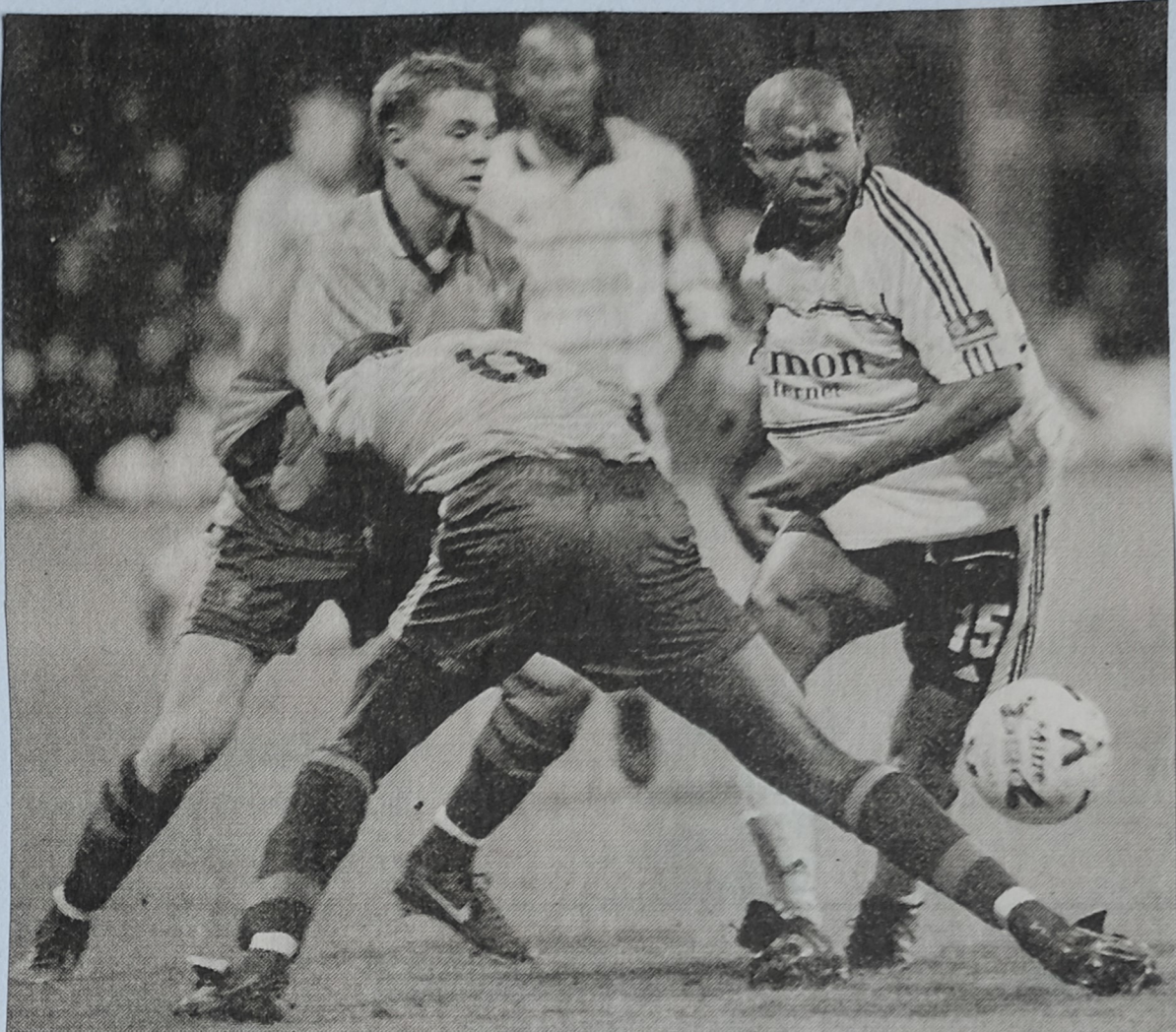




Breaking through: Fulham's Barry Hayles gets past Marvin Johnson of Luton

Hayles' healthy return

99/00 (csc)

By Mike Berry

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FULHAM finally pulled rank over Luton to earn themselves a shot at Premiership side Wimbledon in the fourth round of the FA Cup. Held 2-2 by the Second Division outfit at Craven Cottage, the expensively-assembled Division One promotion chasers asserted themselves with a burst of three goals in six minutes during the second half.

Barry Hayles, who had seemed unlikely to play because of a bout of flu, climbed out of his sick bed to score twice in a victory that capped a day of celebration for Fulham's owner Mohamed Fayed, who had emerged triumphant from his legal battle with Neil Hamilton yesterday afternoon.

Hayles also picked up a first-half booking for what looked to be a case of mistak-

en identity with Wayne Collins. Paul Bracewell, the Fulham manager, said: "I will be having a word with the referee and hopefully he will take a look at the video."

Fulham, who have not scored a League goal in December after three 0-0 draws, bristled with intent and might have been in front inside the first 10 minutes.

But Hayles, allowed to advance on goal when Collins was being flagged offside, miskicked with only Nathaniel Abbey to beat and Kit Symons dragged a 20-yarder wide.

Luton, fielding seven players aged 21 or under, broke quickly on the counter. The highly-rated Matthew Taylor, 18, twice tried his luck from long range and the trickery of Liam George up front also caused problems as the home side ended the first half having restored territorial parity.

Luton's light flickered only

briefly in the second period, Steve Finnan's wayward back-pass requiring Taylor to pull off a double-save to deny Stuart Douglas and George. Ten minutes later the game was over as Fulham dramatically rediscovered their goal touch.

Steve Hayward and Lee Clark combined for Hayles to sweep them ahead with his fifth goal of the season, and No 6 quickly followed when Clark released the former Bristol Rovers striker, who muscled his way through for a brilliant second. Luton, guilty of some naive defending, leaked a third goal when Hayward curled in a low free kick.

Luton Town: Abbey; Doherty, Watts, Johnson; Fraser (Boyce 60), Locke, Spring, McLaren, Taylor; George, Douglas. **Subs:** Scarlett, Kandol, Ayres, Tate (g).

Fulham: Taylor; Symons, Morgan, Melville (Trollope 79); Finnan, Collins, Clark, Hayward, Brevett; Horsfield, Hayles. **Subs:** Uhlenbeek, Peschisolido, Trollope, Selly, Hahnemann (g). **Booked:** Hayles.

Referee: G Frankland (Middlesbrough).