

Hatters fall to a sucker punch

98/99

The Hatters almost grabbed a deserved equaliser at the death, but a great save by the Northampton keeper Billy Turley denied substitute L'Andry Zahana'Oni.

So, for the second season running, a solitary goal settled matters between these local rivals at Sixfields, and this year it was a very lucky one.

It was a dire match played on a hard, uneven pitch in a difficult wind with Northampton's quest for points to escape relegation overcoming any footballing instincts they may have had.

The winning goal came on 34 minutes, a little against the run of play, but totally fortuitous. Carlo Corazzin was going nowhere on the left wing and curled in a weak cross towards James Hunt, the only other forward up with play.

Hunt couldn't reach it, but did enough to distract Kelvin Davis, whose hesitation was fatal. Davis was left stranded as the ball bounced its way into the net just inside the far post.

Although Northampton needed the points desperately, a young Hatters side matched them for commitment, battling away against robust opponents for the whole of the game.

It was a telling statistic that the Hatters forced ten corners to one in the second half

Northampton Town 1
Luton Town 0
Report by BILL COLE

and it was typical of the game that the first clear-cut opportunity created by either side came in injury time at the end.

Andrew Fotiadis put substitute Zahana'Oni clean through on Turley but the keeper guessed right, dived right, saved Oni's shot and kept those vital points for his side.

Seventeen-year-old Tresor Kandol, making his starting league debut in place of the injured Phil Gray, was in action early on. He and Stuart Douglas raced towards Turley as he had to deal with a difficult back-pass. The keeper hacked it against one of his own men but the ball bounced to safety when it could easily have favoured one of the young strikers.

Northampton had a mighty shout for a penalty in the 21st minute when Kevin Wilson tried to find Corazzin, but Gavin McGowan was always favourite to clear and the striker's dive failed to impress referee Mr Jones from Cumbria, who was one of the few on the pitch to have a good game.

After taking that lucky lead, Northampton and Corazzin were immediately denied a second goal by a super tackle from Chris Willmott, who starred for the Hatters.

The Hatters were in more positive mood after the interval, pushing back

Northampton, who seemed to be playing a dangerous game in trying to hang on to a single-goal lead.

Matthew Spring's pacy free-kick after a foul on Mitchell Thomas was deflected inches wide by a defender's head, before a long McGowan throw was missed by a mass of bodies in front of goal and found Fotiadis, who promptly fell over the ball and the chance evaporated.

Zahana'Oni came on for Kandol with just over quarter of an hour to play and made an immediate impression. He beat two men on the left and crossed well only for McGowan to shoot wildly, then he headed a McGowan cross back across goal from beyond the far post only for a home head to clear.

Alan White stopped a rare Northampton attack before the Hatters resumed their attack with a low drive from Michael McIndoe that almost caught Turley on the wrong foot before the Northampton keeper made the save of the game from Zahana'Oni.

Stuart Douglas then had a goal-bound header stopped on the line by a defender who knew little about it and the game ended with a Northampton man kicking off his own goal line after an almighty scramble in front of goal looked like producing a last-gasp equaliser.

Luton: Davis, Willmott, Thomas, Spring, Dyche, White, Kandol (Zahana'Oni 73), Fotiadis, Douglas, McIndoe, McGowan. Attendance: 6856.



■ Turley beats Kandol to deny the Hatters an equaliser

Memories of days gone by

MEMORIES of Luton's appearance in the 1959 FA Cup final will be rekindled with a celebration of the anniversary at Luton's last home game of the season.

Such legendary names as Ron Baynham, Ken Hawkes, Brendan McNally, John Groves, Dave Pacey, Billy Bingham, Bob Morton, George Cummins and Tony Gregory

will be guests of the club and take a bow at half-time.

The club are offering a special ticket deal of two main stand seats for £10, no membership required, for fans to see the match against Macclesfield Town and pay homage to the great players of yesteryear.

Call Luton 416976 for details.



■ Andrew Fotiadis tussles for the ball in the Hatters' clash with Northampton yesterday



■ Hatters' Gavin McGowan challenges Northampton's James Hunt