EYES DOWN: Loan star Tony Thorpe looks for a way past Oldham defender Andrew Holt on Good Friday. Thorpe was later brought down by the Latics' left back but referee Paul Danson waved aside the striker's vehement penalty protests. A disappointing afternoon for Thorpe ended with him limping off after pulling a hamstring, an injury that could rule him out for two weeks.

Thorpey's injury blow

TONY THORPE has suffered a cruel injury blow that looks likely to interrupt his loan stay at Kenilworth Road.

Thorpe was expected to be unavailable for last night's clash with York City and is also rated doubtful for the away meetings with Northampton and Manchester City and even the April 17 home game with Lincoln.

The Bristol City striker was substituted at Oldham on Good Friday after pulling a hamstring stretching for the ball.

It is a major setback for the 24-year-old striker, who was hoping to kick-start his stuttering career with the Hatters by enjoying a string of first-team games, something he has been denied during his time at Ashton Gate and Fulham.

About Thorpe's misfortune, manager Lennie Lawrence said: "He's gutted. He pulled his hamstring and I perhaps should have took him off earlier but he started to do a bit afterwards."

Andrew Fotiadis, fit again after an ankle injury, is lined up to replace Thorpe with Lawrence keen to persist with a three-man front-line.

Paul McLaren could also be out for the rest of the season although the medial knee ligament damage he sustained at Oldham is not as serious as first thought.

The competitive midfielder was stretchered off after ten minutes but should be back to full training before the end of the season.

He suffered a similar but more serious injury to his other knee earlier in the season at Reading.

McLaren's fellow midfielder Ray McKinnon is also still struggling to overcome the knee injury that has kept him out of the last four Hatters games.

McKinnon was ruled out of last night's game with York and is unlikely to play a part against Northampton on Saturday.

Captain Marvin Johnson is suspended for that match with Alan White hoping to recover from an achilles problem and stand in.

Mad Gav loses rag yet again!

GAVIN McGOWAN cemented his reputation as Division Two's Mr Ill-Discipline with a senseless last-minute sending-off at Oldham.

If McGowan gets as many cards on his birthday as he's acquired on the football pitch this season he will be a popular and happy man.

But his 14th yellow and second red of the campaign on Good Friday didn't bring a smile to manager Lennie Lawrence's face.

McGowan's latest misdemeanour is likely to see him miss another three games because of suspension and Lawrence said: "He's got to learn not to retaliate otherwise he's going to struggle and miss too many games. It was a bad tackle but he gave the referee the opportunity to send him off."

Former Premiership referee Paul Danson was not shy with his cards and, considering the former Arsenal man's record, it was a surprise that it took 71 minutes for him to add McGowan's name to those already in his bulging notebook.

But it was probably the most justified caution of the afternoon with McGowan executing the kind of tackle more often seen at Cardiff Arms' Park than Boundary Park on opposite number Paul Reid.

Minutes later, the Hatters right wing back remonstrated angrily with Danson's assistant for awarding him a throw-in!

And then on 90 minutes came his real show-stealer when violent retaliation after a Lee Duxbury tackle saw him being shown an instant red card, regardless of his earlier offence.

The timing – just seconds before the final whistle – added to the absurdity of McGowan's actions.

Phil Gray, who shone in a withdrawn role behind front two Tony Thorpe and Stuart Douglas, had earlier given Luton the lead, drifting into the home box to sidefoot in after Mitchell Thomas headed down Matthew Spring's cross.

The Hatters were denied the opportunity to add a second when Thorpe darted inside Oldham defender Andrew Holt after Thomas' through ball and appeared to be tripped in the box.

But Mr Danson waved aside the striker's protests and that second-half decision proved to be the game's turning point.

Oldham are fighting for their second division status and a midfield orchestrated by the experienced and skillful John Sheridan began to overrun teenage Hatters duo Matthew Spring and Michael McIndoe, on for the injured Paul McLaren.

The home strikers had displayed woeful confidence in front of goal and it took defender Shaun Garnett, pushed up from the back, to grab the equaliser.

Garnett held off Hatters defender Sean Dyche to meet Holt's long throw and flick his header into Kelvin Davis' bottom corner.

Lawrence immediately switched to a conventional back four with Thomas, who enjoyed an effective display, dropping to left back and it was the visitors who went closest to snatching a second goal.

Thomas took a break from defensive duties to head against the bar from Spring's corner and Gray suffered the same fate when his clever 20-yard chip had home keeper Gary Kelly well beaten on 89 minutes.

matchfacts

OLDHAM ATH 1 LUTON TOWN 1

- OLDHAM: Gary Kelly, Paul Mardon, Andrew Holt, Shaun Garnett, Paul Rickers, Lee Duxbury, Andy Gray (Mark Innes, 90), John Sheridan, Matthew Tipton (Steve Whitehall, 61), Mark Allott, Paul Reid. Sub not used: Mark Hotte,
- HATTERS: Kelvin Davis, Chris Willmott, Mitchell Thomas, Matthew Spring, Sean Dyche, Marvin Johnson, Phil Gray, Paul McLaren (Michael McIndoe, 10), Stuart Douglas (Alan White, 76), Tony Thorpe (Andrew Fotiadis, 73), Gavin McGowan.
- Shots on target: Oldham 10, Luton 4.
- Off target: Oldham 11, Luton 5.
- Corners: Oldham 9, Luton 3.
- Attendance: 4,948.
- Referee: Paul Danson.
- Top Hatter: Gray – skillful display.

THE LUTON Town Supporters Club Player of the Season Presentation Evening is on Sunday April 25 at the Kent Social Club. The evening will kick-off at 8pm with all first-team players present. There will also be a raffle and a disco. Tickets are available from the Supporters Club kiosk on matchdays or Town-On-Tour travel coaches.

Mac leads young attack

LUTON TOWN'S young guns will be given the opportunity to fire the Kenilworth Road club to an exciting finish to the season.

Hatters boss Lennie Lawrence has called for his talented teenagers to grabtheir chance with both hands with several likely to be given first-team runouts before the end of the season.

With Paul McLaren and Ray McKinnon both unfit, Lawrence will hand Michael McIndoe an opportunity to shine in midfield and he also picked out Stuart Fraser, Tresor Kandol, Jimmy Cox, Emmerson Boyce and Matthew Taylor as others who could receive the first-team call in coming weeks.

Suspension and injury is likely to force Lawrence into selecting youngsters. Gavin McGowan, who could face another disciplinary meeting with the FA, will miss the Lincoln, Notts County and Chesterfield games and Phil Gray and Mitchell Thomas are a caution away from one-match bans.

And with McLaren and Thorpe joining McKinnon, Paul Showler and Julian James in the treatment room and Gary Doherty and Liam George playing in the World Under-20 Championships, Hatters fans could receive a premature look at the club's young stars.

BIG CHANCE: Michael McIndoe.

Manager Lennie Lawrence said: "It's a big opportunity for Michael McIndoe because we're very short of central midfielders.

"He's held his head up before. He needs to go on from that and knows it.

"I've told him and others that now's the time to prove they can do a job. They won't get a better chance than now with the team doing well and the pressure virtually off."

Lennie Lawrence's verdict

"I don't whinge about refs too much but the Tony Thorpe trip looked a penalty. If we'd got a second, we'd have won by three or four but we didn't get the penalty, the pressure mounted and they scrambled one in. The key today was the players battled. It was a performance of resilliance. We'd have lost it two or three weeks ago. Oldham put a lot in and we had to put a lot in to cope with them."

ROUGH AND TUMBLE: Hatters midfielder Matthew Spring gets in a strong challenge during Saturday's 1-1 draw at Oldham (left), while Andrew Fotiadis is sent crashing to the ground after coming on as a second-half substitute to make his first appearance for seven weeks. Pictures by GARETH OWEN

I WIN Hatters v Lincoln City match tickets

LINCOLN CITY visit Kenilworth Road on April 17 – and you could be there to see the game FREE!

The Nationwide Building Society has supplied the *News-Gazette* with two tickets for the game.

Answer this question and they could be yours:

Who scored the goals for Luton in November's 2-2 draw at Lincoln?

All entries must be sent to: Tickets Competition, Sports Desk, *News-Gazette*, 30 Church Street, Luton, LU1 3JQ.

Town On Tour will be taking coaches to the Sixfields Stadium for the Hatters league clash with Northampton Town on Saturday.

In a special offer, prices for non-members are £5 for adults and £2 for juniors and OAPs.

The coach leaves at 12.45pm and tickets are available from the club shop this week.

Hatters left back Stuart Fraser has been called up to the Scotland under-18 squad.

Division 2 table

Up to April 5 1999

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fulham	38	27	6	5	64	26	87
Preston	39	21	10	8	69	37	73
Walsall	37	21	8	8	53	40	71
Man City	40	18	15	7	54	29	69
Gillingham	39	18	14	7	63	35	68
Bournemouth	38	19	10	9	59	36	67
York	37	18	7	12	57	36	61
Millwall	38	19	4	15	49	45	61
Chesterfield	39	16	10	13	46	45	58
Reading	38	16	10	12	44	36	58
Wrexham	40	15	12	13	49	52	57
LUTON	37	12	11	14	38	51	47
Blackpool	38	12	10	16	44	52	46
Notts County	39	11	13	15	35	45	46
Bristol Rovers	38	12	9	17	44	53	45
Oldham	39	9	15	15	49	47	42
Chesterfield	39	10	12	17	44	69	42
York City	39	9	15	15	42	58	42
Oldham	38	10	9	19	46	67	39
Wycombe	39	10	8	21	38	56	38
Northampton	39	9	10	20	41	51	37
Lincoln City	39	8	13	18	31	47	37
Macclesfield	38	10	6	22	34	62	36
	37	8	9	20	30	48	33

98-99 Story so far...

August	Opponents	Score	Scorers	Att	Pos
Sat 8	Wycombe	1-0	Davis (S) 36	5,252	10
Tues 11	OXFORD UTD (WC1)	2-3	Alexander 59 (pen), 63 (pen)	3,165	-
Sat 15	PRESTON	1-1	Marshall 54	5,392	7
Tues 18	Oxford Utd (WC1)	3-1	Gray 37, Evers 48, McLaren 70	5,099	-
Sat 22	Reading	0-3		18,108	12
Sat 29	COLCHESTER	2-0	Douglas 62, Davis (S) 82	5,005	9
Mon 31	Wigan Athletic	3-1	Davis (S) 41, Evers 78, Gray 81	3,778	5
September					
Sat 5	BURNLEY	1-0	Douglas 47	5,554	2
Tues 8	Wrexham	1-1	McKinnon 36	2,951	3
Sat 12	BRISTOL ROVERS	2-0	Davis (S) 7, Alexander 9	5,558	3
Tues 15	Ipswich (WC 2)	1-2	Douglas, 60	9,032	-
Sat 19	Blackpool	0-1		5,695	5
Tues 22	IPSWICH(WC 2)	4-2	Fotiadis 52, Douglas 83, Davis (S) 99 Johnson 120	5,655	-
Sat 26	WALSALL	0-1		5,530	7
October					
Sat 3	Fulham	3-1	Gray 3, Douglas 48, Davis (S) 65	11,856	7
Sat 10	York City	3-3	Douglas 22, Evers 43, Gray 55	3,780	4
Sat 17	OLDHAM	2-0	Gray 82, Scarlett 90	5,447	4
Tues 20	NORTHAMPTON	1-0	Alexander 19	6,087	3
Sat 24	Gillingham	0-1		5,602	4
Tues 27	COVENTRY (WC 3)	2-0	Gray 50, Davis (S) 78	9,051	-
November					
Sat 7	Stoke City	1-3	Douglas 81	12,964	6
Tues 10	BARNSLEY (WC4)	1-0	Gray 82	8,435	-
Sun 15	Boreham Wood (FA1)	3-2	Gray 33, 53, Davis (S) 76	1,772	-
Sat 21	Lincoln City	2-2	Gray 43, Doherty 76	4,893	6
Sat 28	MANCHESTER CITY	1-1	Doherty 76	9,070	7
December					
Tue 1	Sunderland (WC5)	0-3		35,742	-
Sat 5	HULL CITY(FA2)	1-2	Davis (S) 36	5,021	-
Sat 12	Macclesfield	2-2	Douglas 3, Gray 90	2,905	8
Sat 19	MILLWALL	1-2	Davis (S) 69	5,939	11
Mon 28	Bournemouth	0-1		8,863	14
January					
Sat 2	Colchester	2-2	Alexander (pen) 7, White 72	4,694	14
Tues 5	WALSALL (AWS 2)	0-3		1,870	-
Sat 9	WYCOMBE	3-1	Spring 16, Evers 69, Douglas 75	5,063	13
Sat 16	Preston	1-2	Fotiadis 15	11,034	12
Sat 23	WIGAN ATHLETIC	0-4		4,934	13
Sat 30	BOURNEMOUTH	2-2	McKinnon 6, Doherty 53	5,426	14
February				10,285	12
Sat 6	Burnley	2-1	Fotiadis 34, Doherty 87	4,759	13
Feb 13	WREXHAM	1-2	Doherty 47	6,361	13
Feb 20	Bristol Rovers	0-1		4,021	13
Feb 23	NOTTS COUNTY	1-0	Douglas 54	4,646	12
Feb 27	BLACKPOOL			4,508	13
March		0-1		7,424	13
Sat 6	Walsall	0-4		5,221	14
Tues 9	FULHAM	1-2	Alexander (pen) 47	3,921	14
Sat 13	STOKE CITY	1-3	Gray 82	5,527	14
Sat 20	Chesterfield	1-1	Spring 12	6,705	13
Tues 23	READING	1-0	Dyche 42		
Sat 27	GILLINGHAM			4,948	12
April		1-1	Gray 4		
Fri 2	Oldham				

Matches still to come...

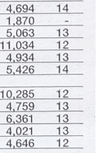
Sat 10	N'hampton	A	3pm	Tues 27	CHES'FIELD	H	7.45
Wed 14	Man City	A	7.45	MAY			
Sat 17	LINCOLN	H	3pm	Sat 1	MAC'FIELD	H	3pm
Sat 24	Notts Co	A	3pm	Sat 8	Millwall	A	3pm

Games and goals

	APPEARANCES (SUBS) Lge	Cup	GOALS Lge	Cup
Nathan Abbey	1(0)	1(0)	0	0
Graham Alexander	28(0)	9(0)	4	2
Hervé Bacque	2(5)	2(2)	0	0
Emmerson Boyce	0(0)	1(0)	0	0
Jimmy Cox	3(5)	1(0)	0	0
Kelvin Davis	37(0)	9(0)	0	0
Steve Davis	20(0)	9(0)	6	4
Simon Davies	2(0)	0(0)	0	0
Gary Doherty	5(11)	2(2)	5	0
Stuart Douglas	34(0)	7(1)	8	2
Sean Dyche	10(0)	1(0)	1	0
Sean Evers	27(0)	10(0)	3	1
Andrew Fotiadis	6(9)	2(2)	2	1
Stuart Fraser	1(1)	1(0)	0	0
Liam George	6(4)	0(2)	0	0
Phil Gray	30(3)	9(0)	8	5
Gerry Harrison	14(0)	1(0)	0	0
Marvin Johnson	35(0)	8(0)	0	1
Tresor Kandol	0(1)	1(0)	0	0
Dwight Marshall	3(1)	3(0)	1	0
Gavin McGowan	24(4)	9(0)	0	0
Michael McIndoe	9(5)	3(3)	0	0
Ray McKinnon	26(1)	6(1)	2	0
Paul McLaren	14(9)	4(3)	0	1
Kofi Nyamah	0(0)	1(1)	0	0
Andre Scarlett	2(4)	0(2)	1	0
Paul Showler	2(1)	0(0)	0	0
Matthew Spring	37(0)	8(1)	2	0
Mitchell Thomas	18(6)	3(0)	0	0
Tony Thorpe	2(0)	0(0)	0	0
Chris Willmott	5(1)	0(0)	0	0
Alan White	13(15)	2(3)	1	0
L'Andry Zahana-Oni	2(3)	0(0)	0	0

Bad boys

WHERE the red and yellow cards have gone...



McGowan

	Y	R
McGowan	14	2
Alexander	8	1
McLaren	8	1
Thomas	6	1
Johnson	5	1
White	4	1
Davis (S)	6	0
Gray	3	1
Douglas	5	0
McIndoe	4	0
McKinnon	4	0
Davis (K)	1	1
Doherty	2	0
George	2	0
Spring	2	0
Cox	1	0
Dyche	1	0
Evers	1	0
Harrison	1	0
Scarlett	1	0
Thorpe	1	0
Willmott	1	0
TOTAL	81	9

Good boys

LUTON News Player of the Year standings (the Top Hatter awards given by Town reporter Dave Flett)...

Alexander	5	Evers	2
Davis (S)	5	McGowan	2
Gray	5	McKinnon	2
Johnson	5	McLaren	2
Spring	5	Thomas	2
Davis (K)	3	Abbey	1
Harrison	3	Scarlett	1
Douglas	2	Showler	1
Dyche	2	TOTAL	48

Phil Gray