

● Ian Feuer, returning to the Luton side, is beaten by this Paul Gibbs penalty



Luton's FA Cup dream is over

97/98 (FAC)

**Luton Town 0
Torquay 1**
by PETER KENYON
ANGRY Hatters' fans called for the head of Lennie Lawrence as Luton crashed out of the cup.

Paul Gibbs hammered home a 72nd minute spot kick to put Lawrence's managerial neck into an ever-tightening noose.

After this embarrassing reverse there can be no more excuses.

An almost full-strength side which manages only two shots on target against third division opposition is simply not good enough.

Good on paper Luton might be. Unfortunately football is played on green stuff and not on sheets of A4.

Unless a serious inquest is held after this debacle, Hatters' slide into the football basement is not so much a possibility as a certainty.

After a number of consecutive poor performances it is becoming glaringly obvious that Gary Waddock's career is over – only Lawrence cannot see this.

Tony Thorpe might be

Luton's best hope of success, but increasingly he is becoming a disinterested passenger.

Perhaps he feels he is too good for division two.

If that is the case sell him now and cash in.

Even Lawrence is beginning to despair of his star striker, hinting strongly that selling Thorpe might be an option.

Compare Thorpe's laziness to Andy Fotiadis – at least the teenager gets stuck in and fights for the ball and shows a good touch in and around the box.

Richard Harvey is not good enough – it is that simple.

And playing Graham

Alexander – Hatters' most creative player since the departure of Ceri Hughes – at right back against third division opposition defies belief.

Only the rapidly-improving Alan White, suspended Steve Davis, goalkeepers Ian Feuer and Kelvin Davis, fighting Paul McLaren, and hard running David Oldfield – who had a rare poor match yesterday – are putting in regularly solid performances.

And if they have got any sense they will leave for pastures new where football is played on grass and not on paper.

The rest? Well, a proverbial kick up the backside would not go amiss.

I would wager that the queue of frustrated fans willing to carry out the task would run between Kenilworth Road and the sight of the proposed new 'Kohlerdome'.

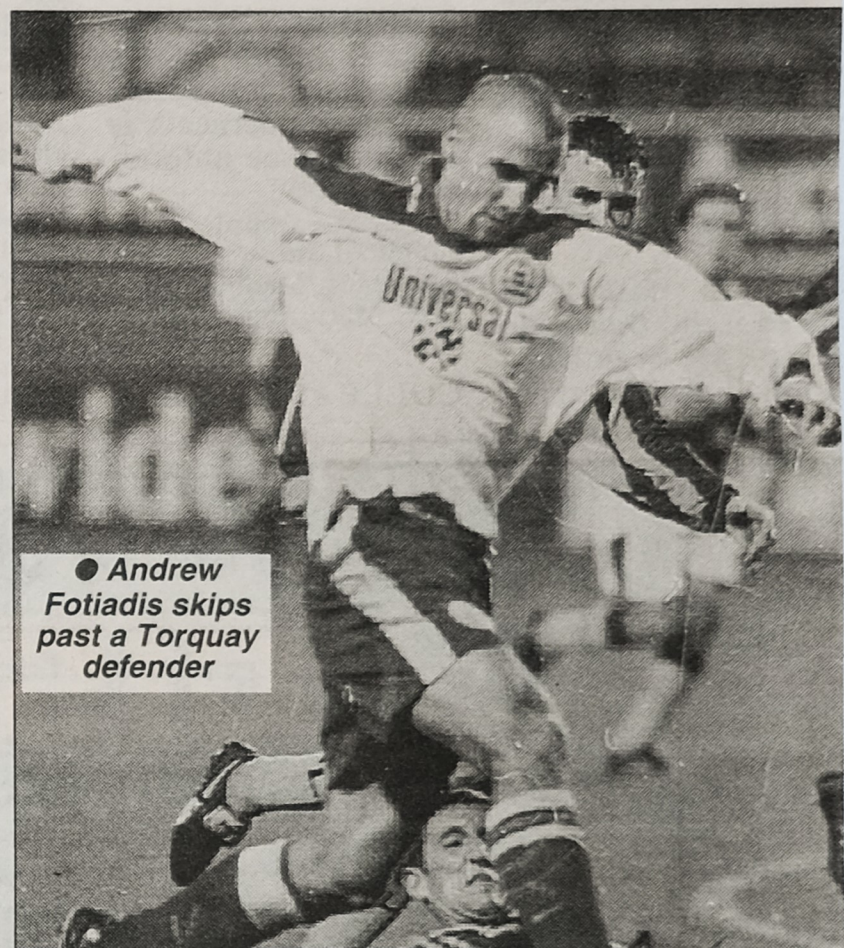
The youngsters who played at Bristol City and lost 3-0 showed more heart than many playing yesterday.

Weak

It took miserable Hatters a startling 41 minutes to get their first shot on target, a weak Graham Alexander long range effort.

Two minutes after the break Paul McLaren mis-hit another effort between the posts, but again it was easy meat for Torquay's Matthew Gregg.

Even after Torquay took the lead following Alexander's chop on an accelerating Tony Bedeau inside the box the



● Andrew Fotiadis skips past a Torquay defender

expected grandstand finish just did not happen.

Substitute Gary Doherty fired a close-range volley just over the angle, Julian James' half-volley from 15 yards flashed agonisingly wide, and right at the death Thorpe spooned an easy chance high over the bar, but once again it was too little too late.

Never was the pantomime-like shambles more strongly illustrated when, with a full five minutes still to play, Hatters' goalkeeper Ian Feuer chose to lumber up for a corner which predictably enough was cleared up field.

As Lawrence shook his head in utter disbelief the visitors broke clear and had the ball in the net only to have it disallowed for offside.

After the match Lawrence refused to criticise his players' commitment. "It was quite simply a performance that lacked a cutting edge up front," he said.

"We have tried hard enough and the back four was makeshift and we played quite well."

The 3,000 Hatters' fans who

witnessed yesterday's pathetic showing must have been watching a different game.

Lawrence went on: "Last week when we lost I was sick, this week I felt the result was a little harsh. It is still a long hard road."

How he can say that when Torquay managed five shots on target and never seemed in trouble defensively seems more than a trifle odd.

But he refused to blame the fans for their outburst at both half and full time, saying: "Who can blame them? They were pretty patient in the first half and although they got on our backs in the second you cannot really blame them for that."

"I like it here – even the people who abuse me. The truth is I think we over-achieved last year."

Team: Feuer, James, Harvey (Doherty 80), Waddock (Patterson 53), White, Spring (Davies 59), Fotiadis, McLaren, Oldfield, Thorpe, Alexander. Subs not used: K Davis, Evers.

Man of the Match: White.

● Richard Harvey clears off Luton's line with Feuer beaten

