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LUTON TOWN

**v CRYSTAL
PALACE**

INSIDE TOWN TODAY:

Harry Haslam
Action 74
Town Focus

OFFICIAL PROGRAMME

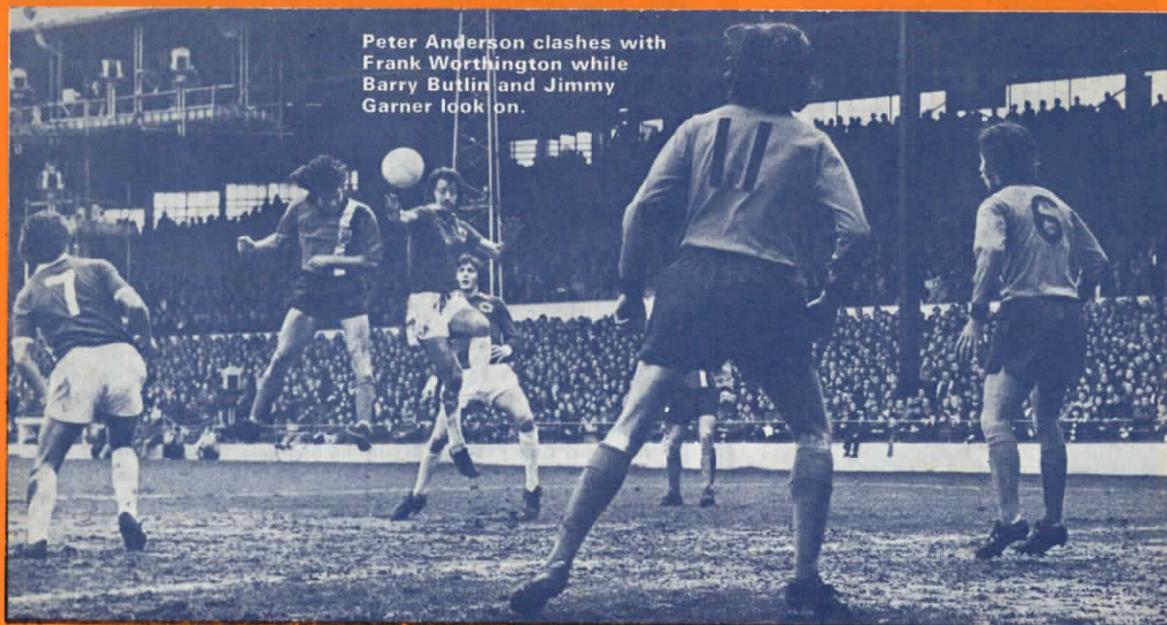
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Football League Div 2

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Peter Anderson clashes with Frank Worthington while Barry Butlin and Jimmy Garner look on.

LUTON TOWN



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A classic action shot of Leicester's Frank Worthington.

PARRISH IS EW

MAN IN THE MIDDLE

PETER WALTERS, Bridgwater. Appointed to the full list in 1967 after two seasons on the supplementary list and five on The League line. Graduated via the South West League and Football Combination. Refereed the 1969 F.A. Amateur Cup Final at Wembley and was a linesman for the 1967 F.A. Cup semi-final; Leeds United v Chelsea and a European Cup Winners' Cup quarter-final the same year. A headmaster, married with three children he is vice-chairman of Somerset County Referee's Association and chairman of Bridgwater Referee's Society. Hobbies include gardening and cine photography.

HARRY'S TOWN

So our Cup ambitions ended abruptly in Round Five this year, one stage earlier than we managed last season.

When defeat has to be suffered, it's only right for it to take the wind out of your sails, because otherwise you could not have the feeling of immense satisfaction when you enjoy success.

I can only echo my sentiments of this time last year after being knocked out only two steps from the Final. On the Cup trail there is a bitter pill for ALL, except for the actual Wembley winners. No matter how far you travel, only one side, each season, escapes the empty feeling at the end of 90 minutes, when all you have worked for flies out of the window. But it's not the end of the world, far from it. In our own way, we have lost as much as Leeds United. But the exit of the Champions-elect serves to show that no reputations are safe on such a hazardous, sudden-death exercise and what we must do now is, congratulate the team on getting so far, pay tribute, as I would like to do, to all the fans who showed their support, and get on with the job of getting Luton Town back into the First Division.

Looking back on the game, I feel that if

Rodney Fern had been able to convert his header, in the first-half, the match would have turned out something entirely different. We had Peter Shilton looking edgy, for he was not picking them up cleanly and up to half-time it was anyone's game. We might have been two up before they had a chance to score. But it's the old story, if you miss them, you can suffer the penalty, and we did.

The lads thought that they had lost badly especially after matching Leicester so impressively up to half-time. But they know they got unsettled when Sammels broke through immediately afterwards to fire over the top. It seemed to rob the defence of their composure and on the very next break, Leicester got a killer second goal.

From that point, our grip on the game just slipped further the longer it went—but that's football. I have told them there is no need to feel demoralised, we still have the job well in hand that was there at the start of the season and now every one of the remaining 14 games is going to be a fight, a real battle, because this club means to achieve its main objective of promotion.

If we learn from our defeat, we will be able to say that it has done us good. If

we don't, then we are in a poor state. The structure of the club is too far advanced and ambitious for us not to be able to sweep away the pieces of an unsuccessful Cup campaign and go wholeheartedly towards the target we see so boldly.

The Cup always relates a lot to everything which is considered success. Being knocked out of it brings a few palpitations at the time, but we must remember that the players are professionals and they are so conditioned to treat one setback not as the end of the road, but just a reminder that nothing can be taken for granted.

Another 200 or so clubs said farewell before we did and surely if Leeds United can be beaten by a Second Division side, that shock for the country can help our supporters, perhaps, understand that to lose against Leicester City was a body blow at the time, but not something we can't forget without any lingering damage being done.

I have taken a knock on the chin as sharply as anyone, but I am sure Luton Town will find their way back on the path to success again, starting today with Crystal Palace, whom we welcome warmly and trust that the fixture will prove from a Luton point, all I have been trying to explain.

HARRY HASLAM

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INTRODUCING PALACE

Seven points from the first four games of the New Year opened up possibilities of Crystal Palace pulling off 'The Great Escape' after spending most of the season on the bottom of the table in virtual isolation from a safe place.

Manager Malcolm Allison had predicted a promotion challenge at the start of the campaign, but with only four draws from the first 15 fixtures, Palace were tailed off seven points adrift of the 19th-placed club and the pre-season prediction was adjusted to a promise of better things by Christmas.

In a dramatic flurry of buying and selling and an assortment of team changes which meant that 30 players have so far appeared in the League team, Allison was as good as his

word. Palace collected their first win with a single goal at Bristol City on 3rd November, and succeeded by 4-2 in the match they just had to win, against troubled Swindon Town.

By Christmas, the team had slowly taken on a steadily-increasing degree of efficiency and style—but the facts were still just as bleak. When they ended the Old Year by losing just 1-0 at Middlesbrough on 29th December, the Londoners were still parted by seven points from the escape route.

All was not lost, however. Allison, now armed by a vote of confidence at the club's annual meeting, stood firm amidst all the criticism and saw his quiet faith rewarded with a New Year's Day present in the form of a 1-0 win against high-flying West Bromwich Albion.

Palace now had enough spirit to overcome a Cup shock at home to Wrexham and carried on with their League business by drawing 0-0 with Bolton Wanderers, winning 3-1 at Notts County and 2-0 in their first-ever Sunday home match against Preston North End. So, at that stage, Palace were off the foot of the ladder and had crept to within three points of Oxford United and Sheffield Wednesday, who were bracketed in 20th and 19th positions.

If they manage to wriggle clear of the Third Division, it will be a much-deserved bonus for the courage of Malcolm Allison. He wrote in a recent club programme: "The poor results we have been getting have not made it any easier for me to introduce the changes that I knew I had to make when I first took over the managerial chair at the end of last season.

"I quickly realised at the time that there was an urgent need for drastic re-organisation in the club if we were to succeed with our aims of establishing a structure which would stand Crystal Palace in good stead in the long term."

"Drastic" seemed the word to sum up the movement of players. He has unloaded seven senior players and accepted heavy losses by returning Iain Phillip (Dundee) and Charlie Cooke (Chelsea) to their former

W.W. PARRISH IS HERE



Left to right:
ROY BARRY, PETER TAYLOR
STEWART JUMP

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INTRODUCING PALACE

clubs. Two other former regulars—John Jackson and David Payne—were sold to Orient, who also signed reserve defender Bill Roffey. John Craven went to Coventry City, Bobby Tambling accepted an Irish contract in Cork and centre-half Bobby Bell is booked for South African soccer.

Other big-money purchases made by former manager Bert Head—notably Paddy Mulligan and Alan Whittle—have dropped out of the first-team to make way for a group of players who have cost Allison something over £300,000.

He went back to Manchester City and paid a hefty fee to sign midfielder man Derek Jefferies and returned again to Maine Road when taking on another midfielder, Jeff Johnson in December. This talented young

Welshman gained most of his League experience while on temporary transfer to Swansea City last season.

Former Coventry City skipper and centre-half Roy Barry was among the first signings of the season and the steady spending continued with a six-figure sum for Southend United forward Peter Taylor, around £40,000 for Ipswich Town's former Welsh international forward, Mick Hill, and about £70,000 for Stoke City's young defender, Stewart Jump.

Probably just as important as any of the imported players is goalkeeper Paul Hammond, a Palace product who was thrust into the team in preference to Jackson. This caused a torrent of criticism for the manager, Jackson having been the crowd's idol when known as the man who kept

Palace in Division One for four seasons.

The courageous decision to sell Jackson has been justified by the excellent form of young Hammond, who is now regarded as Under-23 material by many good judges. That also sums up Allison's conviction in himself. "Crystal Palace represented the biggest challenge of my career," he said. "That challenge remains and I promise you I won't run away from it. I shall continue to make decisions which I believe are right for the club."

He regards Palace as a club of high potential, plus well-appointed ground and a large catchment area which has given them an average of around 20,000 even in these difficult times.

But, for the moment, Palace have to live with the fear of Division Three. This would be a totally alien setting to the skills now brought together in the re-moulded first-team. So many clubs would fall over backwards in order to sign forwards of the quality of Don Rogers, the most successful buy surviving from Palace's First Division spending sprees, and Derek Possee, the former Millwall striker who recently came back to form with three goals in two games.

Certainly, there is too much talent for a relegation-threatened side, but have Palace the time to make up for the distressing start to the season?



Left to right:
PAUL HAMMOND, DEREK
JEFFRIES, DON ROGERS

Paul Price



TOWN FOCUS

In the 'opinion' of the record books, Luton's bright-eyed Welwyn Garden City product, Paul Price, has stood still over the last year. Statistics show that this 19-year-old defender is more Regular in the reserves than a well-known cereal!

True, but far from an accurate assessment of a player who developed fast last season and who proved a central figure in the march to the Mid-week League Championship. Paul has yet to enjoy that pride and fulfillment which comes to all professionals when they step out for their first appearance.

All through last season he pressed his claims to join the seniors, with age, further experience and improved ability further backing his challenge this term. But, so far, Paul has had to continue his 'serial' in the second-team. Yet, the fact that only two players have served the reserves more often this season speaks highly as a guide to the progress Paul Price HAS made in 12 months.

A year ago, in his first spell out of the apprentice-ranks, Paul thundered through the action in the Mid-week table as a consistent, strong-tackling right-back. When you are taking 'out' such famous names as Charlie George and Company, no one can really put a reserve stamp on you any longer.

This is the current position with Paul Price. "I know I still have to make the breakthrough," he says. "But I consider that I have made satisfactory progress since this time last year and now it's just a matter of getting the chance to lift me over the last hurdle."

One thing, of course, which has helped to blunt Paul's bid to get the recognition he deserves, is the consistency, success and injury-free season which the League side has generally enjoyed.

Popular amongst players is the trend to supplement the weeks of hard routine training with a scheme that eventually wins the award of a full coaches badge. John Moore is well on the way in this direction, so too, is Nicky Sparks, and it's a line which Paul aims to begin following in the near future.

"I have no real hard outside interest. My life is wrapped around soccer. Like everyone else, I have no real idea what is in store for me or how high I will get as a professional, so I realise now how important it is to have something to fall back on.

"It's a life I enjoy and one I want to continue for as long as possible. I feel the earlier I get a grasp of coaching, the stronger grip I shall have on a sport I like in all respects."

It might seem odd that a prospective first-teamer at the age of 19 should be talking about an appointment which the many individuals only consider when their career is finishing—unlike Paul, whose hasn't really started yet.

But it's the outlook and attitude of one of Luton's junior professionals who is not just 'working today for tomorrow.' Paul Price is a character who looks at football long term and realises that it has far more to offer than just 90 minutes every Saturday afternoon.

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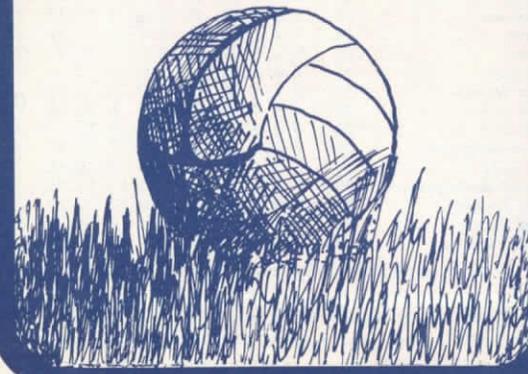


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