

Midweek misfit

Midgley bags a Burnley brace

NEIL MIDGLEY was transformed from a midweek misfit into a magnificent match-winner against Burnley on Saturday.

The 21-year-old striker, on loan from Ipswich Town, was hauled off at half-time in last Tuesday's 1-0 away defeat at Millwall after an ineffective display.

But Midgley responded with all guns blazing, firing in a two-goal blast that left ex-Hatters defenders Steve Davis and Mitchell Thomas trailing in his wake.

The victory marked another big stride for Lennie Lawrence's young side – it was their first home win against a top six side – and it was Midgley's goals that proved the difference.

About the striker's topsy-turvy time, Lawrence said: "He's had a classic footballing week. He got yanked off against Millwall at half-time because he'd not done well enough, but we kept faith in him and he's answered with two goals."

Midgley's first came five minutes after the break with Luton having ended the first-half on top. Liam George had seen a firm, low drive saved by Paul Crichton on 30 minutes and Gary Doherty's downward header from Matthew Spring's corner beat the Burnley keeper but was somehow hacked off the line by Paul Cook.

Sandwiched in between those efforts were shots by Midgley and Matthew Taylor that forced saves from a harassed Crichton.

At the other end, Thomas, afforded a less generous reception by the home crowd than Davis, almost silenced the Kenilworth Road boo boys after just eight minutes when his looping header was tipped over by Nathan Abbey.

Midgley fired the Hatters in front when Douglas' clever dummy released George, whose cross from the left was duly dispatched by the penalty box predator.

Burnley's response was immediate with slack home defending allowing Glenn Little to raid down the right and Andy Cooke to slide in and score at the far post.

That goal set in motion an

match facts

LUTON TOWN 2 BURNLEY 1

● **HATTERS:** Nathan Abbey, Emmerson Boyce, Julian Watts, Gary Doherty, Marvin Johnson, Liam George, Paul McLaren (Adam Locke, 80), Stuart Douglas (Michael McIndoe, 73), Matthew Spring, Neil Midgley (Tresor Kandol, 89), Matthew Taylor. Subs not used: Efetobore Sodje, Scott Ward.

● **BURNLEY:** Paul Crichton, Chris Brass (Ronnie Jepson, 73), Mitchell Thomas, Micky Mellon, Steve Davis, Gordon Armstrong (Alan Lee, 87), Glen Little, Paul Cook, Andy Cooke, Andy Payton (Graham Branch, 79), John Mullin.

● **Shots on target:** Luton 8, Burnley 9.

● **Off target:** Luton 6, Burnley 6.

● **Corners:** Luton 7, Burnley 7.

● **Referee:** Frazer Stretton (Nottingham).

● **Top Hatter:** Neil Midgley – goal hero.

☐ **TICKETS for FLAG's Open Forum Evening at Kents Social Club on Thursday, November 25 are still available. Admission is free but tickets must be obtained from the Hatters Supporters' Club kiosk on match days or from FLAG's office at 83a George Street. The evening begins at 7.30pm.**

☐ **THE HATTERS Supporters Club hold their Fans Forum at the Eric Morecambe Suite tomorrow night. The evening kicks off at 7.30pm with skipper Marvin Johnson, sales and marketing manager John Bailey, catering manager Ffion Wallace and safety officer Geoff Lovell all available to answer questions.**

intriguing second-half contest as Luton's youth and exuberance, best personified by the busy displays of wing-backs Taylor and Emmerson Boyce, were pitted against Burnley's strength and experience.

In an entertaining spectacle, both sides sought three points but it was Midgley's finishing that settled the outcome on 70 minutes.

He again found space in the visitors' penalty box to steer the ball inside Crichton's near post

after persistence and a pin-point right-wing cross from Douglas.

Taylor and Tresor Kandol then sent wild, late shots into the Kenilworth Road end when well positioned before Abbey prevented a last-minute equaliser from an inevitable source.

Not even Steve Davis could deny the Hatters victory. The ex-Luton skipper rose in typically majestic fashion to meet Little's corner but his powerful header was beaten instinctively away by Abbey.

Lennie Lawrence's verdict

“It was as good a game as you'll get in Division Two, especially in the second half. We seem to have a spell in the second half of most home games where we get a head of steam up. We did that for 20 minutes and stretched them. They are our biggest scalp this season. Burnley will be there at the end and won't lose too many games.”

