



BURNLEY have a big shout for a penalty as Andy Kiwomya handles Paul Weller's cross – but referee Trevor Jones shows no interest in the Burnley appeals. (BX7973)

Clarets driven off course

LUTON drove a truck through Burnley's automatic promotion hopes with a thoroughly workmanlike display at Turf Moor on Saturday.

EDWARD LEE reports...

Avenging an opening day defeat at Kenilworth Road, the match followed a similar pattern.

Luton went in at half-time with a 2-0 lead and the points already heading for Bedfordshire and the Hatters heading back to the top two.

But they went in at full-time knowing they had been given a serious run for their money and had been lucky to escape with a win.

Hailed as the division's match of the day, the game was also a shoot-out between the division's two highest scorers.

On this occasion it was Luton's Tony Thorpe who emerged with the credit as he scored the day's two goals.

It was also a day which gave Steve

Davis a first return to the club which sold him for £750,000 almost two years ago.

Nothing had changed about the Davis game – only the fact it appeared to have got better.

One of the greatest "sins" of Burnley 1994-95 relegation back to the Second Division was that it led to the departure of Davis.

On Saturday he was a man mountain in the heart of the Luton defence and it was his role which laid the foundations for Luton's clean sheet.

Davis got a lot of help from giant keeper Ian Feuer.

But the former Clarets skipper went a long way to ensuring that Burnley – despite a very healthy shots-on-target column – were largely restricted to speculative efforts.

But Davis and Feuer weren't the only players to get top billing in a very entertaining game.

Those who had missed the away wins at Brentford and Walsall had missed two excellent displays from Paul



Nationwide FOOTBALL LEAGUE

Burnley 0, Luton Town 2



Burnley: Beresford, Parkinson, Smith, Brass, Hoyland (Little 80), Winstanley, Matthew, Weller, Cooke, Barnes, Thompson (Guinan, 72). Sub not used: Swan.

Luton Town: Feuer, McGowan (Guentchev 80), Thomas, Waddock, Davis, Johnson, McLaren, Alexander, Oldfield, Thorpe, Kiwomya (Marshall 80). Sub not used: Grant.

Goals: Luton Town – Thorpe 14, 43. **Shots/headers on target:** Burnley 9, Luton Town 4.

Shots/headers off target: Burnley 5, Luton Town 5.

Off-sides: Burnley 8, Luton Town 6.

Corners: Burnley 8, Luton Town 3.

Free kicks conceded: Burnley 7, Luton Town 11.

Referee: Trevor Jones (Hull).

Yellow cards: Burnley – Cooke (39 foul) Luton Town – McLaren (16, foul); Thomas (74, timewasting).

Red cards: None.

Attendance: 15,490.

Weller.

He didn't disappoint on Saturday, ran his legs off and created most of Burnley's dangerous openings.

Weller has been overlooked by many as Burnley's other youngsters have cornered the publicity market.

But in this hat-trick of outstanding performances Weller has proved that he can live with the best of them.

He really did crop up everywhere.

From having a strong penalty claim turned down at one end, he was in defensive action at the other.

He made a string of startling runs, any one of which could have led to a goal, and must have really caught the eye of all the scouts and visiting managers sitting in the stands.

They might have turned up to watch the Second Division's highest scorer, but they must have gone home with Weller's name scribbled in their notebooks – along with that of young central defender Chris Brass.

He displays the cool, calm attitude of someone with five years more experience.

He displays confidence drawn from a run of great performances and his must now be the first name written into the defence every week, rather than the standby he clearly was at the start of the season.

Swopped and changed between full back and midfield earlier in his career, Brass has now found his place in a three-man central defensive unit and will take some shifting.

The Clarets were given a hero's welcome for the big match.

Almost 15,500 packed in to Turf Moor and there was a carnival atmosphere.

Every one of the Burnley players received rapturous applause as the team sheet was read out.

And the air of expectancy was spittingling in itself.

Thorpe gave himself a couple of early sighters – but nothing to worry Marlon Beresford in the Burnley goal.

But Burnley hit back with a barrage of chances.

Paul Smith's excellent run forced the

PAUL BARNES gets the better of Steve Davis to make a telling cross. (BX7969)





LOAN signing Steve Guinan just loses out to Steve Davis. (BX7974)

PHOTOS: Dave Harwood

Luton keeper to race from his line and make good catch before Barnes could pounce.

Andy Cooke broke well only to be closed down by Gavin McGowan so that Feuer could collect the ball and then the American keeper made a full-stretch save to deny Cooke as Beresford punted and Barnes flicked the ball into his path.

All that happened in the first 10 minutes and the signs were that we had a cracking match on our hands.

It was a shame that Luton took the lead with a lucky goal – the game deserved better.

Graham Alexander cracked a long-range shot that had no hope of beating the Burnley defence.

When it hit Damian Matthew, however, the ball span straight into the Thorpe's path and he took no time in beating Beresford with a crisp shot.

Burnley could have replied within two minutes.

Marvin Johnson crudely fouled Steve Thompson in midfield but referee Trevor Jones allowed play to go on.

Weller pounced on the right, rode three tackles and hit the bye-line.

With players piling into the area, Weller aimed a low cross at Cooke which deserved to reach him – but a Luton leg stuck out and denied Burnley a great chance.

While Luton breathed a sigh of relief, Mr Jones trotted back upfield and booked Johnson for his challenge – why can't all referees let play go on and then remember to book people for serious foul play?

Play was stuck in midfield for the next 15 minutes or so with the only notable effort being Mark Winstanley's header from a Thompson corner.

Luton, having ridden a storm, forced their way back into the game and eventually got the all-important second goal.

Davis had been close with a shot on the turn and Beresford produced a marvellous one-handed save to deny Thorpe as he lobbed from the edge of the area.

But Luton scored from the resulting corner.

Thorpe found space in the six-yard box to direct a downward header.

It got past Beresford but Gary Parkinson thought he had hacked it clear – only for the referee's assistant the flag frantically to signal that the ball had crossed the line.

As the half fizzled out Parkinson was unlucky to be unable to convert after another fine run by Weller and then Winstanley headed across the face of goal as Feuer found himself in tangle following a Thompson corner.

The second half belonged almost

entirely to the Clarets.

They rained chances on the Luton goal – but simply could not find the back of the net.

Weller inspired everything.

He attacked down both sides and through the middle.

The first real action of the half should have resulted in a penalty.

Weller went through the inside-right channel and crossed from the bye-line.

Andy Kiwomya threw an arm up and the ball hit it ... Burnley appealed, but Mr Jones waved play on.

From then on it was one-way traffic. Thompson set up Barnes but he shot straight at Feuer ... Matthew cracked a 35-yarder at the top corner, but Feuer got a fingertip to it ... Barnes broke clear but Feuer dropped on his shot on the line ... Weller twice broke into the area with twists and turns that would have breached any defence,

but twice he shot over the top.

A goal surely had to come.

Barnes pressed but Feuer got to his cross.

Jamie Hoyland thundered a header at goal from Thompson's corner, but Feuer fell on it on the line.

And so the story went on.

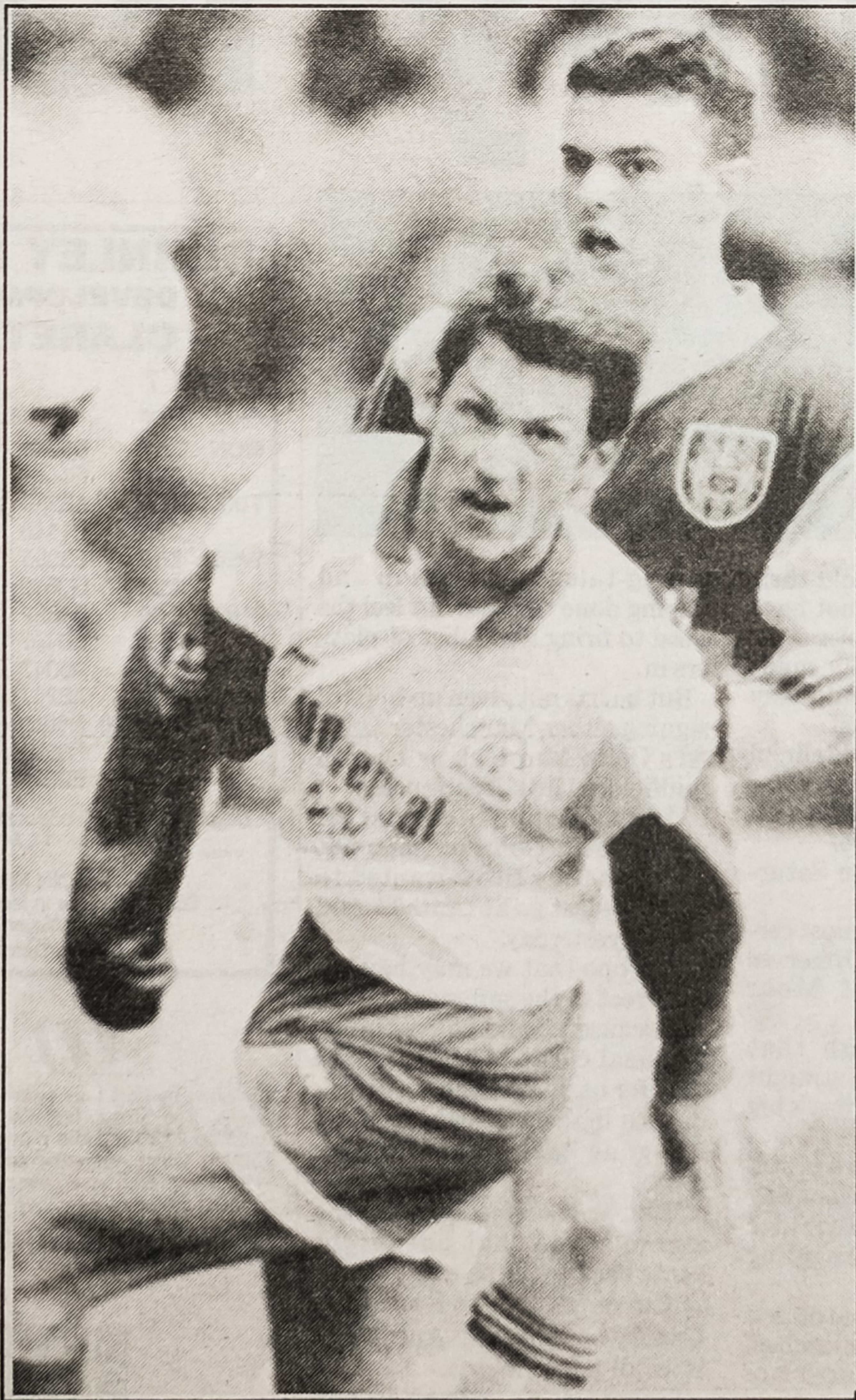
Loan signing Steve Guinan had two solid chances – but Feuer was having the game of his life and there was no hope for the Clarets.

They attacked until the final whistle, but Luton held out and left Burnley thoroughly frustrated.

On a different day it could have been a different story.

But Luton did the damage in the first half and then held on to their advantage very well in the second.

It was no easy ride for the Hatters – but their season is now full of promise while Burnley's is full of nail-biting tension for the next five weeks.



BURNLEY'S man-of-the-match, Paul Weller, once again in the thick of the action. (BX7967)

'It was like the Alamo'

LUTON goal ace Tony Thorpe was delighted that his side had held on to the three points on Saturday.

CHRIS BODEN reports...

After the game he said: "It was like the Alamo out there in the second half. But the lads were brilliant – especially the defence.

"Burnley got on top after the break and made it hard for us.

"But it felt like we didn't have anyone missing today. The lads that came in filled the gaps brilliantly and we have come out on top in a real six-pointer."

Former Claret Steve Davis admitted that his return to Turf Moor "brought a lump to my throat".

He added: "I was nervous before the game, but I got a brilliant reception and everything turned out alright in the end.

"It was nice to be back at Turf Moor because I had four great years here and have a lot of very happy memories of my time with Burnley."

The former Burnley skipper had words of encouragement for his old club.

He said: "We were under a lot of pressure in the second half and Burnley were unlucky not to get at least one goal back.

"Burnley will be up there.

"If not automatically, they will definitely be in the play-offs.

"They are a good side at home and have picked-up away recently – they have still got everything to play for."

BURNLEY FC 1996-97

AUGUST

17: Luton Town	W 2-1
20: Mansfield (CCC 1,1)	W 3-0
24: WALSALL	W 2-1
27: SHREWSBURY	L 1-3
31: Millwall	L 1-2

SEPTEMBER

3: MANSFIELD (CCC 1,2)	W 2-0
7: Gillingham	L 0-1
10: BLACKPOOL	W 2-0
14: WYCOMBE	W 2-1
17: Charlton (Coca Cola Cup 2,1)	L 1-4
21: Chesterfield	D 0-0
24: CHARLTON (Coca Cola Cup 2,2)	L 1-2
28: BRISTOL CITY	L 2-3

OCTOBER

1: Bury	L 0-1
5: STOCKPORT	W 5-2
12: Rotherham	L 0-1
15: Watford	D 2-2
19: NOTTS COUNTY	W 1-0
26: PLYMOUTH	W 2-1
29: Preston North End	D 1-1

NOVEMBER

2: York City	L 0-1
9: CREWE	W 2-0
16: LINCOLN CITY (FA Cup 1)	W 2-1
19: Bristol Rovers	W 2-1
23: BOURNEMOUTH	W 1-0
30: Plymouth	D 0-0

DECEMBER

3: WREXHAM	W 2-0
7: Walsall (FA Cup 2)	D 1-1
10: Hartlepool Utd (Auto Windscreens 1)	W 2-0
14: BRENTFORD	L 1-2
17: WALSALL (FA Cup 2 replay)	0-1 (abandoned)
20: Peterborough	L 2-3
23: WALSALL (FA Cup 2 replay)	D 1-1

Burnley won 4-2 on penalties

26: Blackpool	P-P
28: GILLINGHAM	W 5-1

JANUARY

1: CHESTERFIELD	P-P
4: Liverpool (FA Cup 3)	L 0-1
7: STOCKPORT (Auto Windscreens 2)	P-P
11: Bristol City	L 1-2
17: BURY	W 3-1
25: PRESTON NE	L 1-2
28: CHESTERFIELD	D 0-0

FEBRUARY

1: Crewe	D 1-1
4: STOCKPORT (Auto Windscreens 2)	L 0-1
8: YORK CITY	L 1-2
15: Bournemouth	D 0-0
22: BRISTOL ROVERS	D 2-2
25: Blackpool	W 3-1

MARCH

1: Wrexham	D 0-0
8: PETERBOROUGH	W 5-0
15: Brentford	W 3-0
22: Walsall	W 3-1
29: LUTON TOWN	L 0-2

APRIL

1: Shrewsbury Town	A
5: MILLWALL	H
12: Stockport County	A
15: Wycombe Wanderers	A
19: ROTHERHAM UTD	H
26: Notts County	A

MAY

3: WATFORD	H
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UNITED'S MIXED FORTUNES

BURNLEY UNITED enjoyed mixed fortunes over the Easter weekend.

On Saturday they entertained Vickers and were good value for their 1-0 victory against their relegation-threatened Cumbrian visitors.

Holidays, injury and suspension forced United's assistant manager "Kitsy" Parkinson to make several changes.

However, veterans Gary and Kevin Norwood acquitted themselves well and the evergreen ex-Claret Micky Wardrobe scored United's goal.

On Monday, United faced Lancashire Constabulary at Burnley Belvedere and, despite dominating for long spells, were defeated by the odd goal in five.

United started brightly, playing down the slope, and Dean Stowe flashed a shot inches wide of the upright on 10 minutes.

A good run by Leon Barnett finished with him up-ended on the edge of the box, and from the resulting free kick Paul Keenan saw his header deflected just past the bar.

Midway through the half the visitors took a surprise lead when United's defence failed to pick up a run into the box by a Police forward and the ball was squeezed past Bob Munday.

United replied with a typical run from Barnett, who beat four men in the box before being halted by the goalkeeper.

From the keeper's throw-out, United gained possession and Craig Heffernan broke down the left.

His cross was met by debutant Craig Robinson, who made no mistake from close range to level with 30 minutes gone.

But the Police went into the interval ahead, capitalising on a hopeful punt upfield.

As United looked for the equaliser after the break, Keenan again saw a header go wide, while Dugdale sent a shot past the post.

But the goal the locals deserved finally came with 15 minutes left when Heffernan found Nathan Barras, who cut in before unleashing a ferocious drive into the net.

However, with five minutes to go, United were stunned by a 30-yard snapshot from out of nowhere snatched the points for the Police.

□ Up-to-date West Lancashire League tables will appear in **EXPRESS SPORT** on Friday.