



● ATTACK'S THE BEST FORM OF DEFENCE: Centre-half Steve Davis (left) was pushed upfield for the last ten minutes as the Hatters searched for a late equaliser and (above) Dwight Marshall sees an earlier chance saved by home keeper Lee Jones.

Hatters snatched by James'

Goal break

● LIFT OFF: Rory Allen outstamps Andy Tilsdon, but it was the Rovers' skipper who had the last laugh scoring his side's crucial second goal.



JULIAN JAMES' sickening broken leg injury cast a dark shadow over the Hatters quest for Division 2 safety in Bristol.

The long-serving right back was rushed to hospital after a clash with Rovers' top scorer Barry Hayes left him suffering badly to both his ribs and fibula bones.

There was more than a sense of déjà vu surrounding the incident as James is crumpled in a heap for the second successive Saturday but, unfortunately, this time the damage was more serious.

The injury seemed to have an unerring effect on James' teammates, as a low key first-half performance saw them go into the interval trailing by two goals.

Pete Beardsley's hopeful 15 yards had given Ian Holloway's play-off hopefuls a fourth-minute lead and, when home skipper Andy Tilsdon headed in the second on 32 minutes, a busy-as-Bristol team looked poised to run away with victory.

That they didn't, owed much to a spirited last 30 minutes from the visitors.

Following Beardsley's goal, Kelvin Davis became the butt of 'dodgy keeper' chants for the first time this season, allowing the hope striker's speculative low drive to squeeze inside his net post after Dwight Marshall had lost possession on the edge of the area.

Michael Thomas surrendered possession in an identical position for the second goal, when he was guilty of conceding a needless free-kick after a tangle with opposite number Matt Lockwood.

Player-manager Holloway swung the ball to the far post, but as an unopposed Steve Ford headed back across the face of goal and Tilsdon, equally isolated, added into the bottom corner.

Whether James would have prevented the goal was arguable but sadly academic and the Hatters, needing to avoid defeat to all but save off the threat of relegation, were staring up a mountain the size of Everest.

The home team also needed a victory who kept their promotion dream alive and, on first-half evidence, their need seemed greater.

Hayles, the Division 3 top scorer, had posed an early threat but that Alan White's enforced introduction did much to neutralise.

With White on, Darren Patterson moved over to the right, but he could only look on when Jamie Carrion shot just wide on 22 minutes and the home team ended the first period firmly in the ascendancy.

Much of the Hatters' first-half play was disjointed, although Graham Alexander did see his shot come back off a post after

BRISTOL ROVERS2
Goals: A. Tilsdon 32
HATTERS1
Goal: S. Davis 30
Attendance: 8,038

Rory Allen's lay-off gave him a clear sight of Lee Jones' goal.

David Oldfield was the only other player in a yellow shirt to trouble the home keeper, twisting and turning before sending a curling free-kick effort just wide of Jones' upright.

The Australian striker did get his name on the scoreboard half an hour into the second period with a well-earned goal.

Allen showed composure to turn his man and play the ball into lively substitute Stuart Douglas, who created space for Oldfield with one delicate touch and the Hatters' frontman fired across the goal to take his season's tally into double fig-

ures.

Three minutes earlier, Douglas had put the ball in the net himself after a precise Sean Evans pass, but referee Tony Leake disallowed the effort for a marginal offside.

By this stage, the disappointing Gary Waddock and Marshall had made way for the less vivid but experienced Matthew Spring and Douglas, following Oldfield's strike, the Hatters' chances of a point increased.

Spring's 70th-minute introduction for Waddock had seemed somewhat overdue, but he immediately set about making an impression, while Douglas' pace unsettled the nervous home defence.

On 78 minutes, Evans again played the young striker in but his back was too heavy and allowed Jones to charge down the shot. From the subsequent corner, Steve Davis sent a header just wide, an action that persuaded manager Lenzie Lawrence to keep his talismanic centre-half applied. It was Douglas once more though who had the best chance to level.

The substitute 90th-minute shot on the turn looked as if it would have been enough to push the Hatters from out of the bottom corner, but Jones kept the ball on the ground and sent it into the bottom corner for his side.

At the other end, Davis' absence created gaping holes in the visitors' defence, but Beardsley and Holloway couldn't capitalise, sending over shots that would have been more warmly received by their rugby-playing landlords.

For Lawrence, the match was a case of Gillingham revisited. "We've lost the last two away games narrowly but the second best on both occasions," he said, "we only missed



● IN A STU Hatters skipper (above) sees his hardest to get his side out of trouble and attack's top scorer (below) is locked by Jones, minutes after David Oldfield (left) had three goals with his 10th goal of the season.



● BAD BREAK: Graham Alexander and David Oldfield comfort Julian James as he receives treatment for his broken leg before being stretched off and taken to a Bristol hospital.

LENNIE'S VERDICT

Our first concern is with Julian, but that incident sums our season up. It's a bad break, there's no point in disguising that, but I am sure he'll recover and resume his career. It'll be a while before deciding whether to make a complaint.

Picture: Gareth Owen

August	Opposition	Score	Score	All	Pos
Aug 1	Walsley	1-0	Thorne 16	2,860	1
Aug 12	COVENTRY	1-0	Douglas 74	2,860	1
Aug 23	COVENTRY	1-0	Douglas 74	2,860	1
Aug 28	COLCHESTER (CFL)	1-0	Thorne 87	2,860	1
Aug 30	OLDHAM	1-1	Thorne 80	2,860	1
September					
Sept 1	MILWALL	0-0		2,860	1
Sept 12	Northampton	0-0		2,860	1
Sept 18	WEST BROM	1-1	Marshall 43	2,860	1
Sept 23	WIDEBURN	1-1	Marshall 43	2,860	1
Sept 28	Millers (CFL)	2-0	Davis 20, Gray 30	2,860	1
Sept 30	Walsley	0-0		2,860	1
October					
Oct 1	WATFORD	0-0		2,860	1
Oct 11	PLYMOUTH ARG	0-0	Thorne 36, Gray 30	2,860	1
Oct 18	Walsley	0-0		2,860	1
Oct 23	Cardiff City	1-0	Thorne 80	2,860	1
Oct 28	Walsley	0-0		2,860	1
November					
Nov 1	Worcester	2-2	Oldfield 45, Thorne 74	2,860	1
Nov 4	BURNLEY	2-2	Alexander 30, 36	2,860	1
Nov 8	PRESTON	1-1	Thorne 50	2,860	1
Nov 15	YORKHAY (FAC)	1-1	Thorne 50	2,860	1
Nov 22	Walsley	0-0		2,860	1
Nov 29	York City	1-1	Alexander 15, Thorne 74	2,860	1
December					
Dec 2	GILLINGHAM	2-2	Davis 20, Gray 30	2,860	1
Dec 10	BRISTOL ROVERS	2-2	Allen 1, Collier 22	2,860	1
Dec 18	NOTTINGHAM	1-1	Oldfield 45, Thorne 74	2,860	1
Dec 22	Walsley	0-0		2,860	1
January					
Jan 2	Walsley	0-0		2,860	1
Jan 10	BLACKPOOL	2-2	Thorne 30, 36	2,860	1
Jan 18	BRISTOL LAWS	2-2	Thorne 30, 36	2,860	1
Jan 21	OLDHAM	2-2	Alexander 15	2,860	1
Jan 28	Walsley	0-0		2,860	1
Feb 4	Walsley	0-0		2,860	1
February					
Feb 1	Walsley	1-2	Davis 20, 30	2,860	1
Feb 18	Walsley	0-0		2,860	1
Feb 23	BRISTOL CITY	1-1	Oldfield 45	2,860	1
Feb 28	Walsley	0-0		2,860	1
March					
Mar 1	Walsley	0-0		2,860	1
Mar 8	Walsley	0-0		2,860	1
Mar 15	Walsley	0-0		2,860	1
Mar 22	Walsley	0-0		2,860	1
Mar 29	Walsley	0-0		2,860	1
April					
Apr 1	Walsley	0-0		2,860	1
Apr 8	Walsley	0-0		2,860	1
Apr 15	Walsley	0-0		2,860	1
Apr 22	Walsley	0-0		2,860	1
Apr 29	Walsley	0-0		2,860	1
May					
May 1	Walsley	0-0		2,860	1
May 8	Walsley	0-0		2,860	1
May 15	Walsley	0-0		2,860	1
May 22	Walsley	0-0		2,860	1
May 29	Walsley	0-0		2,860	1

NATIONAL LEAGUE DIVISION TWO		APPEARANCES & GOALS	
Player	Appearances	Goals	Appearances
Paul Smith	28	1	28
Robert Beardsley	28	1	28
David Oldfield	28	1	28
Stuart Douglas	28	1	28
Kevin Davis	28	1	28
Andy Tilsdon	28	1	28
Barry Hayes	28	1	28
Lee Jones	28	1	28
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