

New boy Allen in dream start

97/98

Walsall 2 Luton 3

By **PETE KENYON**

RORY Allen made a dream start - scoring one and setting up another as Hatters finally found some punch in front of goal.

The 21-year-old loan signing from Tottenham - who has only played one and a half reserve games since an ankle operation just after Christmas - coolly slotted home Luton's second and his first of the season after David Oldfield's shot cannoned back off a post.

Earlier, the youngster chased what looked to be a lost cause down the right wing - but managed to wrap a boot round the ball right on the dead-ball line to provide the cross for Oldfield to miskick a lob into the net for the 34th-minute opener.

But what a nailbiter this was - with Hatters doing their level best to throw away a 3-1 lead.

And with fellow strugglers Plymouth, Burnley and Brentford all notching up wins, what a vital three points this could prove to be.

But after going in at the break well worthy of a 1-0 lead, Hatters found themselves under the cosh from Walsall straight from the restart.

Half-time substitute Michael Ricketts should have equalised on 47 minutes - but placed his shot inches wide of an upright with Kelvin Davis beaten.

Davis, again, had to be off his line like lightning to deny Frenchman Didier Tholot - who earlier had been lucky to avoid a booking after a blatant dive under minimal pressure from Mitchell Thomas.

It wasn't long before Luton buckled under the pressure, and on 52 minutes Adrian Viveash took advantage of Davis' hesitancy in the Luton goal to nod home Dean Keates' well-flighted corner.

Walsall then looked like they



● **GOAL No2: Debutant Rory Allen, signed on transfer deadline day from Spurs, slots home.**

would completely overrun Hatters, but on 57 minutes Oldfield started a 60-yard move by turning his man, beating two defenders, drawing the keeper, and firing a low, left-foot shot which crashed back into play off the post.

Rory Allen was first to react - slotting home precisely from eight yards to give Luton an unlikely lead.

Once again Walsall hit the accelerator and were quickly causing all sorts of problems.

Davis did well to hold onto a fearsome drive from Gary Porter, and seconds later French star Roger Boli - who hasn't scored a goal since December - missed a peach of a chance to equalise from two yards out after Julian James had completely misjudged the bounce of a long ball into the box.

On 70 minutes James was thanking his lucky stars after his dreadfully-sliced clearance flew inches wide of his own goal, with Davis struggling to make up the ground.

But once again Luton took advantage of Walsall's policy of all-out attack by hitting the home side on the break.

Dwight Marshall, who had an inspired game, received the ball wide on the left, outpaced two defenders, took the ball into the box, went outside goalkeeper James Walker, and then fired home from a very acute angle to give Hatters what looked like being a comfortable cushion.

Fifty seconds later Walsall had it back to 3-2 - Tholot taking advantage of some dreadful defending to fire past Davis from close range and without a hint of a challenge.

The remainder of the match was played out in Luton's half, and try as they might Hatters just could not get hold of the ball in midfield and relieve the pressure.

In the fourth minute of injury time, Boli went down in the box under a heavy challenge.

But referee Bill Burns waved play on and blew his whistle just seconds

later to give Hatters a priceless away win.

After the match, Rory Allen said: "That was a very tough workout for me. I am on the comeback trail after an ankle injury and have only managed one-and-a-half reserve games since Christmas.

"I came here because I need experience coming-back from an injury and I hope to do well for Luton - I am here to do my best.

"I am not as fit as I could be. The pace was hard but I was glad to score my goal. I have only had one training session at Luton before this game, but the lads have made me feel very welcome. I would like to think I can score goals. I came here and there is some pressure to score goals and I will be doing my best to provide them."

Team: K. Davis, James, Thomas, Waddock, S. Davis, White, Marshall, McLaren (Evers 75), Oldfield (Doherty 84), Allen, Alexander. Sub not used: Davies.

Attendance: 3,922. Man of the match: Alan White.