

Blunders send sad Hatters crashing



● IT'S THERE – Dwight Marshall heads home for Hatters and salutes the crowd, above right



Bournemouth 3 Luton Town 2
TWO blunders in four second half minutes sent Hatters crashing to defeat.

Goalkeeper Ian Feuer was caught in no-mans' land after coming for a drilled Jason Brissett free kick, which Ian Cox was always going to get to first.

And with the goalkeeper hopelessly committed, Cox's flick was enough to spin the ball into the net for Bournemouth's 77th minute equaliser.

Four minutes later assistant referee Mr Bone ruled that Brissett had kept the ball in play at the far post when it had clearly crossed the byline by a good few inches.

But Hatters paid the ultimate price for not playing to the whistle and from the headed pull back Steve Robinson was left with the simple task of poking home past a hesitating Feuer.

Referee John Brandwood immediately looked to his colleague for instructions but the assistant referee

Luton pay the ultimate price

**Report by
PETE KENYON**

did not hesitate in pointing to the centre circle.

In truth the Cherries deserved the points for a rousing second half display – but Hatters could have been out of sight by the break.

After falling behind to a 16th minute Steve Robinson tap in – which had more than a hint of offside about it – Luton stormed back.

Ceri Hughes and Aaron Skelton, in for the injured Gary Waddock, stepped up a gear and marshalled the mid-field superbly.

And just eight minutes after falling behind, Hatters were level.

Graham Alexander's free kick on the left edge of Bournemouth's box cannoned back to him off Dale

Gordon, and from his square ball across the penalty area Julian James shaped himself up then hammered an unstoppable 25 yard shot past the sprawling Jimmy Glass in off the post.

Tony Thorpe then missed a superb opportunity after Mike Dean was caught in possession on half way by a crunching Hughes' tackle.

The ricochet sent Thorpe clear but the Luton striker panicked under pressure and dragged his shot wide of the far post.

Dwight Marshall then failed to make a decisive pass which would have left Thorpe unmarked at the far post, and three minutes before the break Thorpe looked to have won a penalty after being hauled down as he rounded Glass.

But the Luton striker was adjudged to have pulled back Cox.

Just seconds before the break,

Hatters nosed ahead with a goal of high quality.

Paul Showler sent an overlapping Hughes down the left and his inch perfect near post cross was met superbly by Marshall, who had slipped his marker and headed home on the dive.

Manager Lennie Lawrence lashed into his team and said: "It has been a massively disappointing day. We played well in the first half with two good goals and you would have thought that would be enough."

"But the second half was woeful. I can't blame the defence, who were under constant pressure because we were not making any tackles further up the field."

"This was our worst performance in midfield since Brentford. We lost more tackles than I can remember and that put immense pressure on the

defence.

"We might still have got away with it had it not been for some nonsense defending for their equaliser followed by a criminal lack of concentration in waiting for a whistle to come for the third goal.

"It looks like the bad old Luton at the start of the season again, our away form is woeful.

"If we are talking about an automatic promotion spot we are just not good enough. That is not to take anything away from Bournemouth who played with great enthusiasm and passion in the second half."

Team: Feuer, James, Thomas Skelton (replaced by Linton 67 mins) Davis, Johnson, Hughes, Alexander Showler (replaced by Guentchev 81 mins), Thorpe (replaced by Grant 81mins), Marshall.

Attendance: 4,322.