

# Hatters hit five to rival 82 side

FOOTBALL at Kenilworth Road has not been this exciting since 1982!

Joe Kinnear's entertaining team fired in five goals for the second successive match on Saturday as Darlington were beaten 5-2.

It was a devastating display by the rampant Hatters, who last scored five in successive home matches under David Pleat nearly 20 years ago.

Pleat's team had just been promoted to the old First Division when a Paul Walsh hat-trick and other efforts from Ricky Hill and David Moss sealed a 5-3 win against Notts County in September 1982.

Trips to European champions Aston Villa and Football League champions Liverpool then followed before Brighton were thumped 5-0 at Kenilworth Road thanks to Brian Stein's hat-trick, a Wayne Turner bicycle kick and another Moss goal.

Villa Park and Anfield might now seem a world away to Kinnear's Division Three leaders but Hatters fans are, nevertheless, being treated to some five-star entertainment this season.

After seeing seven goals and two missed penalties, Kinnear said Friday's match certainly beat "a night out at the dogs" and his team are also beginning to look a safer bet to win promotion than any wager that might be available on a typical evening's racing at Walthamstow. Sandwiched in between net-busting strikes from Matthew Spring and the irresistible Jean-Louis Valois were other goals from Steve Howard, Dean Crowe and Kevin Nicholls. Spring even had a penalty saved with the last kick of the match as Luton looked to add to a goal tally that is already seven higher than any other team in the division.

At the other end, Luton have gone longer than any other side in the division since their last clean sheet but you will hear few grumbles of discontent at Kenilworth Road about that statistic.

The match attracted the Hatters' highest home attendance of the season despite only a smattering of Darlington fans making the long trip and the exploits of French winger Valois once more proved worth the admission price alone. Valois scored another spectacular goal, claimed another assist from a corner and won a penalty after a brilliant 60-yard dribble.

His ability to strike the ball very cleanly and his immaculate close control were also in evidence during another impressive performance.

But it was Darlington who scored first on Friday after a terrible mistake by the recalled Carl Emberson.

The Hatters keeper smacked his attempted clearance straight at Quakers striker Danny Mellanby, who accepted the gift opportunity by drilling in a low shot from 10 yards. Darlington keeper Andrew Collett then gathered a 20-yard Lee Mansell drive at the second attempt before being beaten by a Spring piledriver on 35 minutes.

The Hatters midfielder scored his first goal of the season by seizing on a loose ball and sending a sweetly-struck 25-yard shot rocketing past a helpless Collett into the bottom corner. Mellanby could have put the Hatters back in front



THAT'LL STOP HIM: A Darlington defender resorts to shirt pulling in an effort to stop French wizard Jean-Louis Valois.

## Joe's verdict



**We produced some magnificent finishing and there were so many plusses. Matthew Spring's goal was a magnificent strike and I do not want it to be overshadowed by another brilliant Jean-Louis Valois effort. It was just as good a game as Torquay but we played a better side. We sometimes attack to the detriment of our defence but I'd sooner take that route than being defensive. It was real sparkling football.**

on the stroke of half-time but blasted a good chance straight at Emberson.

Howard, who has probably benefited most from the arrival of Valois, gave Luton the lead three minutes after the break when he headed in the Frenchman's corner from six yards for his third goal in four games.

But Darlington were level again two minutes later when Neil Wainwright jinked inside from the left and saw his shot deflect off Nicholls before looping over Emberson and going in off the bar.

Mellanby again fired straight at Emberson when put clear by Richard Hodgson on 61 minutes before on-loan

striker Crowe scored his second goal in two games.

Spring had just seen an effort cleared off the line by a stretched Darlington defence before Crowe bore down on Collett's goal and kept his cool to fire into the bottom corner on 67 minutes.

Howard, who was an aerial threat and full of honest endeavour throughout the evening, then went down under a challenge from visitors skipper Craig Liddle after Emmerson Boyce's low ball into the box.

Nicholls buried the resulting penalty in emphatic style, belting the ball into Collett's top right-hand corner on 73 minutes.

Valois' latest breathtaking strike was next on 83 minutes. The 27-year-old winger cut in from the left flank before unleashing an unstoppable 25-yard thunderbolt with his right foot – supposedly his weakest – that crashed into Collett's bottom corner.

It was the former Lille ace's third goal in four games for the Hatters and few players in the history of the English game can have claimed three better strikes as their first in this country.

Darlington wasted an 88th-minute opportunity to reduce the arrears when Barry Conlon's spot-kick was saved excellently by Emberson low to his right after Nicholls had been mysteriously penalised.

And Valois was only prevented from adding another memorable goal to his impressive collection by a desperate challenge from Simon Betts, who clumsily chopped down the Frenchman after a 60-yard dribble into the heart of the Darlington penalty box.

Nicholls had been substituted so Spring assumed spot-kick duties, but his low drive down the middle of the goal was kept out by Collett's feet.

Kinnear later added that he felt Valois should have taken the penalty, considering his part in the award.

## match facts

### LUTON TOWN 5 DARLINGTON 2

● **HATTERS:** Carl Emberson, Emmerson Boyce, Russell Perrett, Chris Coyne, Matthew Taylor, Lee Mansell (Ian Hillier, 86), Matthew Spring, Kevin Nicholls (Adrian Forbes, 89), Jean-Louis Valois, Dean Crowe, Steve Howard. Subs not used: Mark Ovendale, Andrew Fotiadis, Richard Dryden.  
● **DARLINGTON:** Andrew Collett, Simon Betts, Alex Jeannin, Craig Liddle, Paul Heckingbottom, Neil Wainwright, Brian Atkinson,

Richard Hodgson (Kirk Jackson, 78), Barry Conlon, Danny Mellanby. Subs not used: Mark Convery, Steven Harper, Gary Pearson, Frank van der Geest.

● **Shots on target:** Luton 12 Darlington 5.  
● **Off target:** Luton 2 Darlington 2.  
● **Corners:** Luton 3 Darlington 3.  
● **Referee:** John Brandwood.  
● **Top Hatter:** Jean-Louis Valois – another magical display.



CROWE LETS FLY: Dean Crowe scores Luton's third goal.