

All Cobblers...

THE dream of going back to Wembley was shown to be no more than that when the Town turned in a sub-standard performance and went out of the Auto Windscreens Shield to a team of journeymen from Division Three.

Northampton were the side that most wanted to win, worked like hell, and produced the one moment of real quality in a lacklustre game when the winner was netted two minutes from time.

On a night when neither goalkeeper was called on to make anything approaching a thrilling save, Ian Feuer was beaten by a crackling set piece drive from just outside the box. Matthew Rush, on loan from Norwich but too dear at £500,000 for the Cobblers to make the deal permanent, struck it to complete a man of the match performance.

The Town showed no sparkle, and Marvin Johnson had the best and worst of luck over the goal: he conceded the free kick for pulling back Christian Lee, and to most observers it looked like a red card offence.

He got away with the yellow, then joined a defensive line-up left without a prayer after the free kick was touched off to Rush. His shot

Northampton 1 Luton Town 0

screamed into the bottom corner.

"We didn't pass well enough, didn't create enough chances, and the ones we did we missed," said Town boss Lennie Lawrence.

"Northampton always looked more likely to score."

Steve Davis was as near as the Town had to a man of the match, and of the players brought in Sean Evers and Darren Patterson looked useful, but it was a poor team display.

Details

TOWN: Feuer; Patterson, Davis, Johnson, Thomas; Evers, Hughes, Alexander, Guentchev (Oldfield 61 mins); Marshall (Fotiadis 61 mins), Grant. Unused sub Willmott.

COBBLERS: Woodman; Clarkson, Sampson (O'Shea HT), Rennie, Maddison; Rush, Warner (Colkin 74 mins), Martin (Peer 67 mins), Frain; Grayson, Lee.

GOAL: Matthew Rush, 88 mins.

OTHER STRIKES: Town three saved and seven wide; Northampton three saved and two wide. Corners: 5-2 to Northampton.

FOULS: Town 14, Northampton 15. Offside: Town three times, Northampton 6.

BOOKED: Darren Patterson and Marvin Johnson for fouls, and Northampton's David Martin for persistent fouling.

REF: Mick Fletcher, Warley. Tried hard to keep the notebook and cards in his pocket.

ATTENDANCE: 4,201 including 1,100 from Luton.

ENTERTAINMENT: The Bovril at half-time wasn't bad.

Auto Windscreens Shield statistics

Round 1 Dec 12:
Leyton Orient (H) 2-1 (Davis, Grant) 1,594
Round 2 Feb 4:
Northampton (A) 0-1 4,201

APPEARANCES: Two each by Steve Davis, Patterson, Hughes, Guentchev, Marshall and Grant; Alexander 1(1); One each by Kelvin Davis, James, Waddock, Skelton, Linton, Feuer, Thomas, Evers and Johnson; Oldfield (2); Fotiadis (1), Showler (1).
GOALS: Steve Davis and Grant.
ASSISTS: Hughes and Showler.

Michael Evans powered the penalty towards the bottom corner, but Feuer went the right way and his huge frame became telescopic to palm the ball away.

"It wasn't a bad penalty and at half-time I told Evans not to blame himself," said Jones. "It was a tremendous save."

Town boss Lennie Lawrence admitted that his midfield had been below par, with too many round pegs in square holes.

Evers, impressive at Northampton in midweek and



LEADING THE DEFENCE: Bruce Marshall while his match-fixing court continues beyond the goalkeeper, with David Marshall