

Joe's regime gets off to flying start

00/01
Northampton Town 0
Luton Town 1



■ You beauty: The Hatters players prepare to mob Stuart Douglas after his winning, early goal. Right: Joe Kinnear points the way ahead

Welch's right hand without a problem.

Sterling and Dryden produced strong tackles to keep Northampton at bay before Emerson Boyce did even better. His last-ditch tackle kept Luton in front as the dangerous Jamie Forrester burst clean through on goal.

Roland was proving an influence on the left side of midfield and his good run led to Taylor having a fierce shot blocked by Welch.

Then Taylor again threatened, this time with a header from Helin's looping cross but he couldn't find enough power to beat the Welch.

Mark Ovendale had hardly been troubled

in the first half only having to make a routine catch when Forrester had a clear header at goal but the little striker certainly made the 'keeper work after the interval.

Cobblers manager Kevin Wilson made a couple of tactical substitutions at half time reverting to a back three in order to push an extra striker up front.

Forrester forced two brilliant saves from Ovendale inside a minute.

At the other end, George was proving a handful for the Cobblers defence, being thwarted by Welch when played through by Roland, before he teased Ian Sansom into tripping him just inside the box.

Spring took the 68th minute spot kick but rattled the woodwork to leave a nervous last 20 minutes.

The Town defence was well marshalled and grew in confidence as the match progressed. The three points could be the start of Luton's bid to beat relegation.

Luton Town Ovendale, Helin, Stirling, Boyce, Dryden, Taylor, Spring, Mansell, Roland, Douglas (Fotiadias 86), George.

Subs not used: Stein, Abbey, Holmes, Breitenfelder, Attendance 6633. Away fans sellout 1250.



Tough characters the key to escape

NEW Hatters boss Joe Kinnear has spelled out how he intends to lead the club away from the Division Two relegation zone.

His first team selection will be next Saturday's vital home relegation battle with Swansea.

But he does not intend to let grass grow under his feet. "In the next couple of weeks I will know what my best squad is and I'm sure major surgery is required," he said.

"I want players with character: men not players who want to hide. You either instil that into the players that are here or you go out and get some that can do the job.

"At the moment I understand they lack experience or perhaps there's a lack of guidance.

"It's quite simple, if they don't do the business I get people in who can. I have been told money is available and if I need to I will be spending it as soon as possible.

Answering the question of how he expected to attract talent to Luton when he couldn't at his last club, he said: "It wasn't the same at

Oxford. I didn't get the support I have been offered here to get the right players in.

"I'm confident that players will come here to play for me. It's my job to talk to them and convince them that this is where they will flourish.

"Oxford is now in the past, but things were not working out.

"People were dragging their feet. They asked me to manage them time and time again, but I said no.

"I wasn't under contract to them and when things became disagreeable, I got out.

"I had a phone call from Luton and in detailed discussions, the directors convinced me that the club has huge potential.

"I have been locked in meetings for three full days, breakfast time until late evening, to talk through the future of this club in depth and assurances have been given to me.

"I have been told that the club's new stadium is not far away, probably within the next couple of years."

Everyone stays says Kinnear – at least for the time being...

JOE KINNEAR insists the imminent arrival of Mick Harford as his deputy will not automatically lead to Lil Fuccillo and his coaching team leaving Kenilworth Road.

"I haven't come here to sack people. For the next week I will be heavily reliant on Lil Fuccillo, John Moore and Kevan Broadhurst," said Kinnear.

"They know the players much better than I do at the moment.

"My number two will come in addition to the present coaching staff, there is enough work for all of them.

"I always take the top 12, leaving the other 20-odd in the

squad split between a pair of coaches and we would specialise from there: goalkeepers, defenders, strikers and so on."

Fuccillo was too upset to address fans at a scheduled meeting of the Supporters Club on Thursday night.

Instead, a packed meeting was briefed on Kinnear's press conference.

On Friday Fuccillo, who said the previous week that he welcomed Kinnear 'as long as he didn't interfere with the football', said: "I'd like to know where I stand and I've asked for a meeting with directors this morning about my position.

"One day this week it was all OK and the next it had all changed."

After discussions with Town directors Eric Hood and Cliff Bassett, Fuccillo had a heart to heart with Kinnear and certainly seemed happier about life as he gave his new boss a lift to training at Luton Rugby Club.

"I could be here two days or two weeks or more, we will just have to see," he said.

Firmly intending this to be very much a hands-on role, Kinnear, armed with a three and a half year contract, took charge of the players at Friday's training session.



■ Lee Mansell keeps a tight rein on Chris Hargreaves at Sisfields yesterday