



● LEFT: Steve Davis looks on as Tony Thorpe heads in his second
● ABOVE: Garry Waddock in midfield action

Thorpe's touch of magic puts Hatters on track...

96/97

Burnley 0 Luton Town 2
TONY Thorpe snatched a first-half brace as Hatters moved back into the automatic promotion zone.

Neither effort hit the back of the net – but that won't worry the prolific striker, who notched up goals number 25 and 26 at sunny Turf Moor yesterday.

Hatters got their reward for a vintage first-half performance against the Clarets.

But they had to survive a second-half onslaught to bring back all the points.

Hatters got the perfect start as early as the 13th minute. Paul McLaren surged forward on a magnificent run, passed square to Alexander, whose shot deflected somewhat fortunately off a defender's outstretched boot and perfectly into Thorpe's path.

The number nine made no mistake in bringing the ball down and lashing across the goal beyond Beresford's despairing

**Report by
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dive, into the side of the net and back out again.

On-loan Andy Kiwomya got in a magnificent early cross to the far post to find an unmarked Thorpe. But the number nine's first touch, for once, let him down, and the chance was gone.

Minutes later a fantastic piece of skill inside the box from Thorpe earned him half a yard of space in which to power a goalbound effort.

The ball deflected off a defender and looked to be going in over the goalkeeper until he dived backwards to pull off a wonderful save.

But Beresford's efforts were in vain; from the resulting Graham Alexander corner Mitchell Thomas flicked the ball into the six-yard box at the near post, and who else but Thorpe was there to head the ball inches over the line.

Burnley protested but the linesman ruled against the home side. From then, on there

was only one side in the match.

In a frantic five-minute spell midway through the second half Burnley could, and should, have brought themselves back into contention.

Paul Barnes had a shot easily dealt with by Feuer when he should have done better, a 30-yard free kick by Damien Matthew was superbly saved down by his post by Feuer, and from the corner Andy Cooke flicked a header inches wide of Luton's far post.

A minute later Cooke burst clear of ex-Burnley man Steve Davis, but again Feuer was out smartly and his parry was hooked to safety by Marvin Johnson.

Seconds later Matthew wasted another chance – beating Feuer with his shot but not Thomas behind him on the line.

And just after the hour the Turf Moor side wasted their best chance of the game when Paul Weller showed little style in counselling a gilt-edged chance high over the bar when all alone in front of goal.

With Luton reeling under the barrage, manager Lennie Lawrence brought on hard-running Dwight Marshall for Kiwomya and it did seem to quell the tide.

Twenty minutes from time, and against the run of play, Hatters could have sewn the match up after a sweeping move out of defence caught the Clarets cold.

Oldfield surged out of defence, carried the ball 40 yards forward, looked up to his left and chipped ahead for Marshall.

Unfortunately, the ball ran just too far ahead of the little Jamaican, who strode out towards the corner flag and drilled a ball into the path of Alexander, who rode a tackle and then lashed a 10-yard shot into the side netting.

Ten minutes from time on-loan defender Gavin McGowan from Arsenal was carried off.

And with Watford and Brentford losing it looks like a fight for the top two places between Bury, Luton and Stockport, though you cannot discount the Bees.

Luton: Feuer, McGowan (Guentchev 79), Thomas, Waddock, Davis, Johnson, McLaren, Alexander, Oldfield, Thorpe, Kiwomya, (Marshall 64).
Attendance: 15,490.



● Graham Alexander shrugs off a Burnley challenge