



SOUTHPORT 3 LUTON TOWN 3

Gray 10, Mukendi 33, Pilkington og 59

Crow 39, Watkins 45+3, O'Connor 47



PORT IN A STORM:
Southport's Vinny
Mukendi celebrates
making it 2-0 – but
more drama was
ahead

PICTURE: Media Image Ltd



GAME FIT FOR A GUEST!

By Alan Jones

A DISTINGUISHED guest at Haig Avenue yesterday was Billy Bingham, the man who led Northern Ireland in their famous World Cup campaign of 1982.

Once a player with Luton Town, Bingham later enjoyed great success as manager of Southport, and yesterday he witnessed two of his former clubs serve up a wonderful contest, which provided rich entertainment – but left neither camp satisfied at the outcome.

At 2-0 ahead inside the first half-hour, Southport found themselves trailing within two minutes of the second half before battling back to earn a share of the spoils.

On the balance of play a draw was probably fair, although it was Liam Watson who had the greater cause to feel aggrieved, having seen his side relinquish their lead before creating a series of chances to restore it in the closing stages.

"Once we equalised there was only one team ever likely to win," the Southport manager said.

"Luton didn't really trouble us in the second half and we've missed quite a few chances. I feel we

should have been celebrating three points, but I must pay credit to the players' work rate."

It had started so well for Southport, Tony Gray putting them ahead on nine minutes after seizing on a clearance from George Pilkington.

Luton had struggled for any rhythm and the home side took full advantage, with Gray turning provider as he slid a pass to Vinny Mukendi, who held off Janos Kovas before finding the bottom corner to complete a sublime goal.

It took the visitors another seven minutes to wake from the slumber, but having halved the deficit through Danny Crow's close-range header, they were level by the interval.

Adam Watkins had been one of Luton's brightest players and, three minutes into added time, he unleashed a wonderful 25-yard strike into the top right-hand corner.

No sooner had the second half started than Luton went ahead. Aaron O'Connor capitalised on an

errant pass from Simon Grand, taking the ball around goalkeeper Tony McMillan before finding the net.

Yet, in keeping with an absorbing afternoon, Southport wasted little time in responding, as Gray's 20-yard free-kick came back off the right-hand post, inadvertently going in off goalkeeper Pilkington.

Both sides had chances to find a winner, but it was Southport who should have done. Their best opportunity fell to debutant James Ellison, who spurned a fee header, before Shaun Whalley's volley was acrobatically turned over by Pilkington.

Luton boss Gary Brabin said: "Under normal circumstances getting a point at Haig Avenue would have been a good result but today I feel it should be more.

"We started sloppily and were disappointed to concede twice but we showed good character. Once we were ahead I felt we would go on to win."

MATCH STATS

SOUTHPORT v LUTON

4	SHOTS ON TARGET	6
6	SHOTS OFF TARGET	3
8	CORNERS	3
2	OFFSIDE	2
12	FOULS CONCEDED	8
1	YELLOW CARDS	1
0	RED CARDS	0

STAR MAN: Tony Gray (Southport)
ATT: 1,665

ENTERTAINMENT: ★★★★★
REF RATING: Tony Harrington 7/10

SOUTHPORT: (4-4-2): McMillan 7; Smith 6, Akrigg 6, Grand 6, Lever 6 (Benjamin 45, 6); Whalley 7, Parry 6, Ledsham 8, Owens 6; Gray 8, Mukendi 8 (Ellison 75, 6).

Subs not used: Nemes, Brown, Carden.

LUTON TOWN: (4-1-3-1): K. Pilkington 5; Gleeson 5, Kovas 6, G. Pilkington 5, Taylor 6; Lawless 7; Kissock 6 (Morgan-Smith 63, 6), Watkins 8, Howells 8; O'Connor 7, Crow 7. **Subs not used:** Tyler, McAllister, Fleetwood, Poku.