

Sport 3

Big match facts

TOWN: Feuer, Peake (James HT), Davis, Marvin Johnson, Alexander, Hughes, Waddock, Harvey, Oldfield, Woodford, Marshall, Unused subs Guentchev and McLaren.

WEST BROM: Naylor, Burgess, Mardon, Raven, Agnew (Smith 65 mins), Ashcroft, Coldicott, Cunningham, Donovan, Gilbert (Hunt 55 mins), Taylor. Unused goalkeeper sub Pease.

GOALS: 1-0, Richard Harvey left-footer after Albion allowed Steve Davis's long ball to get through the middle, 1-1 74 mins: Lee Ashcroft header from right wing cross by Kevin Donovan; 1-2, 83 mins: Andy Hunt scrambled effort from centre by Donovan.

OTHER ATTEMPTS: Town four saved, including a penalty by Steve Davis which was pushed onto a post by Stuart Naylor, and four wide. Albion two saved, one of which they claimed was over the line after it hit a post and was grabbed by Ian Feuer, and three wide. Corners: 7-3 to West Brom.

REFEREE: Graham Barber, Warwick. His slight bookings were no reflection of the way the game was played, and he also managed to make each half last 50 minutes. Referring by the letter of the law is not enough when the law of commonsense is not applied as well.

BOOKED: For fouls - Town's Richard Harvey, Ian Feuer and Graham Alexander and West Brom's Cunningham, Taylor and Mardon. For dissent: Town skipper Davis and Albion's Raven.

ATTENDANCE: 8,042, highest of the season so far.

ENTERTAINMENT: Excellent until everything went wrong in the last 20 minutes: despite the result and the league table position, the Town played a lot of good football, and the team could not be faulted for effort, but lack of the knock-out blow was crucial.

Inner doubts leave Town on the rocks

From back page

"When you are losing it becomes much a habit as winning, but harder to change," he added.

Despite being bottom of the First Division, the players believe in themselves, and there were good reasons at Kenilworth Road on Saturday to think a revival is possible.

But not if the few scoring chances being created are wasted. The Town looked more menacing than West Brom in their general play until the late stages, but were unable to build on an early goal, and the penalty miss by Steve Davis was as good as giving one to the opposition.

That would have regained the lead, but instead West Brom punished the spot kick failure with a late winner to boost themselves into third place in the table.

With Johnny Vilstrup, Scott Oakes and John Taylor missing through injuries, the Town's reshuffled pack often looked a good unit.

I made Richard Harvey and goalkeeper Ian Feuer the closest contenders to Waddock for the Town man of the year.

AERIAL BATTLE: Steve Davis stretches in vain at the back post as a corner puts West Brom under first-half pressure.

SPOT OF BOTHER: Steve Davis's penalty is saved by Stuart Naylor.



Report by Brian Swain Pictures by Gareth Owen

match honours, and the introduction of Jamie Woodford for his second full league game, added a little more determi-

nation than we had seen from Bontcho Guentchev.

Manager Westley was left to point out the handful of crucial turning points that cost him the win he and his team so desperately wanted.

West Brom's defence stood and watched when Harvey left-footed the Town into a 19th-minute lead from a through ball by Steve Davis.

The Town got well on top but could not add the goal that might have killed off a bedraggled visiting outfit.

Albion were not allowed a single shot on target in the first half, but Stuart Naylor tipped over a thundering volley by the improving Graham Alexander,

and Dwight Marshall shot wide from an opening made by Woodford's surge.

Julian James replaced Trevor Peake at the interval after the veteran had been injured in a collision with Feuer, but for the first ten minutes of the second half the pattern was the same.

A brilliant breakaway from a West Brom corner should have made it 2-0, but after Ceri Hughes and Waddock passed quickly and accurately to send in David Oldfield, the midfielder on the ball and Naylor made a good save at his feet.

Albion manager Alan Buckley had given his men a rollicking at half-time, and ten minutes later, still unhappy with the way they were second best, he was on Andy Hunt to replace Dave Gilbert.

And Hunt had a storming game. He was angry at being dropped, determined to prove he should have been picked, and transformed the proceedings.

Albion started to make better use of the flanks, their passing improved 10

per cent, and the loss of defender Paul Agnew with a knee injury made little difference to their resurgence.

Hunt sent Kevin Donovan heading Harvey to deliver a perfect cross from which Lee Ashcroft headed the equaliser.

West Brom claimed that was belated justice: two minutes earlier Stacey Coldicott's shot from Hunt's pass hit the post and was saved by Feuer. "It was a goal," said Coldicott later. "I don't know whether it crossed the line or not," said the keeper. "The linesman said he couldn't see, but it was certainly not a yard over, as some were saying."

Even after conceding the equaliser, the Town showed the capability of restoring their supremacy.

Referee Graham Barber had a poor game, with over-use of the yellow cards, but even Albion

Sport 4



STRIKING PROSPECT: 18-year-old Jamie Woodford, who made the second full league appearance of his career, and earned praise from his manager.

agreed he was right to give a penalty when Paul Mardon brought down Marshall on a run for goal.

Guentchev, with a 100 per cent record from the spot, watched from the dug-out as Davis took the kick, and Naylor dived to his right to save a side-footed effort that was looking for placing rather than power.

West Brom took heart from that, while the Town's inner doubts and worries surfaced again, and seven minutes from time Hunt nicked the winner, cashing in on a lucky bounce and deflection after a cross by Donovan.

There was no way back after that and whatever slight pleasure we might take from some of the football the Town played, today's league table makes it seem very slight indeed.

Julian James collected the only Town booking - three to the Italians might have been half a dozen or more - and Town fans enjoyed seeing the ref almost book Doc Berry, who was sitting on a ten-man bench.

James was cut when an Italian player's ring made contact with his face. A linesman saw it, and did nothing, which had Westley on his feet, pointing an accusing finger at the linesman.

Westley was wearing his spikes at the time. The linesman complained to the ref, who went to the bench and threatened the bespectacled club doctor with a yellow card.

Westley appeared for the second half without specs, and with a different tone on his training gear.

In the Town were without Ian Feuer, Ceri Hughes, Trevor Peake, Gary Waddock and Dwight Marshall, and the luckless deputies.

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EXTRA injuries added to the misery of the night when the Town were outplayed in the Anglo Italian Cup, conceding four goals again.

The diehard fans who forked out money and gave up wages or took time to go to Genoa made their feelings clear, with manager Terry Westley given the bird by some as he walked across the pitch at half time.

Genoa, relegated from Italy's top flight on a penalty shoot-out last season, are leading Serie B and went close to humiliating the Town. Italian Pressmen could not believe an English First Division side could be made to look so poor.

In fact it was not the Town's worst performance of the season - but they were streets behind the home side in just about every aspect of football.

Fans questioned if too many men were out of their depth - including the manager.

He spoke to some of them in the airport departure lounge on Thursday. "They wanted explanations, and I tried to give them," he said. "Supporters have the right to have their say. But all of us here, manager, coaches and players, are supporters of this club as well."

"At Genoa we were up against a very, very good side. They played the same sort of system that we do, but they were much better. Their movement was brilliant. In this country, compared to that, we play standing still."

That seemed particularly true of the first 32 minutes, when Genoa eased into a three-goal lead.

In 90 minutes the Town managed two shots on target, a first-half header by David Oldfield, which was cleared off the ball, and a 30-yarder by Scott Oakes which went straight to the goalkeeper.

Between times the Town were suffering shadows, and occasionally cushioned from Stoke referee Jim Rushion, who seemed intent on making the game as comfortable as possible for a home manager on marginal decisions.

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Reports and gossip from Town

SC GENOA 4 LUTON TOWN 0

were left to play the part of school-boys being given a lesson by soccer masters.

In a magnificent stadium Genoa varied their play brilliantly, equally comfortable with long and short passes. They were so much on top they gave the impression of having men to spare all over the field.

Looking for positive points was a bit of a struggle, but at least Des Linton and Oakes continued their rehabilitation after long injury absences. Paul McLaren again suggested he might be a good defensive midfielder, but his inexperience showed when Steve Davis moved too far upfield and Genoa made deadly use of the space behind him. No-one dropped back to cover that danger, and in the tiny but energetic figure of Montella the home side had a centre-forward who looked like Paul Walsh in the 1982 videos some of us watched on the journey to Italy.

It's no pleasure seeing your team stuffed, but at least Genoa reminded us of how beautiful football can be when top players are on song.

A set piece, and questions about Kelvin Davis, led to the 18th-minute opener, headed by Skuhravy in Mark Hateley style. Six minutes later a quick break caught the Town up and the winger roared forward. By the time he was ready to cross he had two colleagues in readiness, with not a defender in sight, and Montella converted with ease.

A long ball over the top of Steve Davis put in Nicola for the third goal in the 32nd minute and it was no contest after that.

Bontcho Guentchev and Oldfield never looked like matching the threat of the Genoa attackers, and the most the Town could hope for in the second half was damage limitation.

Magoni hit the bar with a cracking 25-yarder, but the Town almost avoided further embarrassment until five minutes from time.

Kevin Davis charged out of his area, made a hash of a clearance attempt, and presented Montella with his second goal. To be fair to Davis, he then pulled off the best save of the game to prevent further disaster after Skuhravy struck an incredible volley, with his body horizontal three feet or more off the ground.

TOWN: K. Davis; James (Alexander 30 mins), S. Davis, M. Johnson; Linton, McLaren, Vilstrup, Harvey, Oakes, Guentchev (Woodford 57 mins), Oldfield (Thorne 73 mins), Unused subs: G. Johnson, Chenerly, Abbes (8).

ATTENDANCE: 3,759, included almost certainly by Genoa, who got some lovely stuff. The Town were outclassed.

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Tester on TV

MIDFIELDERS Scott Oakes and Johnny Vilstrup should be fit again to join Luton Town's promotion battles at Ipswich on Sunday.

Both aggravated old injuries in Genoa, in the Anglo-Italian Cup, and missed the game against West Brom.

Yesterday manager Terry Westley said: "If it had been desperate I suppose either or both could have turned out against West Brom. But it was not worth taking the risk."

"And with this week's game on Sunday, we have an extra day to give everyone fighting fit to try to give us the victory we need."

The Town's major doubt is Trevor Peake, who has slotted in at right back recently in the three-man rearguard. He is under treatment for a sore and bruised hip after colliding with Ian Feuer and an Albion player. He had to miss the second half, and at this stage it is too early to say if he will be all right for the TV match at Portman Road. The hip joint stiffened up considerably over the weekend.

If Peake is ruled out Julian James is the ready-made replacement.

Westford is one for the future, Westley said he was thinking over the "very interesting" question of whether Portman Road was the right place to give Guentchev another chance.

The dilemma is that leaving him out does nothing for the Bulgarian's confidence, but nor does putting him in if he cannot find the goal standard.

"I'll think about, as I will about the whole team," said the manager.

Agent slammed

TERRY Westley blasted a soccer agent this week over Press reports that Irish under-21 international David Greene was about to join Coventry City on loan.

The manager said: "The story is completely wrong. I can only assume it was put out by David Greene's agent, because Ron Atkinson and I had spoken about Greene, but neither of us mentioned it to anyone else."

"The only other person who knew was the player. If the agent was hoping to provoke a transfer, he has failed."

"Atkinson and I had a personal conversation about various players, and several names were mentioned on both sides. There is a rule that allows a club to take a player from another club on trial, to play him in a couple of reserve games to have a look at him."

"We spoke about Greene in that context, as a possibility, and that might still happen. But I don't think it will happen. Although it is no happier than I am at the way a garbled story has come out."

Coach John Moore was more pleased than usual, because his team included seven first-team apprentices and a school-boy. And he was delighted to see the way they responded after conceding a goal early in the second half after going two to one down.

The goals came from Andrew Barr, Andrew Smith, Steve Augustine and Chris Willmott (penalty).

The lads are set to move to Crystal Palace on Saturday in the League Cup, with the kick-off at Newlands Road at 11 am.

The reserves play Charlton at Kenilworth Road tonight (7.30).

Town's season at a glance....

DATE... OPPONENTS... RESULT... SCORERS... ATTENDANCE... LEAGUE POSITION

ENDSLEIGH LEAGUE DIV 1
August 1995

13 Norwich	(H)	1-3 (Guentchev, pen)	7,348	-
13 Southend	(A)	1-0 (Harvey)	4,820	-
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)	1-3 (Marshall)	8,550	20
13 Millwall	(A)	0-1	7,076	22
16 Sunderland	(H)	2-2	6,985	23
23 Wolves	(A)	0-0	23,469	24
30 Portsmouth	(H)	3-1 (Marshall, Davis, Guentchev pen)	7,795	23

October

7 Tranmere	(A)	0-1	6,680	24
14 West Brom	(H)	1-2	8,042	24

COCA-COLA CUP (First Round)
August 1995

15 Bourne' th	(H)	1-1 (Marshall)	2,728	-
22 Bourne' th	(A)	1-2 (ast) (M. Johnson)	4,844	-

Bournemouth win 3-2 on aggregate.

ANGLO ITALIAN CUP
September 5 1995

Perugia	(H)	1-4 (Guentchev pen) 2,352	-	-
Genoa	(A)	0-4	3,759	-

How they stand

ENDSLEIGH LEAGUE FIRST DIVISION
HOME AWAY ALL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	
Leicester	12	2	2	6	10	4	2	0	9	4	22	12	
Millwall	12	2	2	6	6	4	2	0	7	3	22	12	
West Brom	12	2	2	8	3	2	2	2	7	7	19	12	
Sunderland	12	2	3	1	8	6	3	1	4	1	6	5	20
Birmingham	12	3	0	9	3	2	1	3	10	9	19	9	
Norwich	12	3	2	1	7	4	2	2	10	9	19	9	
Barnsley	12	3	2	0	11	1	1	3	9	13	18	11	
Tranmere	11	2	3	1	10	8	2	2	1	7	4	17	
Charlton	12	3	2	1	9	6	1	3	7	2	6	17	
Oldham	12	3	2	1	11	6	1	3	2	5	6	17	
Grimsby	12	2	4	0	6	4	1	3	2	6	8	17	
Southend	12	2	4	1	7	1	1	4	7				
Ipswich	12	4	0	2	14	10							
Huddersfield	12	4	0	2	11	7	1	1	4	5	12	16	
Reading	12	3	1	2	12	10	0	5	1	4	6	15	
Doncaster	12	3	2	4	5	2	2	2	10	6	12	14	
Derby Co	12	3	2	4	5	2	2	2	10	6	12	14	
C.Palace	11	3	1	3	6	6	2		8	11	14	14	
Wolves	12	2	2	2	9	8	1	2	3	7	10	13	
Sheff Wed	12	2	2	2	8	6	1	2	3	7	10	13	
Blackburn	12	2	1	3	8	10	1	1	4	8	12	11	
Preston	12	2	1	3	8	10	2	2	3	8	11	10	
Port Vale	12	0	2	4	10	2							
Luton Town	12	1	1	4	7	11	2	2	3	2	5	9	