

Big match facts and figures...

● **HATTERS:** Mark Ovendale, Emmerson Boyce, David Bayliss, Russell Perrett, Matthew Taylor, Ahmet Brkovic (Adrian Forbes, 53), Kevin Nicholls, Matthew Spring, Jean-Louis Valois, Dean Crowe (Marvin Johnson, 67), Steve Howard. Subs not used: Carl Emberson, Aaron Skelton, Paul Hughes.

● **CARLISLE:** Peter Keen, Mark Birch (Tony Hopper, 56), Peter Murphy, Lee Andrews, Mark Winstanley, Dave Rogers, Stuart Whitehead, Stuart Green, Steve Soley, Richie Foran, Ian Stevens (Steve Halliday, 71). Subs not used: Craig McAughtrie, Adam Thwaites, Michael Dickinson.

● **Shots on target:** Luton 6 Carlisle 4.

● **Shots off target:** Luton 14 Carlisle 3.

● **Corners:** Luton 9 Carlisle 3.

● **Referee:** Paul Alcock (Kent)

● **Attendance:** 6,647.

● **Star man:** Matthew Spring – poor second-half miss but the Hatters midfielder displayed quality, creativity and vision when in possession.



THE EQUALISER: Russell Perrett levels the scores with his third goal of the season against Carlisle on Saturday.

Picture: JANE SHERLOCK

Irish luck costs Hatters

DUBLIN-BORN Joe Kinnear cursed the "luck of the Irish" after his side drew 1-1 against Carlisle United despite hitting the woodwork three times.

Matthew Spring, Dean Crowe and Adrian Forbes all rattled the Carlisle crossbar during Saturday's match as Kinnear's charismatic compatriot Roddy Collins celebrated a fortunate point at Kenilworth Road.

Collins, who took over at Brunton Park in the summer after leaving Eirecom League double-winners Bohemians, even sensed a third victory in seven days when Steve Soley headed his improving side in front on 52 minutes.

But Russell Perrett headed his third goal of the season midway through the second-half and Carlisle then survived a determined onslaught by a Hatters side searching for the three points that would have sent them back to the top of the table for the first time since October.

A frustrated Kinnear said afterwards: "We hit the woodwork three times and missed from six yards three times. They had so much luck in and around the penalty box.

"They must have thought they had won the pools when they scored because they did not have a chance before then. We enjoyed enough possession to win two or three matches but they had the luck of the Irish."

The Hatters were certainly unfortunate not to take the lead in the first half-hour against a cautious Carlisle team.

A bright start saw Spring release Emmerson Boyce expertly down the right and then race into the penalty box to head the full-back's cross wide after just five minutes.

Boyce went close himself on 17 minutes, cutting in from the right flank before unleashing a fierce left-

Joe's view

If we had scored in the first 20 minutes when we destroyed them it would have been game, set and match. I'm not happy with the goals we are conceding because most are our own making but we showed our never-say-die attitude to come back. They came to bore us to death and got away with it. Valois must have put 30 crosses in but they were not his normal quality and Steve Howard was not getting on the end of them.



footed drive that whistled over Peter Keen's crossbar.

Top scorer Crowe then collected the ball near the corner flag before dribbling his way past three defenders into the penalty box and was only denied a fantastic goal when his shot clipped the top of the bar.

Croatian Ahmet Brkovic was next to go close on 28 minutes, curling a free-kick narrowly wide despite the presence of set-piece experts Spring, Jean-Louis Valois and Matthew Taylor.

Spring turned away to celebrate a goal seconds later when he crashed his shot against the underside of the crossbar after Valois' corner had caused panic in the visitors defence but, sadly for the Hatters midfielder, the referee's assistants were from Kent and Essex rather than Russia and play continued.

Carlisle had rarely ventured into the Hatters half during a one-sided

start to the game but, on 36 minutes, were only denied a goal from their first attack by a strange offside decision.

Peter Murphy intercepted an inadvisable throw-out by Mark Ovendale to Taylor and the Carlisle full-back's cross found Richie Foran.

The Irish striker's shot was then blocked by Hatters centre-back David Bayliss but Soley seized on the loose ball and drilled a low shot into the net, only for the referee's assistant to raise his flag.

Premiership referee Paul Alcock, who was once famously shoved to the ground by Paulo di Canio, seemed at pains to prove he was no pushover and disdainfully dismissed the visitors protests, as well as administering touchline tick-offs to both managers during the first-half.

Carlisle enjoyed their best period of the match in 10-minute spells either side of half-time with Ian Stevens testing Ovendale at his near post on 43 minutes and Foran going close to capitalising on a goalkeeping error straight from the restart.

Ovendale escaped punishment after handling and spilling a Bayliss back-pass with Foran unable to gain possession before the relieved Hatters keeper safely gathered.

Stuart Green saw Ovendale make a more convincing attempt at saving his fiercely-struck free-kick on 50 minutes, but Spring should have opened the scoring seconds later when he shot wide from six yards with only an exposed Keen to beat.

Soley compounded Spring's wastefulness and profited from hesitant defending by Taylor two minutes later, heading in from two yards after the Hatters left-back had failed to clear Murphy's corner.

A spell of desperate shooting then followed with Valois, Spring and Taylor all hitting wayward efforts as

the spirited Hatters almost tried too hard to find a way back into a game they had been dominating.

But Kevin Nicholls went closer with a low drive on 66 minutes and the Hatters did equalise with the next move of the match.

Carlisle struggled to deal with Taylor's free-kick from the left and Perrett powered in at the far post to find the net after fellow centre-back Bayliss had headed across goal.

Having got back on level terms, the Hatters then searched for a winning goal just as they had done at Cheltenham seven days earlier.

At 33, Marvin Johnson might have left it a little late to carve out a career as an attacking full-back but his rampaging runs down the wing and dangerous crosses helped force back the visitors after the second-half replacement of Crowe.

Keen saved Forbes' diving header on 74 minutes and then produced a better stop to push Valois' low shot around the post after the Frenchman had skillfully sidestepped a Carlisle challenge to create space in the penalty box.

Substitute Forbes did beat Keen on 81 minutes, but his header from Valois' corner crashed against the crossbar and victory eluded the Hatters.

Kinnear expressed his disappointment at the final whistle, but his side are now unbeaten in eight matches and have not lost since November.

Fotiadis sent off in Wootton cup defeat

ANDREW FOTIADIS was sent off at Wootton Blue Cross on Monday night as the Hatters crashed out of the Beds Premier Cup.

The 24-year-old striker was red-carded for a late challenge as a Luton side including four players with first-team experience

lost 2-1 to Wootton, who are coached by former Hatters boss Lil Fuccillo.

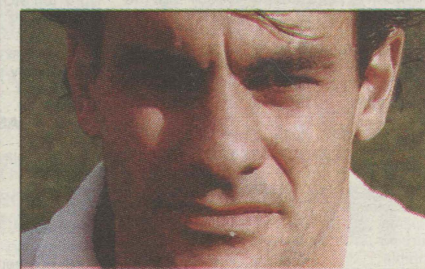
Fotiadis had earlier set up striking partner Peter Thomson for a seventh-minute goal.

But a Michael Jarrett brace saw United Counties League outfit Wootton into

the semi-finals. Fuccillo, 45, has turned out for Wootton this season but did not play on Monday.

● Hatters juniors won 4-1 at Notts County on Saturday thanks to goals from Marcus Jeffrey, Chris Dillon, James Osborn and Curtis Davies.

playerwatch



JEAN-LOUIS VALOIS

THIS week the spotlight falls on French wing wizard Jean-Louis Valois...

- **Shots on target:** 1
- **Shots off target:** 4
- **Blocked shots:** 3
- **Passes to own player:** 21
- **Passes to opposition:** 6
- **Crosses to own player:** 4
- **Crosses to opposition:** 16
- **Pass completion rate:** 53.2 per cent
- **Dribbles ball retained:** 12
- **Dribbles ball lost:** 7
- **Dribbles completion rate:** 63.2 per cent
- **Headers:** 5
- **Clearances, blocks and interceptions:** 8
- **Tackles:** 3
- **Fouls committed:** 0
- **Fouls won:** 2
- **FINAL VERDICT:** Valois (pictured above) delivered a healthy 20 crosses but his team-mates largely failed to capitalise on his supply. His crowd-pleasing style of play is illustrated by the 12 times he went past players on successful dribbles.