

Luton rise on a tide of good fortune

95/96

Jasper Rees believes justice was not done

Boncho Guentchev, a cause of much derision among home supporters, scored his first League goal for Luton, and the score finished 3-1.

Later, John Taylor turned Gittens on the halfway line and tumbled to the floor. The referee compounded his error with a harsh second booking, and the game was all but over.

The less controversial incidents were confined to the first half, in which Marshall gave Luton an early lead by beating Portsmouth's square defence to a huge free-kick from goalkeeper Ian Feuer. Feuer had to intervene when Lee Bradbury pounced on an awful back-pass, and that save established a daunting authority.

Portsmouth were much less certain in defence: a free-kick by the influential Johnny Vilstrup was saved by Alan Knight but not cleared, and Steve Davis tucked in the return to cushion the lead.

In the second half, manager Terry Fenwick reinforced his defence and, doubtless coincidentally, all the silliness started. Terry Westley, the Luton manager, announced reinforcements of his own: Taylor is to have an operation, and Mark Strudel, formerly of Brondby and Borussia Dortmund, arrives today on a month's loan.

Luton Town: Feuer; Peake, Davis, Johnson; Alexander (James 79), Hughes, Vilstrup (Waddock, 49), Marshall, Harvey; Taylor, Guentchev. **Sub:** Oldfield. **Goals:** Marshall (9), Davis (25), Genchev (pen 61).

Portsmouth: Knight; Pethick (Wood 45), Gittens, Butters, Russell; Hall, McLoughlin (Igoe 73), Simpson, Rees (Durnin 66); Bradbury, Walsh. **Goal:** Walsh (44). **Booked:** Gittens. **Sent off:** Gittens.

Referee: J Rejer (Tipton).

LUTON do not deserve to be bottom of the First Division, and by the end of the afternoon they weren't. A second win in 10 attempts came courtesy of palsied Portsmouth defending and an extraordinary refereeing performance that handed Luton a bizarre penalty and saw Jon Gittens unaccountably dismissed.

The game had already provided entertainment enough when, 2-1 up and cruising, Dwight Marshall, the breakaway scorer of Luton's first, tore into the Portsmouth area only to be dispossessed by Gittens's beautifully-timed sliding tackle.

No doubt mindful that seconds earlier he should have been firmer when Paul Walsh shoved Gary Waddock in the other corner of the area, Paul Rejer promptly pointed to the spot, then booked Gittens for dissent.