

Oxford blues for Luton

01/02

Luton Town 1 Oxford Utd 1

THEIR 100 per cent home record went, but the Hatters probably deserved better from a full-blooded encounter against the best opposition they have met in the league season.

After Kevin Nicholls had equalised Andy Scott's opener for Oxford within the first 10 minutes, the Town mounted a second-half onslaught that the visitors just about managed to contain.

And with Luton pushing for a winner, United inevitably had the occasional chance but Scott finished poorly on one occasion and Carl Emberson denied him on another.

The Joe Kinnear connection means there is little love lost between the clubs these days with Oxford owner Firoz Kassam wanting to win this one more than any other this season after the Town boss calling Kassam a 'prat' in a pre-match press conference.

United got off to a dream start, scoring within four minutes. Luton old boy Phil Gray went down in a heap under a challenge from Aaron Skelton, returning to the Hatters defence after injury. Oxford took the free kick quickly from the edge of the penalty area and made a mess of it, only to be called back by the eccentric referee Clive Penton. Second time, Scott curled it in past a static Emberson.

Five minutes later the Town drew level. Skelton, playing at right back, with Emmerson Boyce moving across to central defence, took a long throw into the Oxford goal area. Steve Howard may have got a touch but he certainly drew defenders to him, allowing Nicholls a clear run to usher the ball in from a yard out.

Matthew Taylor became hero and villain when firstly his misplaced pass enabled Gray to present a good chance to Scott, but he headed over.

Then the Luton youngster almost scored

NATIONWIDE DIVISION 3

Darlington	2	Carlisle	2
Halifax	0	Macclesfield	0
Hull	4	York	0
L Orient	3	Bristol Rov	1
Luton	1	Oxford Utd	1
Mansfield	2	Lincoln	1
Rochdale	2	Kidd'minster	0
Rushden	0	Southend	1
Scunthorpe	1	Hartlepool	0
Shrewsbury	2	Cheltenham	1
Swansea	4	Exeter	2
Torquay	0	Plymouth	1

with a cross from a narrow angle that deceived keeper Ian McCaldon and skimmed against the crossbar.

Carl Griffiths almost got on the end of a flicked header from Howard but the Hatters had Emberson to thank for keeping the score level at the interval. He parried Scott's shot before Thomas blazed the rebound over, then produced a great double save to deny Gray.

Kinnear replaced a totally ineffective Adrian Forbes with Ian Hillier and the Town tightened up at the back, while Stuart Douglas's introduction on the hour gave them more energy up front.

McCaldon had to make several crucial catches to stop Howard putting the Town in front as Skelton crossed numerous testing balls into the United box. On the break, Gray produced a classy pass to put Scott clear but Emberson made a superb low save.

He could do nothing when Russ Perrett's weak back-header only found the unmarked Scott, whose attempt to lob the keeper found the top of the netting.

The referee, who interrupted the game for no less than 45 fouls and booked three from each side, seemed to take every opportunity to stop Luton in their tracks. He was particularly hard on Douglas and Taylor. These two combined to force defender Phil Bolland to turn a dangerous ball over his own crossbar.

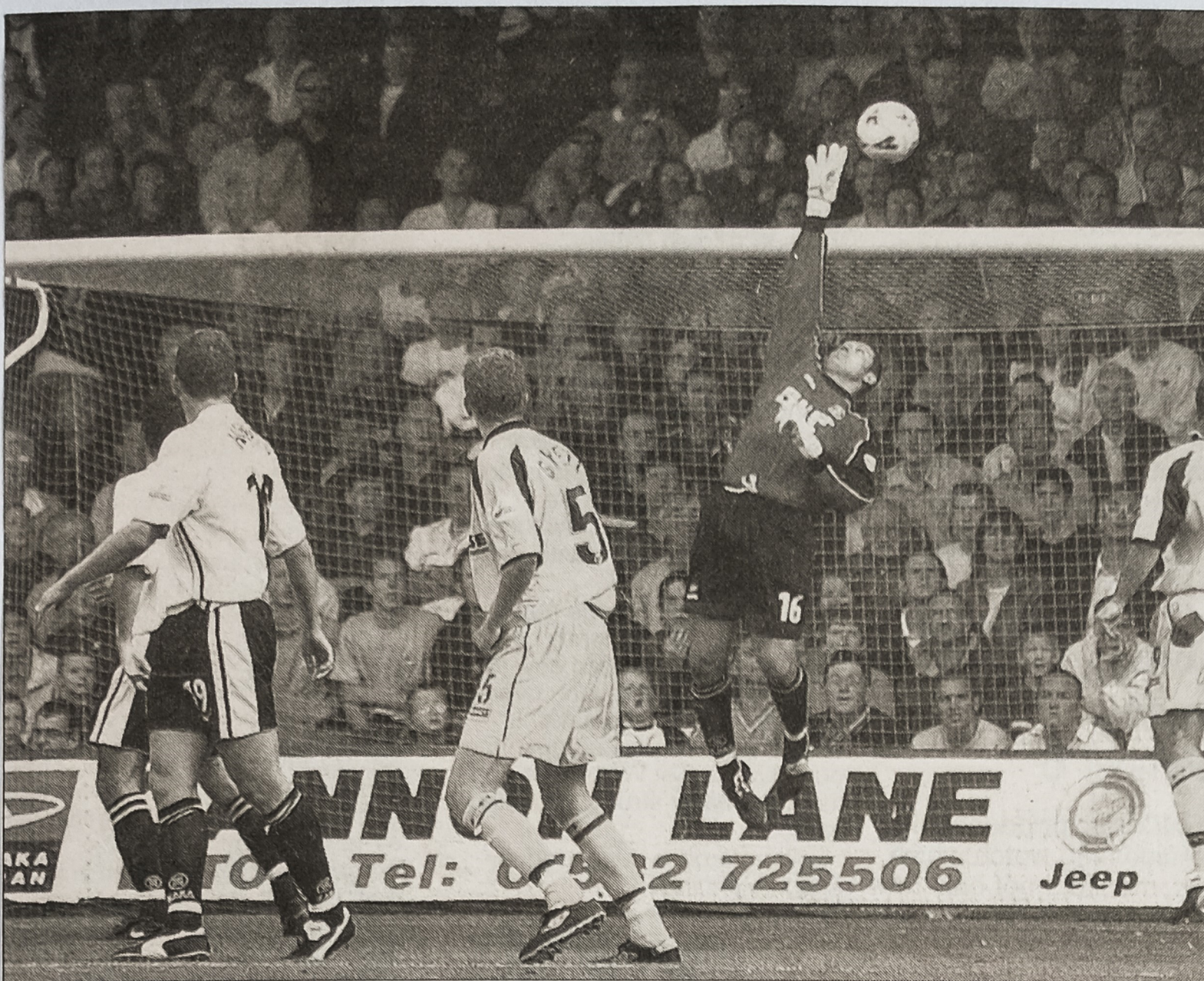
When, with four minutes to go, Taylor took the ball from a short corner and hit the angle of the woodwork, it was evident that a point was all the Town were going to take from a game they deserved to win but could have lost.

Luton: Emberson, Skelton, Boyce, Perrett, Johnson, Forbes (Hillier 46m), Spring, Nicholls, Taylor, Griffiths (Douglas 60m), Howard.

Subs not used: Ovendale (gk), Dryden, Hughes.

Attendance: 6,736.

Man of the Match: Emberson.



■ Emberson tips one over the bar whilst below Douglas flies in for the Town

