

SOCCER SPECIAL...LAST NIGHT'S DIVISION TWO MATCH WITH ROTHERHAM



HIGH-RISER: Hatters' striker Liam George heads goalwards during last night's match against Rotherham.

Picture: JOANNA CROSS

Now you can see Hatters in style

WE'VE teamed up with the supermarket giants Sainsbury's to provide a super prize of four VIP tickets to Luton Town's last game of the season - against Port Vale on Saturday, May 5. One of our readers and three friends or members of his or her family will be able to watch the game in style.

For the last two years Sainsbury's has been delighted to provide sponsorship for the Kids at Kenilworth scheme. Through this Sainsbury's has

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been able to give nearly 700 schoolchildren the opportunity to see Hatters play.

This scheme has been supported by the two newly refurbished stores at Bramingham Park and Bury Park and schools benefiting from tickets include Lealdens High and Bramingham Primary.

This is another aspect of Sainsbury's involvement in the local community, which also includes several charity events for the Pasque Hospice and support for the Luton Lives project.

The prize in our super competition includes a tour of the stadium, a wine reception, a club host for the day, photographs on the pitch, a four-course meal and half-time refreshments, a complimentary bar en suite and an opportunity to meet the players afterwards.

All you have to do to stand a chance of winning this super prize is answer this simple question:

Which team do Hatters play on the last day of the season?
Answers on a postcard or the back of a sealed envelope please to: Hatters competition, Sports Desk, News-Gazette, Media House, 39 Upper George Street, Luton, LU1 2RD.

You must include your name, address and telephone number.

Kinnear is sent off as Hatters are relegated

HATTERS boss Joe Kinnear was sent off as Luton Town's relegation to Division Three was confirmed by a controversial goal that secured a 1-0 away win for promotion-chasing Rotherham last night.

Kinnear was furious after Chris Sedgwick's 76th minute winning goal for Rotherham was allowed to stand after Mark Robins had appeared to be offside during the build-up.

It was a sad end for Kinnear and the Hatters, who were applauded off the pitch after showing the kind of fight and character that has been lacking at times in recent crucial matches.

Luton's unlucky fate was also sealed on the most famous date in the club's history.

Last night's defeat came exactly 13 years since the Hatters' brilliant 3-2 Littlewoods Cup final victory over Arsenal on April 24, 1988.

Kinnear and chairman Mike Watson-Challis are desperate to bring the glory days back to Kenilworth Road and ensure the club can bounce back from relegation to the Football League's basement division for the first time in 36 years.

The goal was the game's only shot on target of the evening in a close game between two teams at opposite ends of the table.

Kinnear dropped Julian Watts from the side that lost 2-1 to 10-man Bury on Saturday. Club captain Marvin Johnson, along with Mark Stein the only surviving member of the playing staff from April, 1988 returned in Watts' place for his first start since December.

Johnson played at left-back in a flat back four, with Matthew Taylor pushed into midfield.



**Luton Town 0
Rotherham 1**
Dave Flett on last night's match at Kenilworth Road

Stuart Douglas was also restored to the starting line-up as a right-winger, replacing an injured Lee Mansell.

Luton made a confident start on the bogy Kenilworth Road pitch and Liam George could have opened the scoring after just eight minutes.

Steve Howard guided Paul McLaren's hooked pass across the face of goal, but George headed over from inside the six-yard box.

At the other end, Rotherham's Rob Scott did the same from further out when he rose unchallenged to meet Kevin Watson's scorer.

Richard Barker then dragged a shot wide of Mark Ovendale's goal from 20 yards before George went close again on 33 minutes.

Johnson patrolled the left flank to good effect early on and it was his cross that led to a chance that George fired inches wide.

The Hatters finished the first-half as the better team after a disciplined display, but neither side managed a single shot on target before the interval.

Chances continued to be at a premium in an even second-half, with Johnson enjoying a faultless display in a well-organised Hatters' defence.

A brave Ovendale was also quick off his line on two occasions to seize the ball off the toes of Rotherham strikers.

The first chance of the half saw Emmerson Boyce charge down a goal-bound 54th minute shot from Kevin Watson.

Howard then fired into the side-

netting for the Hatters after being teed up by Douglas.

Rotherham, desperate for any kind of goal, almost went ahead in the most fortuitous circumstances, but Chris Sedgwick's mis-hit cross rebounded off Ovendale's crossbar.

Howard shot wide again on 76 minutes after Spring's through ball, but seconds later Rotherham took the lead in controversial fashion with the first on-target effort of the evening.

Mark Robins appeared to be offside when he broke down the left-wing, but the flag stayed down and Sedgwick side-footed in the ex-Manchester United striker's low cross at the far post.

Hatters' boss Kinnear was incensed by the goal and after a long argument with referee Paul Armstrong, he was sent off to the dressing room and given a guided escort by stewards as he passed the away end.

big match line-up

● **LUTON TOWN:** Mark Ovendale, Emmerson Boyce, Marvin Johnson, Richard Dryden, Paul Shepherd, Matthew Spring, Paul McLaren, Matthew Taylor, Liam George (sub 65 mins Mark Stein), Stuart Douglas, Steve Howard. Other subs: Adam Locke, Julian Watts, Peter Holmes, Scott Ward (gk).

● **ROTHERHAM:** Paul Pettinger, David Artell, Rob Scott, Marvin Bryan, Mark Robins (sub 90 mins Andy Monkhouse), Richard Barker, Chris Sedgwick, Stewart Talbot (sub 90 mins Jeff Minton), Kevin Watson, Paul Hurst, Guy Branston. Other subs: Brian Wilmsterman, Chris Beech, Ian Gray.

● **Referee:** Paul Armstrong (Berkshire).

● **Attendance:** 4,854.

● **Luton top player:** Marvin Johnson - a faultless display on his return.

Abbey is shown the door

GOALKEEPER Nathan Abbey was the biggest surprise as Joe Kinnear began his summer clear-out by releasing five players.

And Kinnear indicated this week that the decision to show Abbey the door was not made purely for footballing reasons. Abbey was arrested under suspicion of ABH after an incident in Luton's Liquid nightclub last month (see page 22).

Gavin McGowan, Andre Scarlett, Friedrich Breitenfelder and Rocky Baptiste are the other four players to have their contracts paid up.

Kinnear has also transfer-listed four players that are not in his plans but are contracted beyond the end of this season. They are Peter Thomson,

Peter Holmes, Dean Brennan and Dean Standen.

Holmes has another two years of his contract left to run while the other three have an extra 12 months.

The Hatters boss is hoping to attract a small fee for £100,000 signing Thomson and admitted that Brennan might have to go out on loan before leaving the club.

Kinnear also added that there will be more players to follow at the end of the season with the futures of six other out-of-contract players - Julian Watts, Adam Locke, Mark Stein, Jude Stirling, Paul Shepherd and Tresor Kandol - still to be resolved.

Kandol, like Abbey, is expected to

be shown the door because of off-the-field considerations as well as footballing reasons and on-loan midfielder Keith Rowland will return to newly-relegated Queen's Park Rangers this week.

Kinnear said: "I have taken action with nine players who are not in my plans for next season. I would sooner lose those nine and get five top-drawer players in."

"The squad next season will be thinner but the quality will be better."

The Hatters manager also revealed that he has already lined up a keeper to replace Abbey, with Wimbledon's Paul Heald a likely target.