Hornets stung by Telfer's double strike

THE SEASON SO FAR

Chart shows Luton Town score first, Town scorers, attendance and league position.

ENDSLEIGH LEAGUE DIV I

			August		
13	West Brom	(H)	1-1 (Oakes)	8,640	-
20	Derby Co	(A)	0-2	13,060	-
27	Southend	(H)	2-0 (Harrison, Hughes)	9,318	17
30	Tranmere	(A)	2-4 (Hughes; Harison)	5,480	20
			September		
3	Port Vale	(A)	1-0 (Marshall)	8,541	15
10	Burnley	(H)	0-0	5,911	18
13	Bolton	(H)	0-3	5,764	20
17	Watford	(A)	4-2 (Telfer 2, Dixon, Oakes)	5,680	16

GOALS: Harison, Hughes, Oakes and Telfer two each; Dixon and Marshall one each.
ASSISTS: Telfer and Preece 2; Marshall, Harison, Oakes and Johnson 1.
APPEARANCES (as sub in brackets): Ever-present, eight each: Sommer, Peake, Johnson, Telfer and Preece. Oakes 7; Harrison 6; Marshall 3 (3); Dixon 5 (1); Harison 4; Hughes 4; Stathers 3; Waddock 3; Thomas 2 (2), Linton 1 (2). Woodstead (1). Before transfer: Houghton 1. Number of players used: 18. Last season: 26

COCA COLA CUP
(First round)

			August	
16	Fulham	(H)	1-1 (Oakes)	3,287
23	Fulham	(A)	1-1 (Marshall)	5,154

Lost on penalties
APPEARANCES: Two: each by Sommer, James, Greene, Peake, Johnson, Telfer, Preece, Stathers and Dixon. Houghton 1; Oakes 1 (1), Linton 1 (1) Marshall 1 (1); Skelton (1).

GREAT SCOTT . . . Watford men take cover as Scott Oakes, far right, blasts in a drive which rose just too high.

THE TEAM that broke a few hearts in losing twice at home gave its fans the tonic they wanted with a thumping local derby victory on Saturday.

The Hornets were stung as Luton Town at last found the goals to match the style of play half David Pleat has set out as his priority.

And Town followers at Vicarage Road did not mind in the least that two of the goals were down to assists by Watford skipper Andy Hessenthaler.

The strikes by Scott Oakes and Kerry Dixon that punished his mistakes were both deadly, and two cracking goals by Paul Telfer helped us to forget the defensive frailty that let Watford have a couple of consolation goals.

Best of all, in the last ten minutes the Town were so much in command that they played keep-ball, passing around with impudent confidence as Watford forlornly accepted that they could do nothing about it.

It was a touch of the arrogance Leeds United made famous 20 years ago, and all the sweeter for being displayed in the lair of the old enemy.

As a spectacle it was one of the best local derbies for a long time, with both sides looking suspect at the back but potent in attack.

The Town persevered with the formation that had come unstuck in the second half against Bolton, with Garry Waddock as sort of free sweeper and only three defenders behind him.

The style it produced was a throwback the cavalier side Mr Pleat turned out in drive to the old Second Division promotion and a successful decade in what's now the Premiership.

I hope he sticks with it. Opposing teams will always have a chance of scoring against a defence that can sometimes look undermanned, but if the midfield is in shape as it was on Saturday we can hope for more goals scored than conceded.

For most of the game the Town were well on top against a Watford team struggling to overcome the injury absence of midfield Colin Foster.

They threw in 17-year-old Eric Fitzgerald for a debut at centre-forward, a bold baptism on a day when the Town were out to bury the nightmare memory of two consecutive home defeats. The teenager so mercifully faded in the slaughter at half-time.

Juergen Sommer had a tough time early, saving a shot from Jason Miller, and Watford were fortunate to escape a free-kick, which Tony Coton had to parry.

The Hornets were in the ascendancy when Tommy Mooney's through ball put Jay Mazloumi in front of Johan James.

But Watford were not allowed to build on that two goals in three minutes as the Town following a spell of pressure.

The first was a cracking drive by Oakes' left foot with his right foot the weaker edge of the box after Hessenthaler's pass to him had been deflected wide.

Dixon hit the second from inside the box after a pass assist by the Watford skipper, who it seemed, Pleat had turned Watford away.

David Preece's cross-shot was a gift ball inside the left-back post.

Scott Marshall to get clear down the goal. His deep cross was headed back across the penalty area by Mitchell Thomas, and Hessenthaler fluffed the clearance sending Dixon percocd for his first goal of the season.

Rafael were lucky to escape when a slow corner kick routine led to Marshall twisp sarcasticy over the bar, and as the game found up and down in an exciting attempt. Trevor Peake cleared off the goaline. Trevor Peake cleared off the goaline in from Mirosler after Sommer lost possession at the edge of the area.

Tim Sanders before the break. Preece tried another delightful pass inside the defence for Telfer to begin a brilliant solo run. He cut in from the right, beat two opponents and lofted the shot between Perry Digweed and the near post.

It 3-1 on through it was all over, but while two minutes Watford replied. Kenny Jackett, after an indecisive tackle by James in a scramble that allowed Hessenthaler to pick up goal at the right end to compensate to some degree for the two a bad mark at the other.

As Watford's pleasure was short-lived, Wates in the Sky Sports Football Yearbook quiz, beating his would-be marker for pace. Twas an excellent low cross from the speedy and tricky Marshall. Once more it was Preece's precise pass that made it possible.

The contest was over then, with Watford lucky when Digweed managed to save a header by James from a free kick by Preece, and unlucky when Ramage clipped the top of the bar with a lob from 20 yards.

It all made for great entertainment, and I referee Mike Bailey was harsh to book James and Peake for mild dissent, he was very kind when Preece and Hessenthaler got into a tangle and started leaking out at each other.

Players of both sides piled in to keep them apart, and it all ended with the two protagonists with their arms around each other to have the inevitable lecture, and enjoy the relief of seeing yellow cards, not red.

But the real enjoyment of the day was among Watford embarrassed yet again. It was the 17th local derby in the league under Mr. Pleat's management. The record now stands at 11 wins to Luton, three to Watford.

REPORTS BY BRIAN SWAIN
PICTURES BY GARETH OWEN

FLASHPOINT . . . The moment when the derby almost flared up into a real battle. David Preece and Andy Hessenthaler are in the middle of it, having had a bit of a go at each other after the Watford skipper fouled the Luton midfielder. But the rest were intent on nipping trouble in the bud, and succeeded, with the protagonists escaping with yellow cards.

WATFORD 2
LUTON TOWN 4
(Half-time 2-3)

Hot shots make it a happy return for ex-Hatter Rioch

LUTON TOWN 0 BOLTON 3

THE DERBY day delight at Watford was little surprise to Town manager David Pleat after the shock of the second consecutive home defeat in four days.

"Maybe we will get lucky soon," he said after seeing his side play well against Bolton for 45 minutes, except for the little matter of scoring goals.

Bruce Rioch's team rode out the storm, during which Mitchell Thomas might have notched the first hat-trick of his career, then showed what quality fishing is all about.

The Town gave a first outing to the formation that was to prove so successful four days before the Vicarage Road game, with three at the back, and Gary Waddock just in front of them. John Harrison and Kerry Dixon were the central attackers.

"If that spearhead was a little blunt, a storming first half by Thomas, wide on the left, should have more than compensated.

Time and again he found space to attack, and with Paul Telfer firing over a series of consistently good crosses to the far post, Bolton should have paid for not keeping Thomas at bay.

But they were let off because Thomas saw his best efforts flash inches too high. And when he was on target, after a poor punch by goalkeeper Rich Branagan, he was left-hole who headed off the line by Alan Stubbs.

Bolton boss Bruce Rioch admitted that he thought his side was lucky to be level at the interval, but he ordered Neil Fisher to clamp down on Thomas, and said his side to be more positive, instead of sitting back and waiting for things to happen.

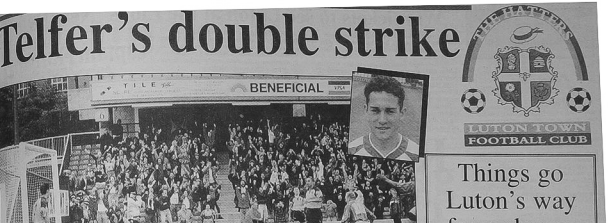
His team's response was devastating, with three goals in the first 26 minutes of the second half.

The crucial first one was mainly down to Juergen Sommer. He failed to hold a powerful drive by Dutch midfielder Richard Sneekes, and John McGinlay reacted faster than the Town defence to snap up the rebound.

That was six minutes after the break, and while the Town and their fans were suffering growing frustration, they were killed off by two goals in as many minutes: "Superlative strikes," said Mr Pleat.

Sneekes struck a belting 25-yarder that gave Sommer no chance, and McGinlay followed suit from closer range, to leave the Luton fans fed up and miserable. The quality of Bolton's finishing was less on their mind than the unconvincing performance by a team that had once again flattered for so long, only to deceive.

The slow hands-lap rung out for a time, on a ground where once Rioch was cheered to the rafters. He was the outstanding midfielder at Kenilworth Road nearly 30 years ago, and enjoyed coming back to prove he not a bad manager either.



WIDE OPEN . . . Goalkeeper Perry Digweed is down and out as Paul Telfer, out of camera range on the right but in his first goal of the season, to make it 3-1 just before the interval.

The big match facts

★ TOWN: Sommer; James, Peake, Johnson; Waddock; Telfer, Oakes, Preece, Thomas; Marshall, Dixon. Subs Linton, Harrison and goalkeeper Barber.

★ WATFORD: Digweed; Bazeley, Holdsworth, Fitzgerald Soleman; HT), Johnson; Hessenthaler, Payne, Porter; Ramage, Morales; Mooney. Other subs Nogan and goalkeeper Wilkinson.

★ THE GOALS: 1-0, 28 mins: Jason Miroslav after the Hornets had been hit by Tommy Mooney's throughball. 1-2, 32 mins: Scott Oakes, instead 25-yard drive after Andy Hessenthaler's poor clearance dropped to his right foot. 2-2, 34 mins: Kerry Dixon, first-time from the edge of the box after Hessenthaler did it again; 1-3, 41 mins: Paul Telfer, brilliant solo goal, cutting in from the right. Left David Preece's pass inside the full-back set him moving. 2-3, 44 mins: Mooney shot from Hessenthaler's cross; 2-4, 45 mins: Telfer again, converting a neat pass chained from Marshall through Preece.

★ OTHER ATTEMPTS: Town five saved and eight wide; Watford seven saved, six wide, and Craig Ramage lob hit the top of the bar. Corners: 8-2 to the Town.

★ REFEREE: Mike Bailey, Cambridge: had a good game overall, and handled a 20-man melee calmly and effectively without red cards, for which David Preece and Andy Hessenthaler might be grateful.

★ BOOKED: Preece and Hessenthaler for a flare-up after the Watford goal. Preece: Jaime James and Trevor Peake, Hessenthaler, for dissent; Jason Soleman of Watford for a foul on Marshall.

★ ATTENDANCE: 8,880 including about 1,507 from Luton.

★ ENTERTAINMENT: Six goals and Watford well shaffled at Vicarage Road. What a smashing day out for Town fans.

How they stand

ENDSLEIGH LEAGUE FIRST DIVISION

	HOME					AWAY					
	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bolton	8	4	0	0	10	0	1	2	1	4	4	17
Millwall	8	3	1	0	7	3	2	1	1	5	3	17
Reading	8	3	2	0	5	1	1	2	1	3	3	17
Southend	8	3	2	0	5	1	1	1	2	3	4	15
Tranmere	8	3	2	0	5	1	1	0	2	3	4	14
Luton Town	8	3	1	1	8	4	1	1	2	3	5	14
Port Vale	8	3	1	1	8	4	1	1	2	3	9	13
Watford	8	3	1	1	7	4	1	1	2	3	9	13
West Brom	8	2	2	0	7	5	1	1	2	6	9	12
Barnsley	8	2	2	0	5	3	1	1	2	3	6	12
Derby Co	8	2	1	1	6	3	1	1	2	7	7	11
Swindon	8	2	1	1	5	4	1	1	2	5	7	11
Bristol City	8	2	1	1	4	3	1	1	2	3	7	10
Oldham	8	2	1	1	4	5	1	1	2	0	3	10
Wolves	8	2	0	2	5	4	1	1	2	3	5	10
Bristol Rovers	8	2	1	1	7	0	1	0	2	2	5	9
Charlton	8	2	1	1	5	3	1	0	2	7	6	9
Barnsley	8	1	2	1	2	3	1	2	1	2	6	9
Sheffield U	8	1	2	1	3	2	1	2	1	3	4	9
Portsmouth	8	1	2	1	5	6	1	1	2	2	4	9
Grimsby	8	1	2	1	3	4	1	1	2	2	4	8
Stoke	8	0	3	2	2	4	2	0	2	4	5	8
Sheffield W	8	0	2	2	4	7	1	2	1	3	4	8
Leicester	8	0	1	3	1	5	1	2	1	2	3	6
Peterboro	8	1	1	2	3	7	0	1	3	2	4	5
Cambridge	8	0	1	3	1	7	0	1	3	2	9	4

GOAL . . . David Preece is rather pleased as Kerry Dixon wheels away from Watford goalkeeper Perry Digweed in the first of the season and Town's second following a mistake by Watford skipper Andy Hessenthaler.

CELEBRATION . . . Fans in the Luton section at Vicarage Road show their pleasure as Paul Telfer, grounded after a marvellous solo run and shot, receives congratulations on his first goal from Kerry Dixon and Dwight Marshall.

Things go Luton's way for a change

LIKE any Luton Town fan, Hatters manager David Pleat took great delight in the result at Vicarage Road

It was, he said, no more than his players had earned after losing to Bolton a few days earlier.

"Football is not black and white," said the Town manager. "It's a lot of grey. Against Bolton it was horribly grey. But today we had got some reward for what we did in that game

"Burnley and Bolton had their day at Kenilworth Road. This one is ours, and we fully deserved it.

"The minor question I always ask myself about our performances is this: did their goalkeeper seek harder than ours? The only game this season where our keeper had to work harder was at Port Vale... and we won that one. Football can be a strange game.

A main source of pleasure, he said, was the way players had taken to the system he is using.

"And he had a special word for Dwight Marshall, who did much to win the victory.

"He looked like a million-pound player," said the manager.

"He was superb in the way he made his runs for pace and energy. But really I am so pleased for all the boys.

"The policy and philosophy of how you play is important. They did everything we could have asked for, and played progressive football."

Wolford boss Glenn Roeder said his team did not play as badly as the result might suggest.

He agreed that the strike by Scott Oakes to make it 1-1 was an important one.

"That was a marvellous strike," said Roeder. "We knew he is a very good player. Nine times out of ten Andy Hessenthaler would have got away with the mistake he made, but Oakes is such a good player and he punished it."

Watford felt the absence of injured Colin Foster was a blow. "I have got five centre-halves on the books, and they are one of them fit," said the manager who threw in a 17-year-old for his debut, then took him off at half-time.

And Watford can produce statistics to underline Foster's value — in 15 games which Foster has played only seven goals were conceded. In the five matches he has missed, 12 goals have been shot into the Watford net.

But on the day, admitted the Watford boss, Luton Town had done the business, and got a result by playing very good football.

And to pile on the Hornets' agony, Watford's first home defeat of the season enabled the Town to edge above them in the league table!