



● **FAREWELL:** Mick Harford, in his last appearance of the season, completes his match-winning hat-trick.

GLAD HATTER'S THREE PARTY!

THE GANGLING teenager once signed for Lincoln by Graham Taylor exploded into a hat-trick hero to settle the local derby conclusion to Luton Town's home season.

Mick Harford's second hat-trick of the season destroyed Watford far more completely than the result suggests.

Even Taylor joined in the tributes to a centre-forward who has developed into one England should have taken to Mexico.

Harford's lethal shooting took his season's tally to 25 to maintain the Town's hopes of marking their centenary with their highest-ever finishing place in the First Division.

The Watford manager said the Town goals were messy in the sense that he was able to fault defenders or the pitch, but Taylor paid tribute to the expertise with which Harford took his chances.

He might have had four goals, because in the last minute another raking drive provoked Tony Coton into an outstanding save to flick the shot over the bar into the Oak Road terrace.

A 4-2 result would have been justice on the run of play. Watford were second best by a mile in the first half, tightened up a little in the second, and were revived by a penalty which surprised both managers.

That pulled back the Town's advantage to 2-1 with 31 minutes to go, and after Harford completed his hat-trick the Town's willingness to go for-

**Report by
Brian Swain
Pictures
by Mark
Richards**

ward cost them a second Watford goal.

The Town were back to the formation which is one of the most enterprising attacking outfits in the First Division. Brian Stein returned to play just behind the front-runners, and Meka Nwajiobi was also making a return after a long injury absence.

Mike Newell was the unlucky striker left out, with Tim Breacker reverting to right back and Rob Johnson dropping down to sub.

Considering Stein and Nwajiobi had been out of the top level for so long, it was astonishing how the old rhythm and flow returned.

The build-up moves were smooth, and Coton was fortunate that at times the shooting was inches on the wrong side of perfection.

The first 45 minutes saw Watford almost demolished, with the Town's defence rarely in trouble, the midfield prompting regular attacks, and Harford showing no sign of a

Match details

LUTON TOWN 3 WATFORD 2

HALF-TIME: 2-0

TOWN: Sealey; Breacker, Foster, Donaghy, Thomas; Hill, Nicholas, Preece; Stein, Harford, Nwajiobi. Sub: Johnson, not needed.

WATFORD: Coton; Gibbs, Terry, McClelland, Sinnott; Talbot, Barnes, Jackett; Sterling, Allen (Bardsley, 59 mins), West.

THE GOALS: Mick Harford hat-trick for the Town, with perfect shots in the 10th, 30th and 74th minutes; Kenny Jackett penalty for Watford, 59 minutes, after a shot hit Mitchell Thomas's hand; Lee Sinnott header for Watford, 78th minute.

OTHER STRIKES: Town eight saved and seven wide; Watford five saved and five off target. Corners: 11-9 to the Town.

ATTENDANCE: 11,810, fourth highest of the season, despite smaller than usual Watford following for the last match at which away fans will be welcomed. Lowest-ever First Division local derby attendance.

REFEREE: Dennis Hedges, Oxford. Should be trimmed from the list if upsetting both sides is anything to go by.

ENTERTAINMENT: Just about the perfect finale to the home season for Town fans, with Watford beaten more handsomely than the score-line suggests.

painful knee condition which would send weaker men into rest and recuperation.

Watford are one of the clubs opposed to synthetic pitches, and Taylor blamed the bounce for the opening goal. His defenders misjudged it when Les Sealey punted a long clearance downfield. Stein and Nwajiobi exchanged passes before feeding Harford, who sidestepped past Steve Terry and buried the shot wide of Coton.

That was in the tenth minute, and Watford missed a glorious chance of equalising in the 21st.

Colin West was put clear by Brian Talbot's excellent through pass but while he was lining up the shot Steve Foster sprinted back and made the saving tackle.

Watford were short of similar defensive skill in the 30th minute when Nwajiobi won possession in midfield, waltzed past John McClelland and Lee Sinnott in a run towards the right, and then crossed accurately.

Once more Harford shot deliberately past Coton and by half-time Watford were so far behind on points a boxing ref would have stopped it.

After the interval Watford sorted themselves out, with Talbot marking David Preece tighter, Kenny Jackett closing down Peter Nicholas and Sinnott pushing up to try to contain Ricky Hill.

It worked in the sense that the second-half honours were shared, although the Town always looked the more inventive attacking combination.

Preece beat the offside trap from Foster's clever pass to deliver a cross which Nwajiobi

nearly converted, with McClelland making a good interception.

Watford's lifeline was a re-assisted goal in the 59th minute. Mitchell Thomas conceded a corner to keep out Worrell Sterling. Watford sent defenders forward and as the ball bounced around in the area McClelland's shot hit Thomas.

Even Watford were surprised when Mr Hedges called that deliberate handball. Jackett converted the penalty, Watford sent on sub David Bardsley and committed more men to attack, and the Town might must have had a difficult last half-hour.

Instead Harford struck again in the 74th minute. Watford failed to clear a corner, were caught ball-watching as Stein and Hill tried to get possession, and Harford stepped in from nowhere to bang a tremendous volley past Coton from the edge of the box.

Sinnott reduced the arrears four minutes later — another defender showing Watford forwards where the goal was with a header after Bardsley had headed back across goal from John Barnes's left wing cross.

Bardsley had half a chance to equalise eight minutes from the end, but Sealey, despite a pretty quiet afternoon, was alert and quick off his line, and the season's fourth double was secure, and deserved.

It was the 58th local derby in the league, and the Town's 27th success, against 21 by Watford. The only sadness was in realising that Harford's superb hat-trick was too late to influence Bobby Robson. John Barnes, who has been chosen for Mexico, was just about anonymous.