### Big match facts

2 Derby 9 Reading 13 Millwall 16 Sunderl'd

7 Tranmere 14 W Brom

2 West Brom 5 Charlton 9 Stoke 13 Birminghan

4 Oldham

ENDSLEIGH LEAGUE DIVISION ONE

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

MARCH

DECEMBER 2 (Marshall 2, McLaren)6,025 - 23

(Guentchev, Oakes 2)6,566 - 24 (Guentchev pen) 12,474 - 23

(Alexander, Guentchev, Marshall)

AUGUST (Guentchev pen)

REFEREE: Brian Knight, Kent: in his first season on the league list. Some would hope it will also

be his last.

IOOKED: Mitchell Thomas, Steve Davis, Gary Waddock, Cerl Hughes and Darren Patterson of the Town, and Grimsby's Vance

Warner.
ATTENDANCE: 7,158 - the fans are trickling back. This was the best gate since mid-November, and despite a very small following

from Grimsby.
ENTERTAINMENT: Plenty of blood
and thunder on a tacky soft pitch,
with the turn-round in fortunes in
the final half-hour making it
memorable for home supporters.
So was Graham Alexander's first

Luton Town's season at a glance.

Confident

Hatters

6 4 21 18 2 5 6 14 19

28 5 4 6 22 23 3 4 6 6 17

28 3 4 6 16 20 4 6 5 17 20 28 6 2 6 18 17 2 2 10 15 31

28 6 3 5 19 18 1 8

29 4 4 6 18 21 2 5

Aug 15 (1) Bournemouth H 1-1 (Marshall) 2,728 Aug 22 (2) Bournemouth A 1-2 (M. Johnson) 4,844

Jan 6 Round 3 Grimsby A 1-7 (Marshall)

ANGLO-ITALIAN CUP Sep 5 Perugia H 1-4 (Guentchev pen) Oct 11 Genoa A 0-4 Nov 8 Cesena A 1-2 (Marshall)

Dec 13 Ancona H 5-0 (Oakes, Marshall, Taylor,

HER ATTEMPTS: Town four

7,848 -4,630 -

8,550 -7.076 -

23.659 - 24

9,382 - 23 6,047 - 23 7,920 - 23

Huddersfd

Sunderland

7,612 - 17 4,289 - 10

## Victory is

GOALS

**ENDSLEIGH LEAGUE** 

GOALS: Marshall 8, Guentchev 6 (three pens),

ASSISTS: Thorpe 5; Alexander 4; Oakes, Marshall,

Guentchev, Harvey 2; Oldfield, Taylor, M Johnson,

G Johnson, S Davis, Vilstrup, Feuer, Hughes, Thomas

APPEARANCES, as sub in brackets: Harvey 24

Alexander 21 (1); Feuer 21; Hughes (18) 1; Waddock 16 (4); Oakes 15; Peake 14 (3); James 13 (3); Oldfield

12 (7) and Guentchev 12 (7); Taylor 12 (4); McLaren

9; Thorpe 8 (7); Patterson & Thomas 7 (2); Vilstrup 6

Sommer 2; Douglas 1 (3); Woodsford 1 (2). Number

APPEARANCES (subs in brackets): Sommer,

Marshall, Taylor, Guentchev, Harvey 2 each; Thorpe

**FA CUP** 

APPEARANCES: One each by Feuer, Patterson,

Guentchev, Oakes, Oldfield, McLaren and Marshall.

GOALS: Marshall 2, Guentchev 2 pens; Oakes,

ASSISTS: Taylor 2; Hughes, Linton Marshall and

APPEARANCES: K Davis, S Davis, and Harvey

4; Oakes and McLaren 3; Marshall 2 (1); Guentchev,

Vilstrup 2; Thorpe 1 (2), Alexander and Waddock 1

(1); Skelton, Evers, Hughes, Riseth, Taylor, Thomas

and Upson 1; Woodsford (2), Simpson (1).

James, M Johnson, Oldfield, Patterson, Linton and

ANGLO-ITALIAN CUP

James, Marvin Johnson, Thomas, Waddock,

One as sub by Alexander and Thorpe

(2) 0; Thomas (1) 1; James, Hughes and Waddock 1

Marvin Johnson, Steve Davis, Oldfield, Alexander,

COCA COLA CUP

Linton & Riseth 5 (2); G Johnson 5 (1); K Davis 5;

GOALS: Marshall 1, Marvin Johnson 1.

ASSISTS: Steve Davis 1, Alexander 1.

of players used: 26 (27 last season).

each; Matthews (1) 0.

GOAL: Marshall.

Taylor and Thorne 1.

ASSIST: Guentchev

(3); M Johnson and S Davis 24; Marshall 21 (2);

Oakes 3; Thorpe. S Davis and Oldfield 2; Hughes,

Harvey, Douglas Alexander and McLaren 1.



NUMBER ONE: Graham Alexander fires the Town into the lead, with his first goal for the club. He netted four for Scunthorpe in the Third Division last season - and his team were winners every time

crucial victory to keep his survival plan on schedule. Players, who received their

due bouquets from him, made it a mutual admiration job, realising the importance of his tactical awareness and experience. With an hour gone the Town

were 2-1 down, and looking ner-yous and bedraggled. The bubble of recent confidence looked ready In the dug-outs Grimsby assis-

tant Kenny Swain was thinking his men were going to be worthy win-

But Lawrence and his right hand man, Wayne Turner, were holding a swift managesubs were sent on, the forslightly, and it all paid off to roars of delight from

Within five minutes Bontcho Guentchev equalised, with his fourth goal in consecutive appear after that first sub David Oldfield set up the chance for second sub Dwight Marshall to fire a dramatic

It was the perfect end to a day that started with Lawrence receiving his award as First Division manager of the month in January, which included a 7-1 thrashing in the FA Cup at Grimsby. That now looks like a blessing as a

turning point.

Terry Westley may allow himself a bittersweet smile to hear that the players are now wondering f he was right when he kept telling us the team at the bottom of the First Division was good enough to be in the top six.

Even a very poor referee failed to spoil the enter-tainment on a day Lawrence feared the worst - the manager of the month prize has often been the kiss of death, and be recalled that several times when he won it at Charlton the happy day ended in sad

He thought it was going to happen again midway Saturday. Grimsby, near and methodical, and play-ing good passing football,

were no mugs.

They came back strong. ly after Graham Alexander put the Town ahead after seven minutes, with a first goal for the club that will be long remembered for its quality. He took a pass from Mitchell Thomas in his own half, and drove forward with the ball. Guentchev was running strongly ahead, and as two markers shadowed him Alexander was allowed to keep going. Just outside the box he let fly with his

Lennie Lawrence's manager of the month prize as he guid. ed Luton Town to another

> GRIMSBY 2 (Half-time: 1-1) his right foot, and on a tacky sur-

> > bottom corner.
> >
> > The Town enjoyed a good spell of pressure, with Tony Thorpe having a shot deflected onto the outside of a post, but the defence was caught out ten min-

utes later.
Mitchell Thomas became the first of the day's six bookings with a lunge at Neil Woods on the by-line. Ivano Bonetti floated Forrester hooked in the equaliser

The ref turned down two Town appeals for penalties, one of which was after a pretty decisive handball by Bonetti, and upset both sides with very odd deci-

If the Town's passing was less than 100 per cent, the spirit and determination was intact until Forrester scored again, after Ceri Hughes and John Taylor had gone close. He was allowed to run into the danger area before shooting his fifth goal of the season, and his fourth against the

Suddenly the Town looked to be on the ropes, but the double substitution changed all that. Mr Knight gave his best deci-sion of the day when Hughes played a pass to the edge of the penalty area. Vance Warner handled, but the ref waved play on as

showed against Grimsby, and with the tactical expertise of Lawrence and Turner, he might be right. But first, it's about sur vival – and 20th place, and seven Watford, will be enough for most of us this season after the depresthe ball broke to Guentchev, and of the campaign.



ered by grateful teammates after hitting the winner. Referee Barry Knight is a little more detached, demanding an end to the celebrations



POSTING A WARNING: Tony Thorpe gets at the Grimsby rearguard, and was inches away from making it 2-0 - his shot was deflected onto the outside of the upright.

# sweet revenge

PICK THAT ONE OUT: Bontcho Guentchev slams in the

equaliser, his fourth goal in consecutive appearances.

THE WINNER: Dwight Marshall is surrounded by Grimsby defenders, but the shot is already on its way into the net, beyond Paul Crichton's left hand.

Skipper faces his

son, after picking up his

with Reading on the following

Davis has already served a two-

rame ban for his unlucky sending-

Midfielder Ceri Hughes is the

next in line for FA disciplinary

off against Huddersfield.

Moore: "It was a poor pitch and it was windy - a day when players had to apply themselves."

Bristol City missed a counte of

good chances in the first half, and

in the second the Town lads played up the slope and against the wind, with Moore demanding:

ing eased into a two-goal lead through schoolboy Jimmy Cox

and England schools international

for handling on the line, but the penalty was blasted over the bar

and the ten men defended well to

On Saturday Wimbledon are the

visitors in the league, with kick-off at Newlands Road 11 am. If

arrangements are completed in time, and the weather does not

intervene, Kenilworth Road will

stage a youth game on Monday

an Eastern Junior Cup-tie which

was postponed because of frost

THE away game with Port Vale, postponed because Vale Park was frostbound on December

30, has been rearranged for Tuesday March 5 (7.45), which

means the clubs will meet twice in

less than a fortnight, because Vale are due to visit Kenilworth Road

"Take care of the ball."

Andrew Fotiadis.

protect the lead.

Silvermon

7 51266; Dunstable Editorial: (01582) 608811

he carefully shot his fourth goal **LUTON TOWN 3** in four appearances to make it 2-

REPORT BY BRIAN SWAIN

PICTURES BY GARETH OWEN

the end for Grimsby. Confidence soared again, and Marshall's 12th goal of the season was cracked in with instinctive skill face despatched his drive into the

six minutes later after Hughes and Oldfield worked the ball to Guentchev, languishing in the reserves before Lawrence's arrival, was full of praise for the boss who has put him within sight of his first Wembley

appearance.
"I have played under some in Rulgaria," he good managers in Bulgaria," he said. "But Lennie Lawrence is very good. He has changed things tactically, looked at every player, and told us what he wants us to do. If I keep playing like this I will be in the Bulgarian

and I am keeping my fingers crossed for that. playing well now. I like it here at Luton. They said we should be in the top ten, but I think we should be in the first six. And I think it is

team at Wembley next month,

With the character the team



LOVE HIM: Dwight Marshall is under there somewhere, smoth



DOWN to ten men for the last 20 minutes, the Town's youth side came home with a 2-0 victory over Bristol City in the South East on March 16.



Reports and gossip from Town

#### Lennie Lawrence is setting a new target

LENNIE Lawrence this week welcomed the achievement of his first target as manager of Luton Town - and immediate-ly set himself and the team a

new one.
"We have completed phase
one of the struggle," he said,
after his amazing unbeaten
league record continued with
a thrilling home win over
Grimsby. That was to get out
of the bottom three.
"Now phase two has to be
tackled—to get four, rive and
said of the control of the control
again or one way of with a recrespondent of the control
again or one way of the control
again of the cont

home game next, we can con-tinue our progress if we all remain concentrated on what

December the Town were bot-tom of the First Division, with four wins from 22 games, and only 18 points to their name, five below the then safety

look over is four wins and two draws, and the 14 points have taken the Town up to 20th, their highest since the unreal-istic early season tables were compiled when Derby won 2at Kenilworth Road on

September 2.
More importantly, as the league table published on page 42 shows, there is daylight between the Town and

page 92 shows, there is day-light between the Town and the bottom three - they are four points above 22nd-placed West Brom.

#### **Gavin Johnson is** signing for Wigan

three months on loan.

He came to Luton on a free transfer from Ipswich last summer, but has made only six appearances in the Town side. His loan to Wigan was one of the last deals done by

twice, both times against Colchester, who had David Greene



The general belief is that 50 points is normally a safety mark, but Lawrence wants gated with 48 points, and Sunderland just escaped with

GAVIN Johnson, who had the bad luck to be out on loan the day Lennie Lawrence became manager of Luton Town, will sign for Third Division Wigan tomorrow for £15,000, after

side. His loan to Wigan was one of the last deals done by Terry Westley. Lawrence said yesterday: "It just happened that Gavin was away from the club when I arrived, and I have now got my squad organised without him. When Wigan he now got my squad organised without him. When Wigan he had to weigh up the prospects of regular league football in the Thrift Division, or come back to fight for a place in our First Division side. "If he was 19 or 20 I would not at him go, but at 25 it might be a shame if he found himself stuck in the reserves here when first team football was available somewhere etc." Johnson came to Luton as a multi-field. He has scored appearances at Wigan he Tolchester, who had David Greene

The former Irish under-21 international centre half is not for sale because he is stil only 22 and Lawrence wants to see how he declause ne its stil only ze and Lawrence wants to see how he develops. He is nearing the end of a three-month loan at Colchester, and when he leaves Layer Road he may well be offered as a loan signing to another club which can give him regular league soccer and build up his experience.