



■ MIXED EMOTIONS – Matt Taylor celebrates Dean Crowe's first-half goal for Luton in front of the Diamonds fans at Kenilworth Road



■ IT'S BEHIND YOU – Andrew Sambrook is beaten by Jean-Louis Valois

Telegraph Match stats

Luton 1 Diamonds 0

Kenilworth Road

Division Three

Attendance: 7,495

RUSHDEN & DIAMONDS:		RATING
Billy Turley	<i>No chance with goal and barely troubled all day</i>	7
Andrew Sambrook	<i>Tried to push forward in second half</i>	7
Mark Peters	<i>Vital interceptions and clearances</i>	7
Barry Hunter	<i>Relished aerial contest with Howard</i>	7
PAUL UNDERWOOD	<i>Never gave up in search of equaliser</i>	8
Paul Hall	<i>Plenty of possession but poor delivery</i>	6
Ritchie Hanlon	<i>Typical energetic display; unlucky to be booked (sub Michael McElhatton 83 mins)</i>	7
Garry Butterworth	<i>Battled away and should have scored near the end</i>	7
Andy Burgess	<i>Couple of second-half shots against his former club</i>	6
Duane Darby	<i>Struggled to get involved on his return (sub Scott Partridge 57 mins)</i>	6
Onandi Lowe	<i>Sparked life into attack after traumatic week</i>	7
Subs (not used)	<i>Pennock, Setchell, Brady</i>	6
LUTON		
Ovendale, Boyce, Bayliss, Coyne (sub Perrett 9 mins), Taylor, Brkovic, Spring (sub Holmes ht), Nicholls, Valois (sub Hillier 75 mins), Howard, Crowe. Subs (not used) Emberson, Forbes.		
GOAL: Crowe (29 mins, 1-0).		

None

Howard, Brkovic
(both fouls)

Hanlon, Boyce, Ovendale (all unsporting behaviour)

REFEREE Paul Danson 4

Maintained his reputation; thought he was star of the show

The facts

	Luton	Diamonds
Attempts on target	3	6
Attempts off target	5	7
Corners	4	5
Fouls	19	21
Offsides	5	6

The verdict

Diamonds deserved a point despite failing to create too many goal-scoring opportunities. Once again they more than matched one of the promotion favourites and couldn't finish them off. Encouraging signs for the second half of the season.

MATCH RATING: ★★

Diamonds find 13 an unlucky omen

Luton Town...1 Diamonds...0

by Mark Lea

FOR the second time in 13 months Rushden & Diamonds could count themselves unfortunate to lose by a single strike at Kenilworth Road.

Despite failing to create as many chances as they wasted in last season's FA Cup defeat, Brian Talbot's team still deserved at least a draw in the local derby with Luton Town on Saturday.

But they were beaten by top scorer Dean Crowe's eighth goal of the season as the Hatters climbed into second spot in Nationwide League Division Three – leaving Diamonds just outside the promotion play-off places.

Around 1,200 away fans made the short trip south on a freezing afternoon and their efforts were rewarded with a battling display that should have earned a point.

However, just like the previous week's cup defeat at Brighton & Hove Albion, they didn't do enough in the final third of the pitch to trouble the home defence or test keeper Mark Ovendale.

Ritchie Hanlon's 25-yard drive brought an early save then Garry Butterworth and Onandi Lowe both headed wide before a long-range effort from Jean-Louis Valois flashed wide of the Diamonds goal.

Luton's first attempt on target broke the deadlock on 29 minutes.

Former Northampton Town striker Steve Howard's cross was turned onto the post by Diamonds skipper Paul Underwood and Crowe pounced on the rebound by finding the bottom corner of the net.

Howard and substitute Russell Perrett nodded off target early in the second half. But striker Scott Partridge's introduction lifted Diamonds in search of an equaliser.

He had a couple of shots saved by Ovendale and winger Andy Burgess also went close twice on his return to the club which released him.

The best chance fell to Garry Butterworth with ten minutes left. He burst from midfield into the penalty box from Paul Hall's pass, only to miss the target.

Michael McElhatton made a welcome return to league action following a lengthy injury lay-off but, even though keeper Billy Turley went forward for an injury-time corner, Diamonds went home empty-handed.



■ HOLDING ONTO THE BALL – former Cobblers striker Steve Howard keeps possession from Diamonds defender Barry Hunter

Pictures by Paul Redding