

Hatters stun bitter rivals

LUTON Town pulled off a shock Worthington Cup first round giant killing act at arch rivals Watford in a match

marred by scenes of violence which delayed the kick-off by 15 minutes.

Matthew Spring and Steve Howard scored stunning first half goals, and the Hatters held on for a hard fought victory in more than one sense despite Dominic Foley's late strike.

It had been four years since the sides last met, but this encounter eventually began 15 minutes late after dozens of rival fans fought a running battle on the Vicarage Road pitch.

Watford were forced to cancel a minute's silence to commemorate the victims of the September 11 tragedy, and one injured fan was stretchered away after receiving treatment to a head wound.

Violence erupted when a group of travelling Luton fans jumped the advertising hoardings behind their goal and ran unopposed onto the pitch.

Stewards were powerless to prevent Watford fans from the other end running the length of the pitch to do battle, and even the corner flag was brandished as a weapon.

When play finally got under way, police in riot gear formed a protective wall behind each goal, where both sets of supporters stood to a man to hurl abuse at each other during the opening exchanges.

Watford were well on top against their Second Division opponents, but failed to convert early possession into chances.

And Spring punished their wastefulness to stun the home fans with a superb opener in the 31st



Watford 1

Luton 2

minute.

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He emerged from a crunching tackle won by Howard from Sean Dyche on

the halfway line and burst forward unopposed before unleashing a stunning 25 yard bullet into the top corner.

And he added insult to injury 10 minutes later, turning provider for Howard, who struck an equally vicious first-time shot past helpless former Hatter Alec Chamberlain.

Luton defender Russell Perrett could have put the game beyond doubt from a corner after the restart, but put his close range header over the crossbar.

Watford substitute Anthony McNamee almost got his side back in the contest on 63 minutes, threading a delightful through ball to Foley.

But Luton goalkeeper Carl Emberson, recalled because Charlton blocked loan signing Ben Roberts from playing, saved with his legs.

Watford were growing in confidence and grabbed a lifeline when Foley scored his second goal in two games after 74 minutes from a Micah Hyde cross.

And Chamberlain kept them in it with a stunning point blank save from Howard with minutes remaining as Luton reminded of their danger on the break.

But the visitors held on with some heroic defending to preserve a remarkable record — they have not lost at Vicarage Road since 1987 — and shatter their rivals' unbeaten home start to the season into the bargain.