■ DAVE FLETT REPORTS FROM GRIFFIN PARK: GALLANT LUTON WELL WORTH POINT THEM SAFE – AND MAY YET CONDEMN BEES

● UP IN ARMS (left): Warren Aspinall's heavy challenge on Kelvin Davis sparks a massive brawl in the Luton box. Steve Davis gets a firm grip on Paul Watson – too firm in the referee's view. Both Davis and the Aspinall were later booked.

● ARMS UP (right): Hatters salute their travelling supporters, in the knowledge that the point at Griffin Park means Second Division football at Kenilworth Road once more next season.

SAFE AT LAST!

A BRAWL in Brentford brought an explosive end to Luton Town's fight for Division Two survival.

The Hatters came away from West London with a point as well as a few bruises after the home team kicked, snarled and punched their way to a draw.

Fighting against the drop themselves, Brentford's attempts to intimidate the Hatters into submission failed though, despite the best efforts of experienced, battle hardened pros, such as Glenn Cockerill, Jamie Bates, Graeme Hogg and Warren Aspinall.

Aspinall, whose wide grin and bald head suggest an older age than his 30 years, seemed particularly fond of employing bully-boy tactics and it was the former Aston Villa midfielder's late challenge on Kelvin Davis that provoked an ugly 20-minute free for all.

With his side trailing, Aspinall's 62nd minute follow-through on the Hatters' goalkeeper was as unsolicited as it was dangerous and Steve Davis added immediate retribution for his teammate, angrily shoving the crestfallen Aspinall.

Aspinall wobbled towards the corner of the pitch swarmed around Davis. Boro players from all corners came bounding their weight to the argument, a minute-long fracas ensued, with fists flying as powerless referee Mark Halsey watched on frowning his whistle in desperation.

Melee

Mitchell Thomas, Alan White and Stuart Douglas all seemed to be both perpetrators and victims in the melee which saw both Aspinall and Steve Davis entered the Welwyn Garden City official's notebook.

Players from both sides could have received their marching orders and, had certain individuals' actions not been concealed by the anonymity of such a large punch up, they surely would have.

Aspinall, somehow, avoided a red card, but he did leave the pitch a minute later, when home manager Micky Adams sensibly took some of the heat out of the pressure cooker atmosphere by substituting the experienced midfielder.

Just four minutes earlier, trouble in the terraces had spilled on to the pitch, when a Luton fan celebrating Rory Allen's goal was chased and attacked by an incensed Brentford fan to set the tone for a tense and tense second half.

The nastiness was partially averted by Aspinall's embarrassment, but the tension only intensified as Brentford piled forward in frantic search for a second equaliser.

On 80 minutes, the heavens opened and the home fans prayed were answered in a driving hailstorm.

Boro danger man Carl Hutchings was one of the few home players who seemed more interested in playing football than applying brute force and it was not surprising when he caught the ball to head in a Paul Watson corner with the aid of an elbow.

In a frantic last minute Danny Cullip fired over a header in effort from a cleared corner and skipper Bates squandered the best chance, the ball skimming off his head from close range when a former contact would have given his side a crucial point.

Earlier, Dwight Marshall had given the Hatters a life-saving lead in this sudden-packed encounter before bringing his side nouse to a premature end with a hamstring injury.

The Jamaican striker had won a corner, diverting a wide Alan Oldfield drive towards goal, home keeper Kevin Dearden saved the ball behind and, when Graham Alexander swung the corner on to Steve Davis' head, it was Marshall who was the quickest as the Brentford penalty box, looking the ball in front close range.

Sadly, for the goalscorer, in stretching for the decisive touch he tweaked a muscle and was promptly replaced by Douglas, who bustling presence upset home supporters and players alike when he had the temerity to mix it with the uncompromising Cullip, the crossbar with Dearden well beaten.

The Boro also hit the woodwork in an end-to-end second period. Aspinall seeing his cutting drive from just outside the penalty area cannon back off the bar before his later mouldering attempt was beaten back off the post by Davis.

BRENTFORD: Kevin Dearden, Carl Hutchings, Paul Watson, Danny Cullip, Jamie Bates, Graeme Hogg, Steve Blaney, Glenn Cockerill (Kevin Dennis, 90), Andy Scott, Warren Aspinall (Charlie Dutway, 65), Niall Thompson (Kevin Rapley, 63).

HATTERS: Kelvin Davis, Graham Alexander, Mitchell Thomas, Alan White, Sean Evers, Paul Gary Waddock, Steve Davis, Paul Duffield, Rory Allen, Dwight Marshall (Stuart Douglas, 16), Gary Doherty, 82).

Referee: Mark Halsey (Welwyn Garden City).

Agony is finally over for Hatters

BRENTFORD 2
Scott 22, Hutchings 81
HATTERS 2
Marshall 13, Allen 59
Attendance: 5,098

AGONY AND ECSTASY: Dwight Marshall curls short the celebrations with Rory Allen and David Oldfield after tweaking his hamstring

● UNDER THE COSH: Rory Allen feels the force of Boro' Graeme Hogg's aerial challenge.

LENNIE'S VERDICT

● It was an excellent effort considering the age of some of the players we had out there. We had a lot of youngsters doing men's jobs and, although there were defensive mistakes in both goals, the commitment of the players couldn't be faulted.

Pictures: Gareth Owen

LUTON TOWN FC 1997-98 THE SEASON'S RECORD

Date	Opponents	Score	Scorers	Att.	Pos.
August					
Sat 9	SOUTHEND	1-0	Thorpe 87	6,837	1
Sat 16	SOUTHEND	1-0	Thorpe 67	7,446	1
Sat 23	BURNLEY	1-1	Thorpe 45	12,000	1
Sat 30	COLCHESTER (DCup 1-1)	1-1	Thorpe 24	3,611	12
Tue 2	COLCHESTER	2-1	Oldfield 46, Thorpe 74	4,011	12
September					
Sat 6	MILLWALL	0-2		9,781	15
Sat 13	WATFORD	0-1		6,847	20
Sat 20	WEST BROM	1-1	Marshall 43	4,841	21
Sat 27	WEST BROM (DCup)	1-1	Thorpe 90	3,611	21
Tue 30	WEST BROM	0-1	Grant 90	5,227	21
Sat 4	West Brom (DCup)	2-1	Davis (D) 36, Thorpe 73	2,205	
Sat 11	Bradford	0-0		10,600	22
October					
Sat 4	WATFORD	0-0		5,341	22
Sat 11	Tranmere	2-3	Thorpe 36, 84, Davies 51	7,000	22
Sat 18	Wigan Athletic	0-0	Oldfield 88	4,469	22
Sat 25	Bradford	1-1	Thorpe 90	4,000	22
Sat 28	BRENTFORD	2-2	Alexander 20, Thorpe 45	5,098	22
November					
Sat 1	Bristol City	2-3	Oldfield 46, Thorpe 74	9,219	19
Tues 4	BURNLEY	3-0	Alexander 30, 90	5,103	19
Sat 8	Stoke City	1-1	Thorpe 90	5,000	19
Sat 15	TORQUAY (FACup 1)	3-0		8,846	
Sat 22	WALSALL	0-1		4,726	20
Sat 29	Hull City	0-2	Alexander 13, Thorpe 72	6,127	20
December					
Sat 6	GILLINGHAM	2-0	Davis (B) 25, Thorpe 77	4,904	21
Sat 13	Gillingham	0-0		5,000	21
Sat 20	BRISTOL ROVERS	2-4	Allen 5, Oldfield 28	5,280	22
Sat 26	SOUTHAMPTON	1-1	Marshall 90 (pen)	9,000	22
Mon 29	Millwall	2-3	Davis (B) 36, Thorpe 90	7,483	22
January					
Sat 3	Sheffield	1-2	Alexander 45	4,000	22
Sat 10	BLACKPOOL	3-0	Thorpe 33, 74, 77	5,524	18
Sat 17	BRENTFORD (JAWS)	1-0	Thorpe 90 (Brentford 8)		
Sat 24	Watford	0-0		6,000	19
Tue 27	FULHAM	1-0	Thorpe 90	5,346	13
Sat 31	Wigan (AW)	1-1	Marshall 90 (Luton 8)	2,000	13
February					
Sat 7	BOURNEMOUTH	1-2	Oldfield 72	5,466	13
Sat 14	Fulham	0-1			
Sat 21	Wrexham	0-0		3,000	13
Wed 25	Watford	0-1	Johnson 81	13,382	20
Sat 28	BRISTOL CITY	2-1		5,400	17
March					
Sat 7	BRISTOL CITY	0-1	Oldfield 39	4,420	17
Sat 14	WALSALL	1-1	Brkovic 75 (Luton 9)	4,000	17
Sat 21	Plymouth Arg.	2-1		6,982	20
Sat 28	Bristol R.	0-0		6,000	20
April					
Sat 11	WYCOMBE	0-1	Thomas 85	5,116	21
Sat 18	Burnley	0-1	Davis (B) 90	9,000	21
Sat 25	Blackpool	0-2	Oldfield 31, Allen 55, Mellor 72	3,002	21
Mon 27	Chesterfield	3-0	Marshall 14, Allen 48, Oldfield 90		
May					
Sat 2	Wycombe	1-1	Davis (B) 90	7,000	21
Sat 9	YORK CITY	3-2	Alexander 35(pen), Oldfield 45, Mellor 88	4,450	19
Sat 16	Grimsby	1-1	Thorpe 90	5,000	19
Sat 23	Southend	1-1	Marshall 90	6,000	19
Sat 30	CHESTERFIELD	3-0	Marshall 14, Allen 48, Oldfield 90	5,884	19
Mon 4	Bournemouth	1-1	Davis (B) 90	9,000	19
Sat 23	Swansea	1-1	Marshall 13, Allen(L)	5,000	19
Sat 30	Brentford	2-2	Allen 59	5,098	19
Mon 1	CARLISLE	1-0			

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE DIVISION TWO

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1 Wigan (AW)	46	29	11	6	77	33	44	98
2 Bristol C	46	25	13	8	72	53	19	88
3 Grimsby Town	46	24	13	9	81	53	28	85
4 Luton	46	20	16	10	61	43	18	76
5 Fulham	46	20	15	11	67	47	20	75
6 Watford	46	19	15	12	64	47	17	72
7 Blackpool	46	19	14	13	67	54	13	71
8 Brentford	46	17	18	11	60	47	13	69
9 Wrexham	46	17	16	13	60	43	17	67
10 Chesterfield	46	17	15	14	57	49	8	66
11 Bournemouth	46	17	15	14	56	54	2	66
12 Burnley	46	16	15	15	58	56	2	63
13 Wycombe	46	16	14	16	55	58	-3	62
14 York City	46	15	16	15	58	56	2	61
15 Gillingham	46	15	14	17	54	57	-3	59
16 Wycombe Wdrs	46	15	14	17	50	54	-5	59
17 Preston N. E.	46	15	13	18	52	54	-2	58
18 Millwall	46	14	16	16	52	57	-5	58
19 Swansea	46	13	15	17	62	62	57	54
20 Carlisle	46	13	14	19	47	62	-15	53
21 Southend	46	11	17	18	44	57	-13	50
22 Plymouth Arg.	46	11	13	22	44	67	-23	46
23 Bristol R.	46	10	13	23	44	67	-23	43
24 Torquay Utd.	46	9	13	24	41	73	-32	40
25 Southend Utd.	46	9	13	24	41	73	-32	40

BAD BOYS

	Yellow Cards	Red Cards
Paul Duffield	9	0
Gary Doherty	8	0
Kevin Davis	7	0
Steve Davis	7	0
Carl Hutchings	7	0
Dwight Marshall	7	0
Mitchell Thomas	7	0
Alan White	7	0
Gary Waddock	6	0
Sean Evers	5	0
Graham Alexander	5	0
Paul McLaren	5	0
Kelvin Davis	4	0
David Oldfield	4	0
Tony Thorpe	4	0
Alan Wright	4	0
Michael Thomas	3	0
Gary Waddock	3	0

APPEARANCES & GOALS

Player	Appearances	Goals
Kelvin Davis	46	0
Graham Alexander	46	5
Sean Evers	46	0
Simon Tierney	11(1)	0
Paul McLaren	45	0
Gary Doherty	43	0
Andy Dibble	10(1)	0
Steve Davis	43	7
Paul Duffield	43	0
Sean Evans	1(5)	0
Kevin Davis	43	0
Alan Wright	43	4
Liam George	1(5)	0
Alan White	42	0
Richard Harvey	1(2)	0
Julian James	1(2)	0
Mitchell Thomas	42	0
Gary Waddock	42	0
Dwight Marshall	1(5)	0
Kevin Davis	1(2)	0
Steve Davis	41	7
David Oldfield	40	6
Carl Hutchings	40	0
Tony Thorpe	40	14
Dwight Marshall	40	10
Gary Doherty	40	0
Paul Duffield	40	0
Michael Thomas	40	0
Gary Waddock	40	0
Steve Davis	40	0
Kevin Davis	40	0
Alan White	40	0
Sean Evers	40	0
Richard Harvey	1(2)	0
Kevin McDonald	1(2)	0
Stuart Douglas	1(2)	0
Tony Thorpe	1(2)	0
Julian James	1(2)	0
Bryan Small	1(2)	0

STAR TURN

RORY ALLEN was the Hatters star player against Brentford, once again displaying unmeasuring accuracy in front of goal and an impressive workrate.

MAN OF THE MATCH STANDINGS

Player	Mom
Steve Davis	8
Graham Alexander	5
Paul McLaren	5
Kelvin Davis	4
David Oldfield	4
Alan Wright	4
Alan White	4
Mitchell Thomas	3
Gary Waddock	3
Chris Allen	2
Rory Allen	2
Sean Evers	2
Richard Harvey	2
Kevin McDonald	2
Stuart Douglas	1
Tony Thorpe	1
Julian James	1
Bryan Small	1