

MARV-ELLOUS!

**HATTERS 4
IPSWICH TOWN 2**
(Hatters go through
5-4 on aggregate)

99/99 (FLC)



● **WORTHINGTON BEST:** Cup hero Marvin Johnson.

MARVIN JOHNSON was the toast of Kenilworth Road on Tuesday night after grabbing a dramatic 121st-minute extra-time winner in a pulsating cup tie full of high drama.

The Hatters defender sent Ipswich Town crashing out of the Worthington Cup just two minutes after a spectacular Steve Davis own goal appeared to have given the first division side a lucky passage into the third round.

Davis had been switched back to centre-half after a devastating 20-minute spell as an emergency striker. During that time he set up Stuart Douglas for an 83rd-minute goal to force extra time and then got on the scoresheet himself on 99 minutes to give his side a 4-3 aggregate lead.

His blushes were spared by defensive partner Johnson who, after seeing his skipper power an unstoppable header past Kelvin Davis from Jamie Clapham's cross, did exactly the same at the other end when Ipswich keeper Richard Wright palmed Graham Alexander's corner on to his head.

It was no more than the Hatters skipper and his side deserved after a tremendous fight back. David Johnson had earlier given the visitors a two-goal cushion on 35 minutes when he

Report by Dave Flett

applied the finishing touch to a well-worked move involving a Micky Stockwell cross and a Jamie Scowcroft lay-off.

That was the way it stayed going into the interval but, as at Oxford in the previous round, a barnstorming comeback saw Lennie Lawrence's plucky youngsters come back from the dead.

Andrew Fotiadis, in for the injured Phil Gray, robbed Ipswich defender Manuel Thetis near the byline on 52 minutes before heading towards goal and coolly slipping the ball under Wright to pull one back.

Unique

Fotiadis was replaced by Hervé Bacqué on 74 minutes after Jimmy Cox's arrival for Dwight Marshall seven minutes earlier.

Bacqué produced his unique brand of frustrating football, some exquisite touches being mixed with regular loss of possession, but Cox's fresh legs, combined with Davis' push upfield on 77 minutes, were the real defining factors in the Hatters' comeback.

With seven minutes of normal time remaining, after dominating long periods of the second half, the Hatters drew level at 3-3 on aggregate when Davis lofted the ball over the Ipswich defence and the prodigiously hard working Douglas ran on to squeeze a deflected shot into the bottom corner.

Lawrence took a gamble by leaving his skipper up front for extra time but it looked to have paid off when Davis rose head and shoulders above everybody in the visitors box to direct a towering header from Alexander's corner into Wright's top corner.

Magical

The next job for Captain Marvel was to shore up the other end for the remaining 21 minutes which he did with typical majesty until his 119th-minute blip.

Luckily, for Davis, his old pal Johnson provided a fitting end to a magical evening of cup football and ensured the right outcome after two entertaining matches.

A happy Lennie Lawrence shared the euphoria of all Hatters supporters after the game, saying: "It was a great night for Luton Town Football Club and its fans.

"I wasn't here in the good old days but I hope that performance brought back the memories.

"Ipswich are the biggest scalp since I've been here because they are definite play-off material and they were up for it.

"But just as they thought they were through up pops Marvin for his one-in-every-300-games goal."

Johnson goals may be collector's items but they are often important. His last was not quite 300 games ago but in February - an 81st-minute equaliser against old enemies Watford!

The value of his latest effort will also interest the club's bank manager as the Hatters go into Saturday afternoon's third round draw with the chance of landing one of the plum ties against Manchester United, Liverpool or Arsenal.