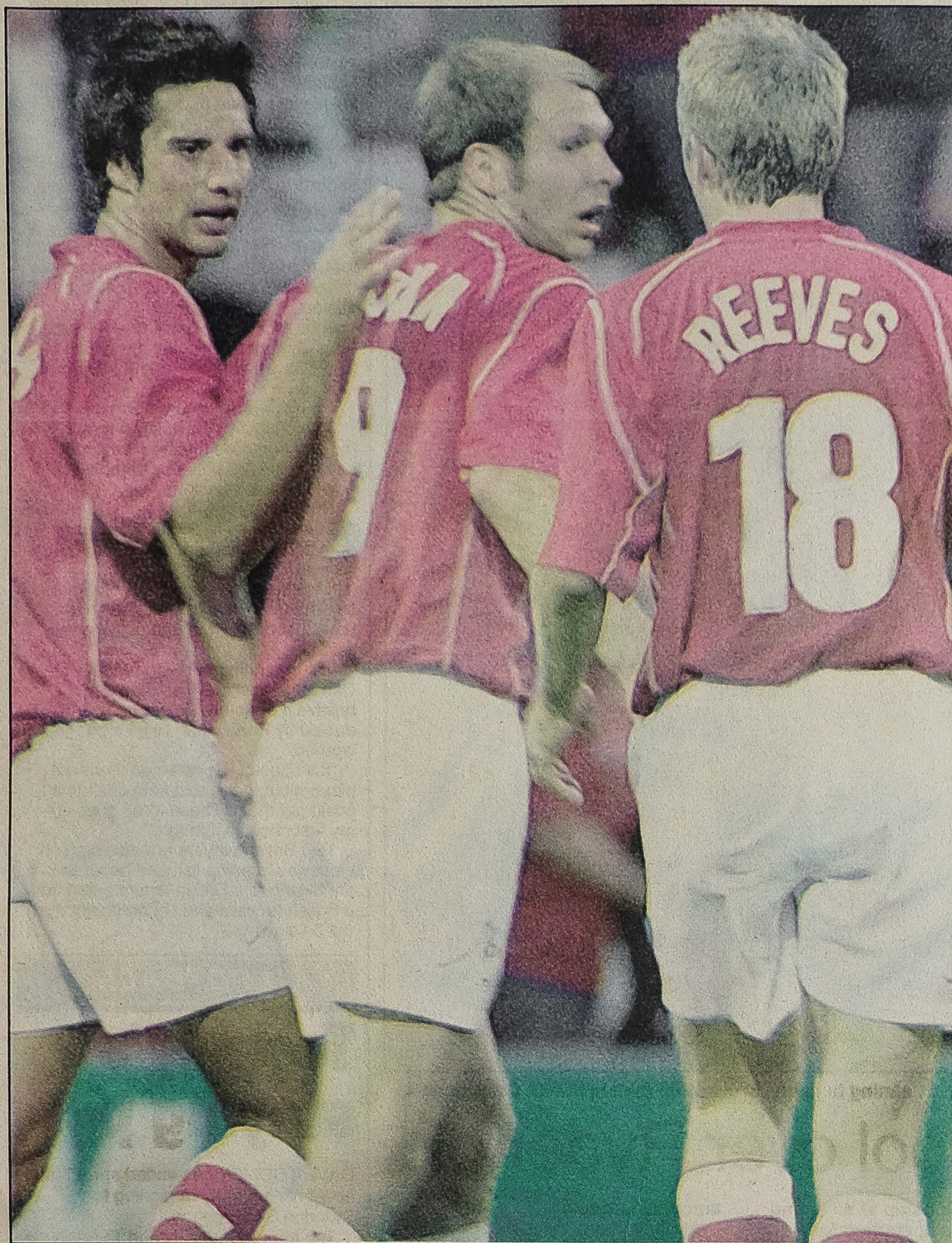


SLOPPY TOWN



● Back on the goal trail . . . top scorer of the last two seasons Sam Parkin takes the congratulations from Rory Fallon (left) and Alan Reeves after scoring Town's first

Ref: 71737-19a

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King's troops make a gift of it to the Hatters

WHEN the referee resembles a maths teacher you feared at school and his surname describes an unhappy knack that Town cannot seem to shake, you sense it isn't going to be your night.

Tony Leake certainly didn't do Andy King's men any favours as they suffered a second successive defeat but it would be wrong to lay the blame for this reverse at his door.

As for the maths teacher, I suspect even he would give me credit for putting two and two together and coming up with the fact that leaking goals and playing just half a match doesn't add up to a winning formula.

Goals from Sam Parkin and Alan Reeves were not enough to prevent Luton notching up a victory that on the balance of play they deserved.

King's men paid a heavy price for a sluggish first half and for nodding off at crucial times in defence.

Twice they halved a two-goal deficit but in the end they couldn't breach the Hatters' defence to score the goal that would have rescued a point.

It was not the performance the majority of 6,000-plus crowd had been expecting and those who return for the MK Dons clash on Saturday are unlikely to tolerate a second helping.

Ahead of the clash King had received a boost as Sammy Igoe shrugged off a tired hamstring to take his place in the starting line-up.

Grant Smith made way for David Duke but Jerel Ifil's thigh injury prevented his involvement once again.

Sixteen-year-old striker Andy Caton had to be content with a place on the bench.

Town carved open the first real chance on two minutes. Howard sprang the off-side, to his surprise it seemed, but he played a poor ball across the area to Igoe.



TOWN 2 LUTON 3

By chief sports writer

JON RITSON

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The little midfielder should have taken it on his left foot, chose to switch to his right and his eventual shot was blocked.

Luton swiftly began to take control of proceedings though and Town had keeper Rhys Evans to thank as the Hatters threatened to take a fifth-minute lead.

Rowan Vine raced in from the left edge of the box and his shot looked destined for the bottom right hand corner. Thankfully for Town, Evans got a hand to the ball and deflected it on to the post.

The ball was hacked out for a corner and from the resulting set piece Curtis Davies got up well at the near post but headed powerfully over the top.

The visitors looked far livelier, more composed and showed terrific movement off the ball.

Town in contrast seemed lethargic and both the passing and decision-making was frequently poor.

Steve Howard headed weakly at Evans from close range after diving to meet a Davis cross

from the left but the goal the Hatters richly deserved arrived on 24 minutes.

O'Hanlon was penalised for tugging at Vine inside the box and referee Mr Leake had no hesitation in pointing to the spot.

Luton skipper Kevin Nicholls stepped forward and thumped the ball into the bottom left-hand corner, Evans guessing right but unable to reach the shot.

Town responded briefly and Gurney whistled a free-kick just wide of the left post from 22 yards on 26 minutes.

Paul Underwood should have doubled Luton's lead 10 minutes later, striding in

LEAGUE ONE TABLE

Colchester	2	2	0	0	6	2	6
Hull City	2	2	0	0	4	0	6
Luton	2	2	0	0	5	3	6
Wrexham	2	2	0	0	5	3	6
Chesterfield	2	1	1	0	3	1	4
Walsall	2	1	1	0	5	4	4
Barnsley	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
Huddersfield	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
Peterborough	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
Doncaster	2	1	0	1	5	4	3
Port Vale	2	1	0	1	5	5	3
Hartlepool	2	1	0	1	3	3	3
Tranmere	2	1	0	1	2	2	3
Brentford	2	1	0	1	5	6	3
Sheff Wed	2	1	0	1	2	4	3
Bradford	2	0	1	1	3	4	1
M K Dons	2	0	1	1	3	4	1
Bournemouth	2	0	1	1	2	3	1
Bristol City	2	0	1	1	2	3	1
Torquay	2	0	1	1	1	4	1
Stockport	2	0	0	2	4	6	0
SWINDON	2	0	0	2	3	5	0
Oldham	2	0	0	2	3	5	0
Blackpool	2	0	0	2	1	4	0