

Mitchell Thomas proved strong in the air



Tony Thorpe gets up to celebrate after putting the Hatters in the lead

## Fabulous Thorpe lifts dour Hatters

Luton Town 2 Notts County 0
CERI Hughes fired home a
reakish 40 yard free kick –
hen Hatters went to sleep.

Manager Lennie Lawrence predicts Luton will get a hiding on Tuesday in the Coca Cola cup replay against Wimbledon if the quality of finishing does not improve.

Speaking after yesterday's dour victory he aid: "That certainly was not a vintage erformance and even though we had done nough to win the points, the players have a had mild telling off because we lacked the killer astinct in the second half."

But he paid tribute to his midfield maestro Ceri Hughes, whose performance he described soutstanding.

If Luton do miss promotion on goals scored hey will look back on this game and wonder ow they did not run up a cricket score. Four tunning saves from County goalkeeper Darren Vard – three of them in the first five minutes – elped keep the score respectable for the isitors.

But a glaring open goal miss by Stuart louglas and poor finishing from out-of-sorts im Grant left County in with a shout.

In form Tony Thorpe bagged his sixth goal in tree games to give Hatters a 21st minute lead.

## Report by PETE KENYON

And two minutes later Hughes lauched a left footed free kick from fully 40 yards which went through everybody – including County goalkeeper Ward.

It could have been 3-0 within five minutes of the kick-off.

Steve Davis looped a goal bound header at the far post following good work down the left from Mitchell Thomas and Graham Alexander – but Ward somehow got a vital fingertip to it.

From the resulting corner Davis showed good skill in chesting the ball down to his feet – only to see his 10 yard drive saved at full stretch by Ward.

And the goalkeeper notched a hat-trick of fine saves barely a minute later – this time Marvin Johnson was the one left to hold his head in his hands in disbelief after his precise 20 yard volley was fingertipped to safety.

Ian Feuer had to be alert to save with his feet after Gary Jones burst clear, but Hatters hit back when Grant went clear after a precise cross field ball from Hughes.

As Grant rounded the goalkeeper he took a tumble but the referee was not impressed.

Richard Walker then used his hand to deny

Davis, but once again the man in black was having none of it.

Then came two goals in two minutes – the first a real beauty from Thorpe who lashed home from 20 yards with the goalkeeper rooted to the spot.

Douglas came on at the break to replace the injured Thorpe, but there was to be no appearance for substitute Dwight Marshall who has been out for eight months since breaking his leg at Sunderland last season.

Douglas, Grant and Guentchev, starting in place of the injured Paul Showler, then proceeded to spend most of the second half wasting a series of clearcut opportunities.

None more wasteful than young Douglas who with 20 minutes left missed an open net from 15 yards after Ward was beaten to the ball outside his penalty box by Guentchev.

A poor County side rallied in the last ten minutes and were unlucky not to pull one back on 81 minutes when Peter Kennedy's low 25 yard free kick looked to have crossed the line by the time Feuer got down to make the save.

Luton Town: Feuer, James, Thomas, Waddock, Davis, Johnson, Hughes, Alexander, Grant, Thorpe, (replaced by Douglas, 45), Guentchev. Subs not used: Marshall, McLaren.

Attendance: 5,664.



Guentchev tries to get a foot in