

NATIONWIDE DIVISION 3

Darlington	2	Kidderminster	1
Halifax	1	Exeter	1
Hull	0	Plymouth	0
L Orient	0	Carlisle	0
LUTON	2	Cheltenham	1
Mansfield	0	Southend	0
Rochdale	1	Macclesfield	1
Scunthorpe	1	Bristol Rov	2
Shrewsbury	1	Hartlepool	3
Swansea	0	Oxford Utd	0
Torquay	0	York	3

Hatters double act on the mark again

Luton Town 2
Cheltenham 1

THE Hatters survived a nailbiting finish with only 10 men to record their second successive win and share the early leadership of Division Three.

For the second week running the goals came from Paul Hughes and master poacher Carl Griffiths.

The little Welshman set up Hughes for the opening goal on the half hour and added his own seven minutes later, but any thoughts that the home side may have had of coasting to victory were dispelled by an extraordinary display from Hertfordshire referee Grant Hegley.

The Town knew they were in for an onslaught from a big physical Cheltenham side, managed by Joe Kinnear's Wimbledon old boy, Steve Cotterill.

But the Hatters were far from innocents although the bookings ratio of five yellow cards and a red to Luton players while the visitors escaped without a single one, was a total travesty of justice.

Hegley set up the grandstand finish after the Robins had pulled a goal back due to some woeful Town defending with 20 minutes to play.

The man in black sent-off acting skipper Kevin Nicholls for a second bookable offence - another one of his trademark hard tackles - and Luton had to hang on for 11 minutes to gain maximum points.

With Aaron Skelton and Marvin Johnson joining an increasing Luton injury list, Kinnear signed Ian Hillier, the 21-year-old Tottenham reserve right back on a month's loan, just in time to make a surprise but an impressive appearance yesterday.

Lee Mansell provided some good team news by passing a late fitness test and winger Aidrian Forbes was fit enough to make his debut for the Hatters.

In a stormy start, the tackles flew in from both sets of players, but Nicholls was first

in the book for carrying through a challenge on 'keeper Carl Muggleton.

The Hatters took the lead after 30 minutes to settle an increasingly vociferous crowd, upset at the referee's decisions, when Griffiths nudged a ball back for Hughes to neatly pass into the net from the edge of the box through a crowd of players.

Griffiths doubled the lead after good work on the Town left wing. Mansell and Matthew Taylor harassed Steve Jones into a mistake, Nicholls was swiftly up in support, picked out the charging Griffiths unmarked in the middle and he made no mistake with an awkward ball in front of an empty net.

Cheltenham never gave up, grabbing a goal back when poor defending enabled Russell Milton to put a free kick on to substitute Neil Howarth's head - just one of three Robins men totally free at the far post.

After that Michael Duff hit a post, substitute Neil Grayson missed a couple of sitters and Luton had Taylor to thank for the three points when he made an incredible goal-line clearance with Carl Emberson beaten.

Luton Town: Emberson, Hillier, Boyce, Perrett, Taylor, Forbes (George 73), Nicholls, Hughes, Mansell, Griffiths (Locke 85), Howard (Fotiadis 61). Subs not used Ovendale, Dryden.

Luton Man of the Match Paul Hughes, attendance 6,177.



■ Rampant Hatters: Adrian Forbes (above), Luton's £65,000 signing from Norwich, made his debut as did Ian Hillier (bottom right), signed on a month's loan from Spurs. Below: Carl Griffiths scores for the second game in a row

