as sub in brackets)
M Johnson 8
Hughes 5
Oldfield 8 (1)
Harvey 9
Taylor 4 (3)
Guentchev 6 (3)
Alexander 6
Sommer 2
James 6 (1)
S Davis 8
Marshall 8
Thorpe 1 (3)
Thomas 1 (1)
Waddock 4 (2)
Peake 4 (3)
K Davis 4
G Johnson 4
Linton 5
Woodford (2)
Vilstrup 3
Feuer 3

League goals
Guentchev 1 pen
Thorpe 1
Hughes 1
Marshall 2

Assists
Alexander 1
Taylor 1
Guentchev 1
G Johnson 1

Coca Cola Cup
Sommer 2
M Johnson 2
S Davis 2
Oldfield 2
Alexander 2
Marshall 2
Taylor 2
Guentchev 2
Harvey 2
Thomas 1(1)
Hughes 1
James 1
Waddock 1
Thorpe (2)
Matthews (1)

Cup goals
Marshall 1
M Johnson 1

Assists
S Davis 1
Alexander 1

Anglo Italian Cup K
Davies 1
James 1
Skelton 1
S Davies 1
Evers 1
Thorpe 1
Linton 1
Guentchev 1
Hughes 1
Harvey 1
Waddock 1
Marshall 1
Woodsford 1

Goals
Guentchv pen

Assists
Hughes (1)

FA Cup dates
Round 3 Jan 6
Round 4 Jan 27
Round 5.....Feb 17
Round 6 Mar 9
Semi-Final.....Mar 30

© Football League

in the Wolves den

Taylor/Watford football, with Tony Daley the biggest threat on the Wolves right wing.

Richard Harvey was embarrassed by Daley's pace only once, when, to the astonishment of everyone, Jermaine Wright, unmarked beyond the far post, lifted a volley over the bar from the excellent cross delivered by Daley.

It should have been a goal, but it would have been a travesty if Wolves had stolen all three points.

Alexander and Harvey made it a Town back five when danger threatened, and Ceri Hughes had a storming game in a midfield without the tackling power of Gary Waddock. I thought it was the Welshman's best performance since he came back from injury, although it was somewhat unluckily marked with a yellow card for a foul on Don Goodman.

With six goals to his credit already this season, Goodman linked well with Steve Bull, but the Town kept their shape and their nerve admirably, and home fans were taking it out on the ref when the two Wolves front runners dropped into the offside trap time and time again.

Wolves paraded Taylor's fifth million-pound signing, Mark Atkins, for his debut after his transfer from Blackburn Rovers, but he was in a department which Wolves often ignored. And when he did try to make an impact, the Town's workaholics bottled him up effectively.

Vilstrup was among those who dug in, and might have been given the chance of his first goal in England when the Town were awarded a free kick just outside the box. Time for a Danish cannonball, we hoped. But the position was not right for a left-foot shot, and the ball was passed to Steve Davis. Vilstrup could only watch as the skipper's firm drive went straight to Stowell.

Vilstrup cracked a sharp 20-yarder just wide, and the Town were out of luck when Taylor's flick sent Marshall into the penalty area. Eric Young's tackle was more suited to rugby than soccer, but the veteran got away with it and Town appeals for a penalty went unheeded. The look on Wolves players' faces suggested they thought the ref had boobed.

Feuer had to make a good save when Bull was put clear down the middle, but not until the last two minutes did Wolves threaten to break the deadlock. With the desperate crowd roaring them on, and pleading for a goal, Daley wriggled through and shot over, and when Bull rampaged through again Feuer stood up, tall and strong, and made the save.

His first clean sheet, at the third attempt, was the very least the goalkeeper and the team deserved. If the Town had finished as well as they defended, the result would have been even better.

At the final whistle, it was Wolves who trooped off with tails between legs, with the Town's following revelling in the unusual pleasure of seeing a team that was not prepared to be the fall-guys against an outfit with pretensions of playing in the Premiership next season.

● HANDED OFF: Mike Stowell's outstretched arms are a little too long for Dwight Marshall.

● SHOOTING HIGH: Bontcho Guentchev hits a 20-yarder that rose over the bar.

REPORTS BY BRIAN SWAIN
PICTURES BY GARETH OWEN

Fans threaten a home boycott

POSTBAGS at Kenilworth Road, to manager and chairman alike, have been heavy with fans' complaints in the last week or so, and many writers have sent copies to the Sports Editor.

Space precludes the publication of all of them, but most take a similar line. Derek Hitchings, of Alexandra Avenue, Luton, is fairly typical. His letter to chairman David Kohler, written after the home defeat by Sunderland, said:

"I am an ordinary fan who, with my daughter and her boyfriend, have had enough, and we felt we had to put pen to paper.

"We realise that a new manager has to have time to settle in and formulate his plans for the team. Terry says he can see us being top six material, but I don't know which world he is in.

"He says people only judge the results. Well, I'll tell you the fans are judging him by the way we are playing. We are awful. There is no style at all.

"Ask any fan about David Oldfield. Why didn't Millwall keep him after his loan from Leicester? Why do we have free transfers from relegated teams like Ipswich?

"These teams give away their rubbish and prepare for the future. Why weren't Guenchev and Johnson in Ipswich's plans? For that reason.

"We accept Davis should be a good player. Alexander could be. Vilstrup we haven't had a chance to weigh up. Darren Patterson is unfit – I hope he is not another Adcock.

"What really bothers me is that the team has no pattern, no style, no pride, no commitment.

Normally when a new manager takes over you see excitement within the fans and the team.

"After one game we couldn't believe how poor we were. And each game we got worse. I hate to say it, but I hoped Sunderland would thrash us to bring it home what a poor team we are.

"Sunderland are very ordinary, and yet after half-time they raised their game and swept us aside.

"Terry thinks that anyone who criticises are yobs, as at Reading. But we are decent fans. We will be at Molineux, but not at the home game against Portsmouth, in protest.

"This will hurt us, as we are usually at every game. I feel that if we turn up at every game no-one will take any notice. If the problem is not addressed we are going down: 1-0 wins over the likes of Southend will not cover up the cracks which have been evident from the beginning.

"Every fan I have talked to feels the same. I hate hearing the jeering at home games, and wonder if you feel the hurt that the fans feel with this team."

How they stand

ENDSLEIGH LEAGUE FIRST DIVISION

		HOME					AWAY				
	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A
Pts Leicester	9	2	1	2	9	9	3	0	6	2	17
Millwall	9	2	1	2	4	4	3	1	0	4	1 17
Barnsley	9	3	1	1	8	9	2	0	2	7	9 16
Charlton	9	3	1	0	8	4	1	2	2	6	5 15
Norwich	9	2	2	0	4	2	2	1	2	9	8 15
West Brom	9	3	1	0	5	1	1	2	2	7	8 15
Sunderland	9	2	1	1	5	3	2	2	1	5	5 15
Ipswich	9	4	0	1	13	8	0	2	2	3	6 14
Oldham	9	3	1	1	10	5	1	1	2	4	5 14
Huddersfield	9	4	0	1	11	5	0	1	3	2	8 13
Tranmere	8	1	3	0	7	5	2	1	1	5	2 13
Grimsby	9	2	3	0	5	3	1	1	2	5	7 13
Birmingham	9	2	2	0	7	3	1	1	3	9	9 12
Reading	9	2	1	2	9	9	0	4	0	2	2 11
Southend	9	2	1	1	4	3	1	1	3	5	7 11
Sheff Utd	9	2	0	2	6	6	1	1	3	7	10 10
C. Palace	8	1	2	0	5	4	1	2	2	4	6 10
Wolves	9	2	2	1	8	4	0	1	3	3	7 9
Watford	9	2	2	1	8	5	0	1	3	3	7 9
Derby Co	9	1	2	1	2	2	1	1	3	6	11 9
Portsmouth	9	1	2	2	6	7	1	1	2	6	7 9
Stoke	9	1	2	2	3	4	1	1	2	5	10 6
Port Vale	9	0	1	3	1	6	1	2	2	4	5 6
Luton Town	**9**	**0**	**1**	**3**	**3**	**8**	**1**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**4 6**

LUTON TOWN FOOTBALL CLUB

Manager praises new bottle

GRAHAM Taylor and Terry Westley sat side by side on the platform in the Pressroom at Molineux, in a magnificent stadium that has Premiership stamped all over it in terms of facilities.

All Wolves fans want now is a team to match. Taylor has spent around £12million so far to try to realise Jack Hayward's dreams, and the locals are getting restless after he failed to deliver the goods last season.

It was the former England boss who had to face the most searching questions, and criticisms, from a Midlands Press corps that is getting disenchanted with Wolves' results.

The unanimous view from the Pressbox was that Luton were the side who deserved to win, and Taylor was rattled when the man from The Sun asked what was wrong with his team, and what could be done to put things right.

Having suffered personal vilification from the tabloids as England boss, when The Sun memorably turned him into a turnip for not beating the Swedes, he refused to discuss the question, speaking somewhat vaguely about taking positive views. Avoiding defeat was the only one that occurred to the local Press observers.

But they gave credit for the way the Town did their job, and Westley spoke with pride of the way his players showed a lot more bottle that they had done at Kenilworth Road a week earlier.

Taylor claimed it might have been a 3-3 draw, and must have struck a chord with Westley when he spoke of pressure and the home crowd's unkind reactions when Don Goodman and Steve Bull failed to make the breakthrough. "Players are doing their best, and they need to be supported," he said.

He added that because crowds are more concerned about results than performances, they are no help when they add to the tensions, and Westley weighed in with a telling remark: "Our players are terrified of playing at home."

He was delighted that at least scoring chances were created, against a team he still thinks is a good bet for promotion.

"We had the bottle to get the ball down and play it," he said. "And I thought we played well.

"Very good approach play enabled Dwight Marshall to get into scoring positions. I was delighted with that, but disappointed that he missed his opportunities."

And Taylor's last word was something for all young managers to think about. "You never play as badly when you lose as people say you do... and you never play as well when you win as people say you have done."