



■ Neil Midgley beats Chris Brass to slot home the winning goal for Hatters



■ Gary Doherty has a header cleared off the line as he gets above Burnley's defence

Midgley the magnificent

ONLY a flying injury-time save by Nathan Abbey prevented ex-Hatter Steve Davis making a dream return to Kenilworth Road.

With Burnley piling on the pressure in search of a late equaliser, the stage looked to be set for Luton's former captain when Abbey mistakenly let Tresor Kandol's misdirected clearing header go for a corner.

Davis's powerful header from Glen Little's corner looked to be heading for the net, but Abbey flung himself at full strength to deny the Clarets – and Luton clung on.

Had Burnley levelled, it would have served as a stiff lesson for teenagers Matthew Taylor and Tresor Kandol, who wasted glorious opportunities to seal the match late on as Burnley abandoned their trenches in search of a leveller.

But Taylor had a mad rush of blood to the head – hammering wildly into the Kenilworth Road crowd when Liam George, Michael McIndoe and Neil Midgley were all unmarked to his left.

And Tresor Kandol had the run of half the pitch to himself, only to fire off a wild 20-yard shot which threatened the corner flag more than the goal.

But it was a game played in front of Hatters'

Luton Town 2 Burnley 1

Report by Pete Kenyon

Pictures by Andy Handley

highest crowd of the season, 7,205, which finished in a frenzy of end-to-end football and started with little more than a whimper.

Burnley, second in the table, and with the meanest travelling defence in the league, were simply diabolical, and could not seem to string two passes together.

Luton were better but just could not break the deadlock.

Four minutes after the break, however, Hatters nosed ahead. The ball was worked to Liam George on the right edge of the box and Midgley was on hand to turn in the low cross fired across the six-yard area.

It was just what a pedestrian game needed to spark some life, but the lead was short-lived. Two minutes later Little's crossfield pass into the box caught Hatters cold and the in-form Andy Cooke popped up unmarked at the far post to turn the ball in on the volley with his wrong foot.

Suddenly Burnley started playing the sort of football which saw them demolish Wrexham 5-0 in midweek and Luton were under the cosh.

But Doherty, Johnson and Julian Watts – surely

the bargain of the season – simply refused to be battered into submission.

Luton wrestled their way back into the game, and after Crichton had made two saves to deny Matthew Taylor, the visitors finally folded.

With Burnley guilty of leaving holes between defence and midfield for the likes of George and Douglas to run into at pace, another goal was only a matter of time.

And in the 70th minute, Midgley completed his brace by neatly tucking home Douglas's cross at the near post following a sweeping move from one end of the pitch to another.

After the match, Luton boss Lennie Lawrence paid tribute to his young side.

He said: "It is a pleasure to come into work at the moment. We have a unique situation here with the youngsters. Without doubt, this starting eleven would be the youngest in any of the divisions in the league.

"At the moment we have more experience on the bench than on the pitch, but while we keep getting results I'm not going to be changing it."

Of yesterday's match, Lawrence said: "It was an excellent game, probably as good as it is going to get in the second division, especially in the second half."

Luton: Abbey, Boyce, Watts, Doherty, Johnson, George, McLaren (Locke, 79), Douglas (McIndoe, 72), Spring, Midgley (Kandol, 88), Taylor.



■ Stuart Douglas and Paul McLaren celebrate with Midgley after his first