

DAVE FLETT SEES SKIPPER DAVIS START THE SEASON



● **BACQUE IN BUSINESS** (far left): Hatters' new French star, Herve Bacque beats Wycombe defenders Chris Vinnicombe and Paul McCarthy to the ball in Saturday's successful start to the season.

● **PHIL THE FORCE** (centre): Wycombe defender Jason Cousins is left trailing as Phil Gray launches himself at a Liam George centre, only to see his flying header go wide of goal.

Pictures by Gareth Owen

WITH A WYCOMBE WINNER

● **RYAN MIGHTY**: Sean Evers finds Wycombe skipper Keith Ryan an immovable object as the Hatters pour forward in search of a second goal on Saturday.



Stevie wonder

REIGNING Luton News Player of the Year Steve Davis started the season in the same manner as he signed off the last - majestically!

The Kenilworth Road king dispatched a jewel of a free kick to give the Hatters all three points in Saturday's curtain raiser at Wycombe.

Speaking on Friday, manager Lennie Lawrence declared his skipper "the best centre-half in the division" and any pretenders to that crown would have been proud of Davis' performance in Buckinghamshire.

The talismanic Georgie delivered what Brazilian Roberto Carlos failed all summer to - a free kick right out of the top drawer - and then marshalled his defence superbly as they defended their lead with ease.

Steve Brown's foul on Matthew Spring 25 yards out provided the Hatters' captain with his first set-piece opportunity of the season and the result was devastating.

Pace

Home keeper Martin Taylor was beaten by the pure pace of the ball as it rose from Davis' boot into his top left-hand corner.

His strike left the sizeable orange army that had made the short journey across the Chilterns already dreaming of a bright future after just 36 minutes of the new season.

Davis' right boot delivered another thunderbolt on the stroke of half-time but, on this occasion, his 30-yard dead-ball effort skimmed inches wide of the post after another foul on Spring.

In between, the visitors had a valid looking penalty appeal rejected when Dave Carroll seemed to trip Dwight Marshall after Phil Gray's intelligent reverse pass.

Since their promotion to the football league, Wycombe have never beaten the Hatters and rarely looked like breaking that duck on Saturday.

But it might have been different had Keith Scott accepted the simplest of chances on 25 minutes.

Carroll's measured pass beat the Hatters' off-side trap and left the big striker with a clear run on goal.

Scott could have almost walked the ball into the net but hit the post in a real early season howler.

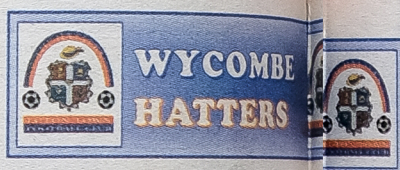
The Hatters defence grew stronger after that scare with Graham Alexander outstanding at right back.

With Julian James out until Christmas, the ex-Scunthorpe man has been asked to surrender his usual midfield berth for an extended run at full back and he is looking more of a natural by the game.

Former Rangers and Burnley wing-back Chris Vinnicombe was the home side's biggest threat but he didn't get past a resolute Alexander once.

The peroxide-headed Hatter didn't miss a tackle all afternoon and, on the occasion he ventured forward, delivered some telling crosses into the Wycombe box.

Considering the scorching heat, the Hatters surprisingly started at a high tempo and could have gone ahead in just the second minute when Mitchell Thomas' teasing cross



had to be turned over the bar by Taylor.

During the summer, the Hatters may have been the only team last season but the way they started this season suggests they are the only team in the new Luton Town on their travels this season.

More open and attacking football would be a welcome change for the Hatters' manager Lennie Lawrence, who has all three members of the Hatters' new attacking trio on the menu with all three members of the Hatters' new attacking trio on the menu.

Add to that Dwight Marshall on the left, Sean Evers in the middle and Liam George on the right and there should be no shortage of goals for the Hatters.

George made his impact on Saturday afternoon by introducing a new dimension to the Hatters' attack.

His enthusiasm earned him a yellow card for his arrival for a late challenge on Taylor.

His strike left the sizeable orange army that had made the short journey across the Chilterns already dreaming of a bright future after just 36 minutes of the new season.

In between, the visitors had a valid looking penalty appeal rejected when Dave Carroll seemed to trip Dwight Marshall after Phil Gray's intelligent reverse pass.

Since their promotion to the football league, Wycombe have never beaten the Hatters and rarely looked like breaking that duck on Saturday.

But it might have been different had Keith Scott accepted the simplest of chances on 25 minutes.

Carroll's measured pass beat the Hatters' off-side trap and left the big striker with a clear run on goal.

Scott could have almost walked the ball into the net but hit the post in a real early season howler.

The Hatters defence grew stronger after that scare with Graham Alexander outstanding at right back.

With Julian James out until Christmas, the ex-Scunthorpe man has been asked to surrender his usual midfield berth for an extended run at full back and he is looking more of a natural by the game.

Former Rangers and Burnley wing-back Chris Vinnicombe was the home side's biggest threat but he didn't get past a resolute Alexander once.

The peroxide-headed Hatter didn't miss a tackle all afternoon and, on the occasion he ventured forward, delivered some telling crosses into the Wycombe box.

Considering the scorching heat, the Hatters surprisingly started at a high tempo and could have gone ahead in just the second minute when Mitchell Thomas' teasing cross



● **TOP OF THE SHOTS**: Steve Davis cracks his free-kick goalwards (inset) and then watches the ball fly past the helpless Martin Taylor for the Hatters Wycombe winner.



● **TOP OF THE CHOPS**: Dwight Marshall is scythed down by Wycombe's Dave Carroll, although the Luton man was not awarded a penalty.

LUTON TOWN FC 1998-99 THE STORY SO FAR ...

August	Opponents	Score	Scorers	Att	Pos
Sat 8	Wycombe	1-0	Davis (S)	36	5,252
Tues 11	OXFORD UTD (WC1)	H	7.45		
Sat 15	PRESTON	H	3		
Tues 18	Oxford Utd (WC1)	A	7.45		
Sat 22	Reading	A	3		
Sat 29	COLCHESTER	H	3		
Mon 31	Wigan Athletic	A	3		
September					
Sat 5	BURNLEY	H	3		
Tues 8	Wrexham	A	7.45		
Sat 12	BRISTOL ROVERS	H	3		
Sat 19	Blackpool	A	3		
Sat 26	WALSALL	H	3		
October					
Sat 3	Fulham	A	3		
Sat 10	York City	A	3		
Sat 17	OLDHAM	H	3		
Tues 20	NORTHAMPTON	H	7.45		
Sat 24	Gillingham	A	3		
Sat 31	CHESTERFIELD	H	3		
November					
Sat 7	Stoke City	A	3		
Tues 10	NOTTS COUNTY	H	7.45		
Sat 21	Lincoln City	A	3		
Sat 28	MANCHESTER CITY	H	3		
December					
Sat 12	Macclesfield	A	3		
Sat 19	MILLWALL	H	3		
Sat 26	READING	H	12 noon		
Mon 28	Bournemouth	A	3		
January					
Sat 2	Colchester	A	3		
Sat 9	WYCOMBE	H	3		
Sat 16	Preston	A	3		
Sat 23	WIGAN ATHLETIC	H	3		
Sat 30	BOURNEMOUTH	H	3		
February					
Sat 6	Burnley	A	3		
Sat 13	WREXHAM	H	3		
Sat 20	Bristol Rovers	A	3		
Sat 27	BLACKPOOL	H	3		
March					
Sat 6	Walsall	A	3		
Tues 9	FULHAM	H	7.45		
Sat 13	STOKE CITY	H	3		
Sat 20	Chesterfield	A	3		
Sat 27	GILLINGHAM	H	3		
April					
Sat 3	Oldham Athletic	A	3		
Tues 6	YORK CITY	H	7.45		
Sat 10	Northampton	A	3		
Wed 14	Manchester City	A	3		
Sat 17	LINCOLN CITY	H	3		
Sat 24	Notts County	A	3		
May					
Sat 1	MACCLESFIELD	H	3		
SAT 8	Millwall	A	3		

Fixtures copyright of the Football League Ltd 1998

APPEARANCES & GOALS

Player	Apps	Goals
Graham Alexander	1(0)	0(0)
Herve Bacque	1(0)	0(0)
Kevin Davis	1(0)	0(0)
Steve Davis	1(0)	0(0)
Sean Evers	1(0)	0(0)
Liam George	0(1)	0(0)
Phil Gray	1(0)	0(0)
Marvin Johnson	1(0)	0(0)
Dwight Marshall	1(0)	0(0)
Gavin McGowan	0(1)	0(0)
Ray McKinnon	1(0)	0(0)
Matthew Spring	1(0)	0(0)
Mitchell Thomas	1(0)	0(0)

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE DIVISION TWO

Up to August 8 1998	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Manchester City	1	1	0	0	3	0	3
Preston	1	1	0	0	3	3	3
Wrexham	1	1	0	0	3	1	3
Notts County	1	1	0	0	3	1	3
Stoke City	1	1	0	0	3	1	3
Bournemouth	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Burnley	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Colchester United	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Fulham	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Luton Town	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Millwall	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Walsall	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Bristol Rovers	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Northampton	1	0	0	1	1	3	0
Oldham	1	0	0	1	1	3	0
Chesterfield	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Gillingham	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Macclesfield Town	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Wigan Athletic	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Wycombe Wndrs	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Lincoln City	1	0	0	1	0	2	0
Blackpool	1	0	0	1	0	3	0
Reading	1	0	0	1	0	3	0
York City	1	0	0	1	0	3	0

BAD BOY

SUBSTITUTE Liam George picked up the Hatters first yellow card of the new campaign for a late challenge on Wycombe keeper Martin Taylor.

LENNIE'S VERDICT

“The players have had a good air of confidence and optimism through the pre-season, but you have to be tested in the real world.”

I'm not suggesting Wycombe will be the ultimate test in Division Two this season but it was a hot day and we were away from home against a big strong team who didn't lose too many home games last season. It's a pleasing start.



TOP HATTER

★ GRAHAM ALEXANDER ★

Looked a natural at right-back, never missed a tackle all afternoon and kept Wycombe dangerman Chris Vinnicombe quiet with a faultless display.

