

Big match facts

TOWN: Fever; Alexander, Davis, Patterson, Thomas, Oldfield (Oakes 75 mins), Thorpe (Johnson 75 mins), Harvey; Guentchev, Wilkinson, Grant, Unused sub Tomlinson.

WEST BROM: Naylor; Burgess, Raven (Gilbert 44 mins), Mardon; Butler, Darby (Angell 74 mins), Hamilton (Donovan 56 mins), Sweeney, Nicholson; Taylor, Hunt.

THE GOALS: 0-1 22 mins: Bontcho Guentchev, far post header from Tony Thorpe cross; 0-2 84 mins: Kim Grant, composed finish with right foot drive from a pass by Guentchev.

OTHER ATTEMPTS: Town six saved and seven wide; Albion six saved and eight wide. Corners: 13-4 to West Brom (10-2 in the second half).

REFEREE: John Lloyd, Wrexham. Did very well to withstand the enormous pressure of a shrieking home crowd who hated his unwillingness to be swayed by noise and invective.

BOOKED: Darren Patterson for a foul on David Gilbert and Bontcho Guentchev for a mistimed tackle on Kevin Donovan.

ATTENDANCE: 15,131, the highest this year at The Hawthorns, contributing to a tremendous atmosphere.

ENTERTAINMENT: A cracking relegation battle - just like a cup-tie, with the Town's 300 travelling fans given a real treat as the team defended in numbers, soaked up everything, and struck at the other end with rare skill - it was the first time the Town had scored two goals in an away game since a 2-2 draw at Ashton Gate, Bristol, just over 13 months ago.

Victory at West

Debut striker scores against high flyers

LUTON TOWN 1 IPSWICH 2

FIRST Division survival hopes were already hanging by a thread before the Town's game last night. Manager Lennie Lawrence used the phrase on a day when he struggled to express his true feelings after promotion-chasing Ipswich were well worth the win that kept them in the top six.

Simon Milton, who netted in the fifth minute, was gifted the winner by Julian James's mistake two minutes after Kim Grant marked his Luton debut with a cracking equaliser.

THE DETAILS

TOWN: Fever; James, Davis, Patterson, Thomas; Oakes (Tomlinson 73 mins), Oldfield (Guentchev 62 mins), Waddock (Alexander 55 mins), Thorpe; Wilkinson, Grant.

IPSWICH: Wright; Uhlenbeek, Sedgley, Thomas, Tarcey, Simute; Sweeney, Williams, Milton (Slater 72 mins); Marshall, Mathie, Unused subs Gregory and Swails.

ON THE BALL: Scott Oakes in midfield action against Ipswich. But the man tracking him had the last word - Simon Milton scored both the visitors' goals, and Oldfield was dropped to the sub's bench at West Brom.



Brom keeps hopes alive

REPORTS BY BRIAN SWAIN
PICTURES BY GARETH OWEN

WEST BROM 0 LUTON TOWN 2 (Half-time 0-1)

LOOKING every inch Second Division material when they lost at home to Ipswich on Saturday, a reshaped Luton Town side battled back with a marvellous performance at The Hawthorns on Tuesday to revive hopes that relegation may yet be avoided.

In a compelling, high-pressure contest against a side that is itself not entirely safe yet, the Town answered the questions posed by manager Lennie Lawrence with a performance that mixed gutsy determination with the ingredient that has been lacking too often - sharp finishing.

Lawrence had to change the team, with Julian James injured and Gary Waddock suspended, and he opted for a 4-3-3 formation for the first time since he took over.

It worked like a dream, although it was a nightmare night for the home side, who battled away for much of the game without much invention, and eventually ran itself into a succession of blind alleys as the Town put up a magnificent defensive shield.

The back four, particularly Darren Patterson, was outstanding, but it was a night when every player got stuck in.

West Brom had a promising opening burst, without getting into dangerous positions, and eventually the 35-goal striking

part-ner ship of Bob Taylor and Andy Hunt was laughed off the pitch... by West Brom supporters.

In the Town's first attack Paul Wilkinson, who got through a tremendous amount of work, was only just off target with a rising drive, and in the second West Brom were stunned by a quality goal.

Mitchell Thomas overlapped down the left wing, and Wilkinson flicked on his header to Tony Thorpe, out on the other side of the penalty area. Thorpe took on his marker, beat him by clever ball control, and crossed perfectly to the far post, where Bontcho Guentchev headed in.

The big home crowd was stunned, and took to taking it out on their players, and referee John Lloyd, who was brave enough not to be a homer when the game developed into a full-blooded cup-tie.

The Town were defiant at the back, and dangerous on the break, and the passing was a 100 per cent improvement on what we had seen against Ipswich.

It fell away slightly in the second half, when West Brom redoubled their efforts. Wave upon wave of attacks bore down on Ian Feuer's goal, but the Town pulled nine men back, lived dangerously at times, and were kept in it by excellent goalkeeping by Feuer.

West Brom forced ten corners in the second half, to two by the Town, but when the Town broke they created the clearer chances.

West Brom had only one, scooped over the bar by Taylor, but their pressure, for all its lack of variety, was causing considerable anxiety among the Town's followers.

You felt that if the home side got one lucky break they might run away with the game, but the Town were in no mood to give up what they held, and two incidents in quick succession settled it.

Feuer made a top class save from a shot by Kevin Donovan, and as the Town surged upfield Guentchev on the right played a peach of a pass square across the penalty area.

Kim Grant, who marked his debut with a classy goal, hit an even better one to snuff out West Brom's hopes seven minutes from time. Two defenders were closing him down, but he took the pass, controlled the ball in an instant, and before either



ON THE SURGE: David Oldfield shows the positive attacking style that enabled him to create the chance for Kim Grant's debut goal against Ipswich.

opponent could react the shot was despatched with clinical precision beyond the reach of Stuart Naylor.

It completed a memorable win, and happy Lawrence said: "I thought we deserved it. We created quite a few chances, and it was a great finish by Kim Grant for the second goal."

"West Brom put us under a lot of pressure, without really creating chances. On Saturday we were very disappointing. So this one was a big game for us, and the players have really given us everything we wanted."

West Brom's Alan Buckley said: "We started really well, without testing their goalkeeper. In the second half we got more strikes on target, but everything seemed to go straight to the keeper."



Still a chance of beating the odds

CHAIRMAN David Kohler, who has had some stormy times in his relationship with fans, will face some of them tonight at a meeting hosted by the Luton Town Supporters Club. He will give his thoughts about the club's present tribulations, and about the future, where the Kohlerdome scheme looms large.

The meeting starts in the Eric Morecambe lounge at 7.30, and the chairman will put himself up for a question and answer session from the audience. Admission is £2 for members of LTSC, £3 for non-members.

And whatever the outcome of the season, the fans will entertain Lennie Lawrence and his players later this month, a week before the season ends at Oldham. The annual player of the year disco will be at Kent's Social Club, in Tenby Drive, on Sunday April 28, and tickets will be £4 for LTSC members, £5 for others.



DAVID KOHLER

Season will end on a Sunday

AS FORECAST on these pages a couple of weeks ago, the last day of the First Division programme has been postponed by 24 hours, which means the Town will end the campaign at Oldham on Sunday May 5.

It followed a request by ITV, under the terms of their contract, to move selected fixtures to Sunday for live coverage.

Lee Walker, controller of broadcasting at the Football League, said: "We were not prepared to sanction the movement of fixtures in isolation on the deciding afternoon of the season, and as a result all First Division games will kick off at 3pm on Sunday May 5."

The League added that if it was apparent club's final matches would not have a bearing on promotion or relegation, and had not been selected for TV coverage, they would have the option of moving the fixture back to Saturday. Sadly, that is unlikely to be relevant to the Town, nor to Oldham.

ENDSLEIGH LEAGUE DIVISION ONE

AUGUST				
13 Norwich	H	1-3 (Guentchev pen)	7,848	-
19 Southend	A	1-0 (Thorpe)	4,630	-
26 Leicester	H	1-1 (Hughes)	7,012	17
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 Wolves	H	0-2	6,955	23
23 Luton	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 Walsley	H	1-2 (Harvey)	8,042	24
22 Ipswich	A	1-0 (Oldfield)	9,123	21
29 Charlton	H	0-1	6,270	22

NOVEMBER				
4 Stoke	A	0-5	9,382	23
11 Oldham	H	1-1 (Douglas)	6,047	23
18 Birmingham	H	0-0	7,920	23
21 Watford	A	1-1 (Davis)	10,042	23
25 Barnsley	A	0-1	6,437	23

DECEMBER				
2 Tranmere	H	3-2 (Marshall, McLaren)	5,025	23
9 Wolves	H	2-3 (Oakes, Marshall)	6,897	24
16 Portsmouth	A	0-4	7,012	24
23 Hudders'fd	H	2-2 (Marshall, Oldfield)	7,076	24

JANUARY				
13 Southend	H	3-1 (Guentchev, Oakes 2)	6,566	24
20 Norwich	A	1-0 (Guentchev pen)	12,474	23
31 Sheff Utd	H	1-0 (Guentchev)	6,995	21

FEBRUARY				
3 Leicester	A	1-1 (Thorpe)	14,821	21
10 Grimsby	H	3-2 (Alexander, Guentchev, Marshall)	7,158	20

MARCH				
17 Millwall	H	1-0 (Thorpe pen)	7,308	19
21 Derby	A	1-1 (Marshall)	14,825	17
24 Sunderland	A	0-1	16,693	19
27 Reading	H	1-2 (Guentchev pen)	6,683	20

APRIL				
2 West Brom	A	1-2 (Guentchev, Grant)	15,131	23
5 Charlton	A	0-1	11,950	20
9 Stoke	H	0-2	13,809	23
13 Birmingham	A	0-2	14,935	23
20 Watford	H	1-2 (Grant)	9,151	23

MAY				
2 West Brom	A	1-2 (Guentchev, Grant)	15,131	23
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9 Stoke	H	0-2	13,809	23
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Town's season at a glance...

DATE... OPPONENTS... RESULT... SCORE...

Latest placings

TUESDAY'S overdue win at West Brom failed to lift the Town out of the First Division's bottom three, but undid some of the damage done by the Ipswich defeat. The gap between the Town and safety widened on Saturday - all three bottom clubs lost, while the three above them, Reading, Sheffield Utd and West Brom, all won. Sheffield Utd and Oldham were winners again on Tuesday, but Reading were dragged nearer to relegation when they lost at Huddersfield.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sunderland	39	12	5	2	29	10	8	4	26	21	73	41
Derby C	40	12	7	1	39	18	6	7	20	26	68	38
Crystal P	40	12	7	1	39	18	6	7	20	26	68	38
Charlton	38	8	7	4	26	21	8	7	4	26	20	62
Ipswich	38	11	4	4	40	26	5	7	29	29	59	35
Hudders'fd	39	12	4	4	36	21	3	7	17	29	56	34
Leicester	37	9	6	5	24	26	8	6	31	30	55	30
Stoke	37	7	6	5	25	25	8	6	32	29	54	29
Southend	40	10	6	4	26	19	4	6	10	21	33	54
Barnsley	39	8	2	32	24	4	6	10	21	35	53	33
Port Vale	37	8	4	26	25	5	9	5	23	25	52	32
Birmingham	39	9	7	4	29	20	4	5	10	23	32	51
Wolves	38	8	7	5	32	24	5	8	20	26	51	31
Norwich	40	6	8	6	21	20	6	5	9	30	28	49
Tranmere	38	7	7	5	33	25	5	6	19	23	48	48
Sheff Utd	40	8	5	7	26	23	4	7	9	21	28	48
Grimsby	38	7	9	4	23	21	5	3	10	21	32	48
Millwall	40	8	6	8	19	24	6	6	8	20	31	48
Portsmouth	40	8	5	7	33	29	3	7	10	23	34	45
West Brom	39	8	5	7	27	26	4	4	11	21	35	45
Reading	38	7	6	6	25	25	2	10	7	19	27	43
Oldham	38	8	6	5	30	19	2	6	11	16	26	42
Luton Tn	38	6	7	5	25	27	4	5	10	9	23	40
Watford	38	8	6	6	24	23	2	8	10	19	35	34

*Not including last night's match, Stoke v Wolves.

APPEARANCES... GOALS

ENDSLEIGH LEAGUE

GOALS: Marshall 9; Guentchev 8 (4 pens); Oakes 3; Thorpe 3 (1 pen); Grant, Davis and Oldfield 2; Hughes, Harvey, Douglas, Alexander and McLaren 1.

ASSISTS: Thorpe 5; Alexander 4; Marshall 3; Oakes, Guentchev and Harvey 2; Oldfield, Hughes, Thomas, Taylor, M. Johnson, G. Johnson, S. Davis, Vilstrup, Feuer, Peake and McLaren 1.

APPEARANCES, as sub in brackets: S Davis 32; Feuer 31; Alexander 28 (2).

Town's Cup record

FA CUP THIRD ROUND

Jan 6 Grimsby A 1-7 (Marshall) 5,387
GOAL: Marshall. Assist: Guentchev.
APPEARANCES: One each by Feuer, Patterson, James, M. Johnson, Thomas, Waddock, Guentchev, Oakes, Oldfield, McLaren and Marshall. One as sub by Alexander and Thorpe.

COCA COLA CUP FIRST ROUND

Aug 15 (1)Bournemouth H 1-1 (Marshall) 2,728
Aug 22 (2)Bournemouth A 1-2 aet. (M. Johnson) 4,844
GOALS: Marshall and M. Johnson 1 each.
ASSISTS: S. Davis and Alexander 1 each.
APPEARANCES: Sommer, M. Johnson, S. Davis, Oldfield, Alexander, Marshall, Taylor, Guentchev and Harvey 2; Thomas 1 (1);

Harvey 27 (5); Johnson 26 (1); Waddock 25 (4); Marshall 23 (3); James 22 (3); Hughes 21 (2); Oldfield 20 (9); Oakes 20 (2); Guentchev 19 (8); Thorpe 18 (2); Taylor 17 (8); Thorpe 16 (9); Peake 15 (3); Patterson 15 (2); McLaren 9 (2); Linton 6 (4); K. Davis 5; Wilkinson 2; Grant 2; Douglas 1 (3); Woodsford 1 (2); Tomlinson 0 (1). Betts transfers: Riseth 6 (5); Vinters 6 (1); Johnson 5 (1); Sommer 2. Number of players used 29, two more than last season.

James, Hughes and Waddock 1; Thorpe 2 (2); Matthews (1).

ANGLO-ITALIAN CUP

Sep 5 Perugia H 1-4 (Guentchev pen) 2,352
Oct 11 Genoa A 0-4 3,759
Nov 8 Cesena A 1-2 (Marshall) 461
Dec 13 Ancona H 5-0 (Oakes, Marshall, Taylor, Thorpe, Guentchev pen) 2,091
GOALS: Marshall 2; Guentchev 1; Oakes, Taylor and Thorpe 1 each.
ASSISTS: Taylor 2; Hughes, Linton 1 each.
APPEARANCES: K. Davis, S. Davis and Harvey 4; Oakes and McLaren 3; Guentchev, James, M. Johnson, Oldfield, Patterson, Linton and Vilstrup 2; Thorpe 2; Alexander 1; Waddock 1 (1); Taylor, Thomas and Hughes, Riseth, Taylor, Thomas and Upson 1; Woodsford 2; Simpson 1 (1).

