

Good reason to celebrate



IT WASN'T pretty, and at times in the first half was one of the worst games I've ever seen, but this may just be the most important win of the season so far.

Stumbling through the festive season conceding goals left, right and centre, with players dropping injured all over the pitch, I cannot imagine how we'd all be feeling today if Town had lost to Luton on Saturday.

Nobody should be fooled that we've turned a corner, but the cheer that exploded at the final whistle was one of enormous relief.

And given that we lost another pair of players to knocks in Sito and Dean Bowditch (can you name me a more dangerous job than playing up front for Ipswich Town this season?) then getting three points on the board and keeping a clean sheet into the bargain was crucial.

Crossing the 30-point barrier as we go into the New Year at least gives Joe Royle a platform to perform his forays into the loan and transfer market this month.

And let's not kid ourselves, the

way the side has been depleted recently he doesn't need sticking plaster to repair the team, he need enough bandages to wrap up a mummy.

It was rare to see the defence not being breached, and also to celebrate a goal to be honest, and there was also the unfamiliar feeling of the team and crowd being united for once.

Maybe it was thoughts of the impending celebrations on Saturday night, or the satisfying feeling of several days of good food and drink swilling round in peoples' bellies, but the fans in the Championship's second-highest crowd of the day was fairly charitable to the side, answering the chairman's plea, and I even heard the South Stand singing a couple of times.

Not that every player was treated gently. Darren Currie, who didn't have his best match for us, was targeted by some pockets of supporters in the second half. "Get him off Royle" bellowed one man behind me, ironically just before he set up the only goal of the game.

This is why, despite his detractors, I always prefer to see Currie on the pitch if the contest is all square, or we're losing.

Relatively static and lacking pace he may be, but he makes things happen. Owen Garvan was contemplating the options from the free-kick when Currie saw the run of Ian Westlake, pushed the

Irish youngster aside and drove a glorious pass over the Luton defence for Westlake to run onto and finish.

I could also point out that when Westlake was put clear down the left in injury time and his cross just failed to find McDonald that it was Currie's flick on the touchline that had released him. People have a tendency to pick on our spiky-haired midfielder, but he creates goals, pure and simple.

And, seeing as we can't go 90 minutes without losing a striker at the moment, and started Saturday's game with a front pairing so inexperienced they were playing with their Action Man toys when Royle was first making his name as a manager, then goals from any other area of the pitch are more than welcome.

And just a final point about Shane Supple, who I thought had an excellent game. Apart from one throw out which Sito wasn't expecting and went straight to a Luton player, and a fumble right before the final whistle that had grown men shrieking like teenage girls at a Take That concert, he handled the occasion well and made one or two crucial stops.

It's a sign of the times to have a teenager in goal, and again today we're down to the bare bones at the Britannia. I'll take another atrocious match with the right result. Wouldn't you?

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TARGET: Darren Currie (centre), celebrating Town's win over Luton on Saturday with Jason De Vos (left)

Photograph: ANDY ABBOTT