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IT was a good win for us and, after my handball against Southend was featured on Soccer AM, it was good to score. It all happened on St Patrick's Day, which I celebrated with an Irish family in Dedham, Chris and Fiona Booth, big Town fans who have taken me in. I'm happy about the opening goal. Sometimes you can be flat-footed but I anticipated that Owen Garvan's shot would come back off the crossbar and I was delighted to be ready to get that goal.

It was a horrible pitch, and even if you find the quality it can be ruined by a bobble, but once we got the goal we settled down and it was a good win for us.

Without realising it, people started to talk about relegation, which was slightly ridiculous. We have the points on the board and can enjoy the rest of this season by playing well and beating teams.

We want to win as many games as we can from now on and build for next season.

Town striker Alan Lee

IT was important we backed up Tuesday's performance and, even though we didn't pass the ball as well as we did at Preston, it was a great result. We had to deal with Jason going off, and it looked as if he was not going to carry on as he needed a lot of stitches, but it epitomised his performance as he led by example and he was great.

It was a terrific team effort as we had to dig in, and at times it was basic stuff, but we were that bit better. Owen Garvan did very well with his shot over the shoulder and hit the bar and Alan (Lee) was Johnny-on-the-spot, so I'm delighted for him and for Matt Richards.

What went on off the pitch didn't affect us, we just focused on what we had to do. We knew we would have to compete against Luton, with the situation they are in, and had to come back with more. We could have had more quality on the ball but I'm delighted with the three points and it gives us something to build on.

Ipswich manager Jim Magilton

WE did OK in the first-half, but we conceded an awful goal to be honest. It was an ugly game and I don't think the pitch helped us.

I don't know what's gone on with the pitch, but we looked petrified to pass it and my message to the players was to pass it.

I changed things at half-time. Lewis got injured and the lad from Liverpool I thought could have done a bit more. He came on a recommendation to Mike (Newell) and myself. We were told he had a bit of a presence.

Sometimes you have to take a chance and, unfortunately, it backfired for us today. We just lacked that bit of quality.

I don't know if it was the pressure of everything that's happened in the past week, but we know we're in a dogfight.

Brian Stein, Luton caretaker-manager

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CHAMPIONSHIP TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Derby	39	22	7	10	54	39	73
Birmingham	38	21	8	9	55	35	71
Sunderland	39	21	7	11	60	39	70
Preston	38	20	8	10	56	41	68
Wolves	39	19	9	11	45	41	66
West Brom	39	18	10	11	66	46	64
Cardiff	39	17	12	10	54	42	63
Southampton	39	16	12	11	61	48	60
Stoke	39	15	13	11	47	33	58
Colchester	39	16	8	15	57	48	56
Crystal P.	39	15	10	14	48	43	55
Sheff Wed.	39	14	11	14	58	59	53
Plymouth	38	12	16	10	51	50	52
Coventry	39	15	7	17	43	49	52
Norwich	38	14	8	16	48	56	50
Ipswich	39	14	6	19	49	52	48
Leicester	38	11	13	14	41	48	46
Burnley	37	10	11	16	36	41	41
Hull	39	11	8	20	41	58	41
Barnsley	39	12	5	22	45	69	41
QPR	38	10	10	18	45	59	40
Southend	39	9	12	18	40	59	39
Luton	39	9	9	21	47	67	36
Leeds	39	10	6	23	39	64	36

Town eyeing final

VERDICT: Still time to convince the season-ticket waverers



KNEESY DOES IT: Above, Ipswich striker Alan Lee (centre) stoops to head past Luton goalkeeper Marlon Beresford to give his side the lead at Kenilworth Road on Saturday. Below, Town's man-of-the-match Fabian Wilnis (left) is joined by Alex Bruce, Gary Roberts and Alan Lee to celebrate victory over the Hatters

Photographs: WARREN PAGE

Luton Town 0 Ipswich Town 2 By Derek Davis

IRISH eyes were smiling on St Patrick's Day, along with Dutch, Canadian, Welsh and English, as Jim Magilton's team produced a battling performance to take all three points at Luton.

The only thing lacking for the Blues on a day where they managed to win, keep a clean sheet and not pick up any bookings, all at the same time for the first time under Magilton's stewardship, was real quality.

But given the circumstances, the atrocious pitch and Luton's ferocious approach, that can be just about forgiven.

What the 1,500 travelling Town supporters did get was a gritty display by their team, who dug out a result that keeps them nine points clear of the drop zone with just seven games of the season left.

The Blues will look to finish this campaign strongly, with finishing above Norwich a priority and doing better than the 15th place where Town ended last season, which was their lowest finish in 40 years and if they dip below that it could be the worst since 1958. They won't want to be saddled with that label.

While no one will get carried away with this win over a side that look doomed, had lost their manager 48 hours earlier and distracted by a mad Hatters crowd baying for blood from their board, it was easy to see why Magilton was so pleased



with his team.

They had to play for 10 minutes without skipper Jason De Vos, who was off having four stitches to a mouth wound, they lost anchor-man Sylvain Legwinski to a full-blooded but fair tackle by Luton

skipper Steve Robinson, and contend with a pitch where the ball never ran true.

That could explain why both sides had trouble finding their own men and all too often the ball was given away and then given back.

The Blues were forced into a couple of changes, with Dan Harding missing out with a ankle injury and new fatherhood after his partner gave birth to a girl in the early hours of Saturday morning.

That meant Fabian Wilnis installed at right-back and David Wright switched to the left.

The Dutchman was imperious, with tenacious defending and a willingness to gallop up the wing whenever possible.

It was one such excursion that led to Town's opener.

Wilnis was pole-axed and Gary Roberts delivered his free-kick to the far post. Owen Garvan acrobatically hooked a shot that rebounded back off the crossbar and Alan Lee followed up with a stooping header that ensured he would not have to buy a pint of Guinness on the night the Irish celebrate St Patrick driving all the snakes out of Ireland.

It was Lee's 15th goal of a disrupted season, which is a good return in a struggling side. He might have added to that but Marlon Beresford was down well to save.

The Luton crowd that had been largely supportive of the players started to get restless and, when Matt Richards finished from eight yards after a sublime cross from Wilnis that was flicked on by the industrious Jon Walters, they erupted.

Police and stewards moved in as hundreds of fans vented their fury towards the group of directors sat in the middle of the main stand.

The players carried on as best

flourish to season

06/07



TOWN JOY: Above, Alan Lee (centre left) and Jason De Vos celebrate Lee's opener against Luton. Below, substitute Matt Richards fires in the second

The numbers

Luton		Ipswich
3	Shots on target	3
2	Shots off target	2
0	Hit woodwork	1
5	Corners	4
20	Free-kicks	13
4	Offsides	3

Earlier time for Derek's webchat

Every Monday from 12.30pm to 1.30pm during the season Derek will be online to answer your questions. Tackle him on any sporting issue you like – questions can be put in advance or during the chat itself. Click on to



www.eadt.co.uk

they could and, for the most part, it was Town who had to do all the defending but, inspired by the colossus that is De Vos, the Blues held firm and, when Luton twice got the ball in the net, the whistle had already gone for infringements, blown by a very unpopular Andy D'Urso.

Lewis Price made a good tip-over save early in the game from Clarke Carlisle and the attacking defender powered a free header over the bar late in the second half.

But, like the fire bell after the game had ended, it was a false alarm and the Blues comfortably saw out the game and started their own quiet celebrations.

The two-week break will give them a chance to rest up, enjoy some team bonding by going paint-balling, and prepare for the run-in, where they have their own targets to meet.

They still have much work to do

and good results against QPR, Hull and now Luton, coupled with a good performance at Preston, gives them something to build on.

The home games against Plymouth and Barnsley will be crucial, not only because they need points to try and overhaul the Canaries and finish 14th or better, but also need to convince the many waverers among potential season ticket holders that they are worth investing in once more before the April 13 deadline for discounted prices.

A good end to an otherwise indifferent season will mean many eyes will be smiling and not just the Irishmen.

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MATCH FACTS

LUTON TOWN 0 IPSWICH TOWN 2

Kenilworth Road, Saturday, March 17

Player ratings

Luton Town (4-4-2)

1 Marlon Beresford

Experienced head stayed cool when under pressure6

21 Keith Keane

Disciplined defending and wandered forward6

25 Leon Barnett

Got everywhere and looks an outstanding prospect ..7

31 Clarke Carlisle

Decent defender who tested Price going forward7

2 Kevin Foley

Kept pressing without much joy6

16 Lewis Emmanuel

Sluggish and struggled5

8 Steve Robinson

Refused to give in and ferocious in middle8

23 Besian Irijaz

Loanee Austrian showed glimpses of quality6

28 David Bell

Dropped a couple of clangers early on5

26 Marcus Heikkinen

Anonymous for the most part5

30 Drew Talbot

Never really threatened5

Subs: 10 Warren Feeney (for Idrjaz 46) 7, 4 Chris Coyne (for Emmanuel, 46) 6, 9 Bjorn Runstrom (for Foley, 79) 6, 15 Stephen O'Leary, 33 Dean Brill.

Ipswich Town (4-4-2)

34 Lewis Price

Good early tip-over save6

20 David Wright

Steady in unaccustomed role6

5 Alex Bruce

Good awareness and strong defending7

4 Jason De Vos

Immense presence in both boxes8

2 Fabian Wilnis

Man of the match8

11 Gavin Williams

Physical sharpness returning to match thought6

8 Sylvain Legwinski

Doing well until forced off hurt6

7 Owen Garvan

Plugged gap at back and anchored midfield7

33 Gary Roberts

Good delivery for opener and weaved away7

10 Jon Walters

Clever play and plenty of endeavour7

14 Alan Lee

Took goal superbly and plugged away7

Subs: 3 Matt Richards (for Legwinski, 26) 7, 18 Danny Haynes (for Lee, 73) 6, 24 Billy Clarke (for Walters, 86) 6, 21 George O'Callaghan, 1 Shane Supple.

GOALS: Luton: None.

Ipswich: Lee, 39. Richards, 62

Luton: Robinson (47, persistent fouling) Barnett (67, foul).

Ipswich: None

Luton: None.

Ipswich: None.

Man of the Match

Fabian Wilnis

THE Golden Oldie showed why he deserves to be kept on at least one more year with a superb all-round game. Wilnis played a part in both goals, decisively for the second with a wicked cross, and belied his years with his non-stop willingness to get forward. The Dutchman also demonstrated how good a defender he is too, with good tackling, great positioning and basic blocking. Wilnis just edges it ahead of skipper Jason De Vos who once more showed outstanding leadership.

Derek Davis' ratings are sponsored by

Referee: Andy D'Urso (Billericay) 6

Attendance: 8,880

Pitch: Poor, bobbly and soft

Weather: Bright