

Karl heads three to go with French flair

01/02

**Luton Town 5
Torquay United 1**

A NAP hand for the Hatters was no more than they deserved at Kenilworth Road yesterday.

The Gulls were no worse than several Third Division sides the Town have faced this season but they were torn apart by Joe Kinnear's team.

The bad news for the rest of the division is that all the new recruits are still not totally bedded in, so there is surely more to come from this emerging Luton squad.

There was a superb debut from Frenchman Jean-Louis Valois, who cracked the goal of the season on the hour, but even he was eclipsed by Karl Griffiths, who scored the first Hatters hat-trick for some seasons.

A delighted Steve Howard, the villain last week in that notorious penalty taking incident, turned hero yesterday with the first Luton goal to break his duck for the season.

The big target man capitalised on the Town's sparkling start by turning the ball into the yawning goal after Griffiths had rattled a post from Emerson Boyce's pass.

Valois had already given notice of his class with a dangerous cross that caused the Torquay defence no end of problems, but he combined with Matthew Taylor to greater effect after 30 minutes.

The Frenchman sent the youngster racing away down the left wing and his pacy, curling cross was beautifully headed home by Griffiths.

Luton were flying high at this stage, but were brought down to earth five minutes before the interval. And it was another in their series of own goals that produced the setback. Kevin Nicholls had been doing some sterling work in front of the back four



■ Heads Hatters win: Karl Griffiths gets the second of his three headed goals

whenever Torquay did manage to mount a rare attack.

But with no danger threatening, he mistimed a clearing header to power the ball past a despairing Mark Ovendale's right hand.

Griffiths gave a more realistic look to the scoreline by restoring the two goal cushion just before the half time whistle.

Valois was the provider with a pulled back cross that the Welshman headed past Kevin Dearden and in off the crossbar. He almost provided another one for Howard five minutes into the second period but Luton-bred Dearden made a great save low by a post.

After 59 minutes Griffiths was denied a hat trick by a terrific diving save but Dearden could do nothing about a real beauty moments later. Out of the blue, Valois produced a screamer of a shot that flew over and past the 'keeper into the far top corner of the net.

Valois continued to torment United with some twinkle-toed runs before Griffiths did manage to complete his threesome of headed goals in the 79th minute.

This time it was Taylor's turn to be the provider with a deep cross that Griffiths dived full length to head past the helpless Dearden to complete the rout.

The only downside was the lengthening of Kinnear's injury list with Hughes and Hillier both having to leave the field with nasty looking knocks in the first half.

But the strength of the substitutes' bench that the Luton boss has been working hard to improve, proved to be a vital component in this comprehensive victory.

Luton Town: Ovendale, Boyce, Perrett, Coyne, Taylor, Spring, Hughes (Hillier 26, Forbes 44), Nichols, Howard, Griffiths, Valois (Douglas 81). Subs not used: Ward (GK), Dryden.

Attendance: 6,392.

Luton Man of the Match: Karl Griffiths.



■ Oui oui oui – Jean-Louis Valois helps Anglo-French relationships



■ Villain turned herro – Steve Howard after his goal of the season