

Sport 3

Big match facts

TOWN: Feuer; Alexander, Peake, Davis, Harvey; Hughes, Vilstrup (Oldfield 69 mins), Gavin Johnson, Oakes; Marshall, Riseth. Unused subs James and McLaren.

STOKE: Prudhoe; Clarkson (Cranson 87 mins), Sigurdsson, Overson, Sandford; Keen, Wallace, Gleghorn, Potter; Peschisolido (Gayle 59 mins), Carruthers (Sturridge HT).

GOALS: Paul Peschisolido, 14 mins; Simon Sturridge, 73 mins; John Gayle 75 mins; Sturridge again, 87 mins; Nigel Gleghorn 89 mins.

OTHER ATTEMPTS: Town two saved and five wide; Stoke seven saved and seven wide. Corners: 8-2 to Stoke.

REFEREE: John Lloyd.

Wrexham: enjoyed a no-fuss afternoon when his hardest job was counting Stoke's goals.

ATTENDANCE: 9,382 including a couple of hundred suffering die-hards from Luton.

ENTERTAINMENT: You can't enjoy humiliation, which is what it was, with the Town falling apart and looking a disorganised and dejected bunch after the second goal went in to kill signs of a possible revival.

Belief goes to pot in

From back page

The price of defeat got worse 24 hours later, when Port Vale drew at Oldham to leave the hapless Hatters bottom of the table again.

The Town's heaviest defeat since David Platt's team went to Grimsby in February came after Westley was forced, for the first time this season, to employ a conventional back four instead of the previous three-man rearguard.

Marvin Johnson was injured in training 24 hours before the game, and with Mitchell Thomas also injured, and David Greene suspended, Westley decided he had to make the change that many supporters have been calling for.

It took the team half an hour or so to look anything like comfortable with 4-4-2. And after they did settle down, Steve Davis, inspirational skipper though he is, made a crucial error of judgement in the build-up to the second Stoke goal.

After that it was embarrassing for Town supporters as only Ian Feuer seemed determined enough to put up a fight.

"Too many players went on the tilt after that goal," said Westley. "Half the team thought it was all over. We were opened up, with gaps all over the place, and Stoke could have scored then. They outpowered us."

He was able to recall, with justification and the agreement of Macari, that after Paul Peschisolido had exploited slack marking to shoot the 14th-minute opener the Town had got back into the game.

"In the last 15 minutes of the first half, we woke up and started to play better," he said. "We got to grips with the game, and fought our way back into it. We started the second half the same, but then Steve Davis chose to come out, missed the ball, and they



**REPORT BY BRIAN SWAIN
PICTURES BY GARETH OWEN**

scored again. And the team went after that.

The trouble was that when possession was evenly divided between the teams, Stoke always looked the more menacing in attack.

Vidar Riseth was given his full debut, but was part of a front line that always seemed to be scattered too far apart.

He was a centimetre or two away from reaching an early centre by Graham Alexander that might have brought a goal, but the other threats to Mark Prudhoe were few and far

between. The Norwegian kick wide when a poor back pass set up a half-chance from an angle.

After going one down, the Town's strikers were woefully over-optimistic: Gavin Johnson shot too high from 30 yards, and from closer range Ceri Hughes lofted a free kick halfway to heaven, to the great amusement of the home crowd.

The best first-half chance was created by Alexander's clever pass into the inside right slot, but Dwight Marshall was unable to cash in, blocked by Prudhoe's rapid advance

GETTING STUCK IN: Vidar Riseth, on his full debut, rises with Stoke goalkeeper Mark Prudhoe in a challenge which was called a foul by the Norwegian.

and spreading save.

And for all their equality in the later stages of the first half, the Town were let off the hook just before the break when Ray Wallace mistimed a shot when left unmarked in front of goal to meet a cross by Peschisolido. Feuer made an easy catch, and Town hopes were that after such a stunning miss Stoke might be made to pay.

It was not to be, because after competing well, without looking sharp enough to equalise, the Town fell

DATE... OPPONENTS... RESULT... 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)	4,830	-		
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) 0-1 (Marshall)	6,552	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) 3-1 (Marshall, Davis, Guentchev pen)	7,795	23		
October					
7 Tranmere	(A) 0-1	6,680	24		
14 West Brom	(H) 1-2 (Harvey)	8,042	24		
22 Ipswich	(A) 1-2 (Oldfield)	9,123	21		
29 Charlton	(H) 0-1	6,270	22		
November					
4 Stoke	(A) 0-5	9,382	24		
COCA-COLA CUP (First Round) August 1995					
15 Bournemouth	(H) 1-1 (Marshall)	2,728			
22 Bournemouth	(A) 2-2 (aet) (M Johnson)	4,844			
(Bournemouth win 3-2 on aggregate.)					
ANGLO ITALIAN CUP September 5 1995					
Perugia	(H) 1-4	2,352			
Genoa	(A) 0-4	3,759			

How they stand

ENDSLEIGH LEAGUE FIRST DIVISION

HOME										
P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A
Millwall	15	3	2	8	7	5	3	0	11	6
Leicester	15	2	2	3	13	6	2	0	15	7
Birmingham	15	4	0	14	6	3	1	3	12	10
Sunderland	15	3	1	10	7	3	4	1	8	12
Tranmere	14	3	1	18	9	2	3	1	8	5
Wrexham	15	5	1	2	12	7	2	3	10	11
Barnsley	15	4	3	1	12	12	2	1	4	10
Charlton	15	3	4	1	11	8	2	3	2	8
Oldham	15	4	3	1	15	9	1	3	3	6
Norwich	15	3	3	1	8	5	2	3	13	13
Huddersfield	15	5	1	2	15	10	1	2	4	12
Sunderland	15	3	1	3	13	14	1	1	2	7
Ipswich	15	4	1	3	16	13	4	2	10	10
Southend	15	4	2	1	7	4	1	2	5	7
Stoke	15	2	4	2	10	6	2	3	10	18
Reading	15	2	4	1	7	4	2	4	10	17
Derby Co	15	2	4	1	7	4	2	4	10	17
Wolves	15	3	2	2	10	8	1	3	4	12
C. Palace	14	1	3	7	10	3	2	2	9	17
Watford	15	2	4	2	11	9	1	4	9	14
Sheff Utd	15	3	1	4	13	14	1	1	5	8
Portsmouth	15	2	2	3	10	10	1	2	5	10
Port Vale	15	0	2	5	12	2	4	2	9	12
Luton Town	15	1	5	7	12	2	2	4	3	10

APPEARANCES... GOALS

League appearances (as sub in brackets)		Harvey		McLaren	
Harvey	15	Taylor	1	Vilstrup	1
Steve Davis	14	Oldfield	1	Oakes	1
Marshall	13	Guentchev	1	Alexander	1
M Johnson	13	Guentchev	1		
Alexander	13	G. Johnson	1	Goals	
Oldfield	11	Marshall	1	Guentchev	1
Peake	10	S. Davis	1	Sommer	2
Hughes	10	Feuer	1	M Johnson	2
Feuer	9	Marshall	1	S. Davis	2
Cup goals		Cup goals		Oldfield	2
Guentchev	8	Marshall	1	Alexander	2
Waddock	7	M Johnson	1	Marshall	2
James	6			Taylor	2
Vilstrup	6	Assists		Guentchev	2
Taylor	5	S. Davis	1	Harvey	2
Linton	5	Anglo Italian Cup		Thorpe	2
G. Johnson	5	K. Davies	2	Thomas	1
Kelvin Davis	4	James	2	James	1
Oakes	4	Skelton	1	Hughes	1
Sommer	2	S. Davis	2	Matthews	1
Evers	2	Waddock	1		
Woodsford	1	Thorpe	1	Goals	
Riseth	1	Linton	2	Marshall and Marvin	
Thomas	1	Guentchev	2	Johnson	1
McLaren	1	Hughes	2		
Marshall	1	Harvey	2	Assists	
Waddock	1	Marshall	1	Steve Davis and	
Thorpe	1	Oldfield	2	Alexander	1
Davis	1	M Johnson	1		

Sport 4

Reports and gossip from Town

the fatal closing minutes

After Stoke were forced to send on two subs to replace their injured striking pair, John Gayle and Simon Sturridge had everything to prove, and were lucky enough to meet a team that lost its defensive brains. Feuer made two brilliant saves to deny Sturridge and Wallace, but had no chance when a long clearance let in Sturridge for Stoke's second goal after 73 minutes.

The Town's confidence and self-belief vanished after that, with Gayle bombing in an angled 25-yarder within two minutes after being left unmarked to pick up a poor clearance header by Trevor Peake.

Scott Oakes, a fitful attacker and anonymous midfielder, might have pulled one back shortly afterwards, but his shot was charged down when he got to the rebound first after Riseth's cross-shot was misplaced.

The closer calls came at the other end, with Richard Harvey clearing off the line from Lee Sandford's header, and Sturridge going clear then shooting wide.

But he made no mistake in the 87th minute after being set up by Wallace, who looked well offside before making the pass. And as injury time was reached Nigel Gleghorn got the end of another attack that sliced through the Town, shrugged off a challenge by Harvey and completed Stoke's second home win of the season.

And if the Town manager still believes his team is capable of a top six finish,



HELD OFF: Dwight Marshall battles to try to find a way through the Stoke defence.

Hughes stands by for Wales

MIDFIELDER Ceri Hughes is back on the international scene. He has been put on stand-by by Wales, who play in Latvia next Wednesday in the European championships. And if, as often happens, players drop out after this week's league games, he has a chance of being recalled.

He won the fourth of his four full caps nearly two years ago, but then dropped out of the Welsh reckoning when injuries put him out of football for almost a year.

DEFENDER Marvin Johnson, whose enforced absence at Stoke led to a new look defensive formation, will be back to help Luton Town's battle for survival at Kenilworth Road on Saturday.

He was much missed at Stoke, having been ruled out by a calf injury sustained in training 24 hours before the game.

And it led to manager Terry Westley opting for a 4-4-2 formation, instead of the three at the back formula he prefers, and which will be used again against Oldham. And yesterday he said the result, the worst beating he has suffered as a manager, confirmed his view that players, not tactics, win them.

Patterson makes his debut at last

(Continued from back page)

He is known as a strong tackler and very determined individual, but he was struck down by a broken injury, and has already missed a third of what is so far a very troubled season for Luton.

He has now been given a clean bill of health after resuming training last week, and tonight's match in Italy will be his first match experience since last season.

He is a tremendous character, and he wants to get match fit before he can be a serious contender for a place in the league side.

Midfield-born Patterson is keen to break back into league soccer: with Crystal Palace he had become a fixture in the Northern Ireland side, with

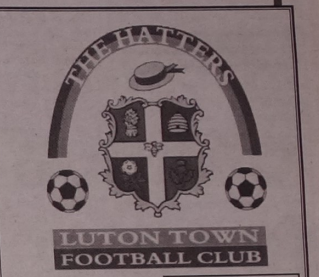
eight caps won so far, and is desperate to get back into the international scene.

Knowing that qualification for the next round is nearly impossible, Westley will experiment tonight's match, and is considering using skipper Steve Davis in midfield.

It was an under-strength Town party that flew out yesterday, with the manager admitting that, with hindsight, the Anglo-Italian competition had not been much help to him.

The club will come out of it losing around £10,000. The money-making potential is in reaching the final at Wembley, and after losing their first two matches, at home to Perugia and away to Genoa, the Town have little chance of doing that.

"On reflection, I don't think the Anglo Italian Cup has been much help to us," said Westley. "We



IF TERRY Westley deserves the sack for leading a team that has again slumped to bottom of the First Division, he reckons he is in good company.

Chairman David Kohler is keeping faith with a 36-year-old manager who is learning his Football League trade the hard way.

"You blame the players for what we saw in the later stages at Stoke, not the manager," he said. "I still have faith in Terry."

Westley said: "Of course I feel under pressure. We're bottom of the table and it's painful."

Asked if he feared the sack after three wins in his first 15 league games in charge, he said: "In this business you know what the bottom line is. But you might as well sack half the managers in the division. I bet there's a bit of pressure at Sheffield United, Watford, Wolves, Port Vale and Portsmouth."

"Wins change everything, but we know that everyone here has got to be fired up to get a couple of good results. We need people who can guarantee to give 100 per cent effort, and I can promise I am one of them."

"And the First Division table is very tight. We're bottom but we're only 13 points away from the top six. We mustn't feel sorry for ourselves. We must get on and do a job, and we need commitment from first second to last in every match."

Bidder for club says it is all a wind-up

THE MAN who flushed out the news that David Kohler was setting £5million as the negotiating figure for Luton Town admitted this week that the chairman was dead right to be suspicious of him. It was a hoax.

David Smith, a 36-year-old motor trader who is dealer from Colchester said: "I read about Luton being up for sale, and rang David Kohler for a laugh. I was winding him up."

"When he said the asking price was £5million, I thought the local paper at Luton ought to know that."

The information he gave was checked by us with the Town chairman, who confirmed that the asking price was indeed £5million, but was subject to negotiation.

Smith has a reputation for hoaxes. He has previously played the part of a potential buyer of Rotherham and reserves turned in a fair performance, with Julian James their goalkeeper.

Andrew Barr was the youth team's marksmen against Barnet, when you can learn more from Luton.

The Reserves play Norwich at Kenilworth Road tonight.