

Coyne shows Hatters worth

Hartlepool United 1
Luton Town 2

CHRIS Coyne was the star man as a heroic defensive display from a patched up team gave the Hatters' promotion push a welcome boost.

They had to survive for over half an hour with ten men after Ian Hillier was sent off, having commanded the game to that point.

Dean Crowe and Matthew Taylor sent them into the break with a two goal lead after a first half in which the Town played almost all of the quality football – this against one of the form sides in the division, boasting a splendid home record.

With Friday's signing David Bayliss thrown in with hardly an introduction to his fellow defenders, the former Sheffield Wednesday striker Richie Humphreys almost took early advantage by slipping between the

new boy and Chris Coyne only to fire over.

Luton have obviously been working in training on Hillier's long throws and Taylor headed a good chance narrowly over when Steve Howard flicked on a header.

Referee Tony Leake was proving somewhat eccentric, controversially booking five Town players in the first 45 minutes – in most cases for minor offences. Howard, Hillier and Bayliss were the most glaring examples.

He did, however, allow the first goal to stand despite Anthony Williams in the United goal claiming that he had been impeded.

The move was started by Ahmet Brkovic, who chased an unlikely ball before crossing through a pack of players on the half hour.

The goalkeeper dropped the ball and Crowe was quick to drive it into the roof of the net. On the stroke of half time, Taylor struck a killer goal for the Hatters.

Mathew Spring collected the ball from Crowe to put in a splendid centre into the zone of uncertainty between defenders and goalkeeper. Taylor was the only player to react, finding himself all alone to slide in for an easy score.

The Hatters were cruising through the second period without creating too much when Hillier was sent off for a mistimed tackle on right winger Darryl Clarke on 58 minutes.

With United players and crowd encouraged, the match completely changed character and six minutes later Clarke made the visitors pay.

He cut inside Taylor to fire in a shot that Mark Ovendale could only parry to Humphreys who converted the rebound from close range.

Coyne, Bayliss and company were then subjected to a severe examination, having to face wave after wave of home attacks.

Ovendale produced three blinding saves on his return to the side, and the Town passed the test with flying colours to hold on to a victory that could prove so important in their quest for promotion.

Luton Town: Ovendale, Boyce, Bayliss, Coyne, Hillier, Brkovic, Spring, Nicholls, Taylor, Howard, Crowe (Forbes 80),
Subs not used: Emberson, Douglas, Fraser, Holmes.
Attendance 3,585
Luton Man of the Match: Chris Coyne

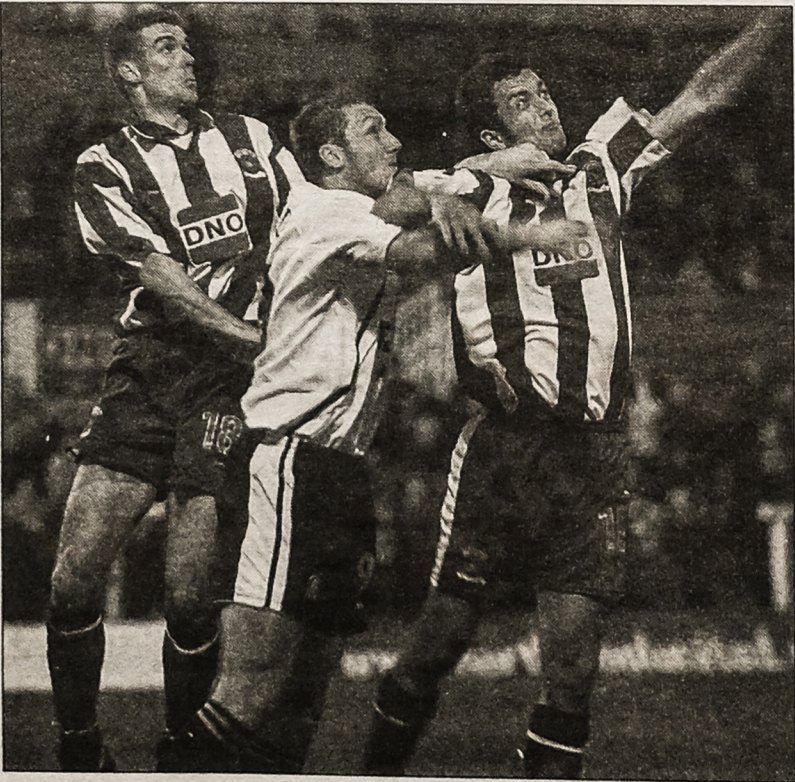


■ Joy: Dean Crowe nets the first goal for the Hatters



■ Woe: Ian Hillier heads for the dressing room after being sent off at Hartlepool

NATIONWIDE DIVISION 3									
Hartlepool	1	Luton		2					
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts		
Plymouth	21	13	6	2	31	11	45		
Mansfield	21	12	5	4	35	22	41		
Hull	21	11	7	3	36	20	40		
Luton	21	12	3	6	42	28	39		
Rochdale	21	11	6	4	32	21	39		
Shrewsbury	21	10	4	7	31	24	34		
Scunthorpe	21	8	8	5	36	23	32		
Rushden	21	7	9	5	23	20	30		
Kidd'minster	20	8	5	7	19	18	29		
Cheltenham	21	7	8	6	30	30	29		
Darlington	21	8	5	8	27	30	29		
Hartlepool	22	8	4	10	26	20	28		
Leyton Orient	21	7	6	8	28	31	27		
Exeter	21	7	6	8	23	34	27		
Lincoln	21	5	9	7	22	23	24		
Southend	21	7	3	11	23	26	24		
Swansea	21	6	5	10	26	34	23		
Oxford	21	5	7	9	20	25	22		
Macclesfield	21	5	7	9	19	28	22		
York	21	6	4	11	25	37	22		
Bristol Rov	21	5	6	10	15	25	21		
Torquay	21	6	3	12	16	31	21		
Carlisle	21	4	7	10	18	27	19		
Halifax	21	4	7	10	15	30	19		



■ Sandwiched: Steve Howard finds himself outnumbered