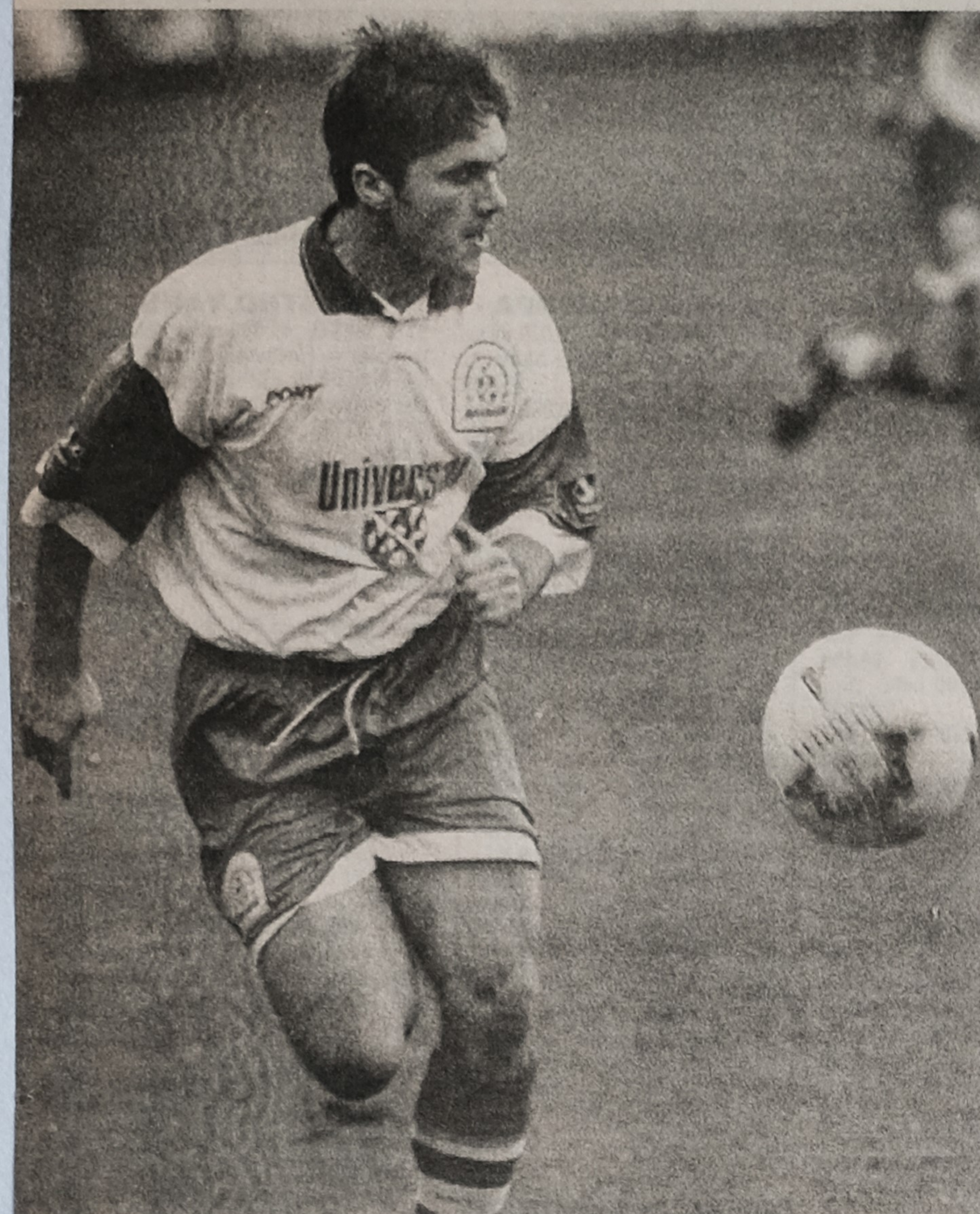


Thorpe weaves his magic spell



Luton Town 2 Bournemouth 0
TRICKY Tony Thorpe bagged a brace as Hatters struggled to breach Bournemouth's baracade.

Two opportunistic goals in two match turning minutes killed off the visitors, who spent most of the match camped in their own half.

Hatters mounted wave after wave of attacks on the Seaside's goal, but the defensive seawall just would not give way.

To Bournemouth's credit they never looked like surrendering a goal until a piece of Thorpe magic created a goal out of nothing.

After 58 minutes of frustrating deadlock, Julian James launched a harmless looking throw in into the box for Thorpe to control with his chest.

With his back to goal and Owen Coll breathing down his neck, Thorpe back heeled himself into some space only to find Coll's outstretched leg conveniently placed to trip over.

Report by PETE KENYON

Referee Carl Finch did not hesitate to award the clear-cut penalty, which tightly marked Thorpe had cleverly played for.

After a minute long delay to allow police to wade into the Oak Road stand and calm down protesting Bournemouth fans, Thorpe composed himself and despatched the penalty with ease, before burying his head in his shirt Ravanelli style to start the celebrations.

Bournemouth could have equalised within seconds – only a timely challenge from Marvin Johnson prevented Robinson from pulling the trigger from close range.

Seconds later it was 2-0 – courtesy of a dreadful backpass from Ian Cox.

Under no pressure whatsoever the centre half underhit his pass to Andy Marshall in the Bournemouth goal – allowing Thorpe to dart in and flick past the stranded goalkeeper. That was

the cue for yet more Ravanelli style celebrations, only this time the shirt came off completely.

Ceri Hughes might have made it three a minute later, only failing by inches to slide in on the end of a misdirected James' shot at the far post.

But once again it might have been very different had partial spectator Ian Feuer not made a crucial double save in first half injury time.

Aaron Skelton, in for the injured Steve Davis, lost an aerial tussle with Fletcher and from the flick Robinson found himself with a clear route to goal.

But after blocking the first effort left him on the floor, Feuer recovered magnificently to use every inch of his six foot seven inch frame and get a vital fingertip to Robinson's follow-in goalmouth lob.

After the match Bournemouth boss Mel Machin hotly disputed the penalty – claiming that Thorpe had dived.

But Hatters' boss Lennie Lawrence said there was no doubt in his mind that his man had been tripped.

"Two things turned that match in our

favour – a great save from Feuer just before the break and Thorpe's skill on the byline to win us the penalty."

"We suffered from having a hard midweek game against Wimbledon and it was our work rate which won us this game.

"We played magnificently on Tuesday at Wimbledon and with so many midweek fixtures the players just cannot perform every Saturday.

"Bournemouth caused their own problems but it is good to win when you are not playing at your best."



MY BALL – Graham Alexander in action for the Hatters



Ceri Hughes, who should have scored a third goal

A TOUCH OF MAGIC – double goalscorer Tony Thorpe