

WE DID IT

WATFORD 1 LUTON TOWN 2

DAVE FLETT reports from
Vicarage Road

LUTON Town fans will still be celebrating this morning after a memorable Worthington Cup victory over old rivals Watford at Vicarage Road.

A magnificent strike by Matthew Spring and Steve Howard's fourth goal of the season secured Hatters' passage into the second round at the expense of their First Division neighbours.

Carl Emberson returned to the Luton line-up after Charlton manager Alan Curbishley refused permission for on-loan keeper Ben Roberts to play in the competition.

Out-of-favour striker Tony Thorpe was not among the visitors' substitutes, but Carl Griffiths and Andrew Fotiadis did make the bench.

Watford included ex-Hatters Alec Chamberlain and Sean Cox in their side.

The start was delayed for 15 minutes after ugly scenes on the pitch. Some 40 Luton fans spilled on to the playing surface to taunt home supporters.

Watford fans then ran up the pitch from the opposite stand to confront the visitors.

The game started amid a hostile atmosphere and Paul Hughes, Sol Davis and Howard all responded with aggressive challenges early on.

Luton had the first chance of the evening when an excellent tackle by skipper Kevin Nicholls

match facts

WATFORD: Alec Chamberlain, Neal Ardley, Paul Robinson, Neil Cox, Sean Dyché, Micah Hyde, Tommy Smith, Stephen Glass (sub 53 mins, Anthony McNamee), Lloyd Doyley, Dominic Foley, Jamie Hand (sub 65 mins, Jason Norville). Other subs: Paolo Vernazza, Jerel Iffil, Richard Lee.

LUTON TOWN: Carl Emberson, Emmerson Boyce, Russell Perrett, David Bayliss, Sol Davis, Ahmet Brkovic (sub 72 mins, Steve Robinson), Kevin Nicholls, Matthew Spring, Paul Hughes (81 mins, Alan Neilson), Steve Howard, Dean Crowe. Other subs: Carl Griffiths, Chris Coyne, Andrew Fotiadis.

REF: Peter Walton (Northants).

ATTENDANCE: 14,171.

TOP HATTER: Matthew Spring.

olls on Micah Hyde set up a chance for Howard that the 6ft 3in striker dragged disappointingly wide.

The home side's first attempt saw Stephen Glass strike a curling free-kick straight into the Hatters' defensive wall on 17 minutes.

Watford's Paul Robinson was the first player in referee Peter Walton's notebook for a crude, late challenge on Emmerson Boyce. Nicholls was then fortunate to escape a caution for a blatant trip on Hyde.

Jamie Hand's long-range shot bounced wide of Emberson's goal on 29 minutes, but it was the Hatters who went in front moments later with a fantastic strike by Spring.

The Hatters' midfielder col-

lected the ball from Howard's pass on 31 minutes and strode forward before unleashing a 35-yard thunderbolt beyond the despairing dive of Chamberlain and into the top corner.

Luton doubled the lead on 41 minutes with Spring this time the architect, threading through a perfect pass to release Howard, who shot low and firm past Chamberlain.

Ahmet Brkovic sent an ambitious, long-range effort sailing into the visitors' end just 15 seconds after the interval and Howard then saw a goalbound shot deflected wide on 49 minutes.

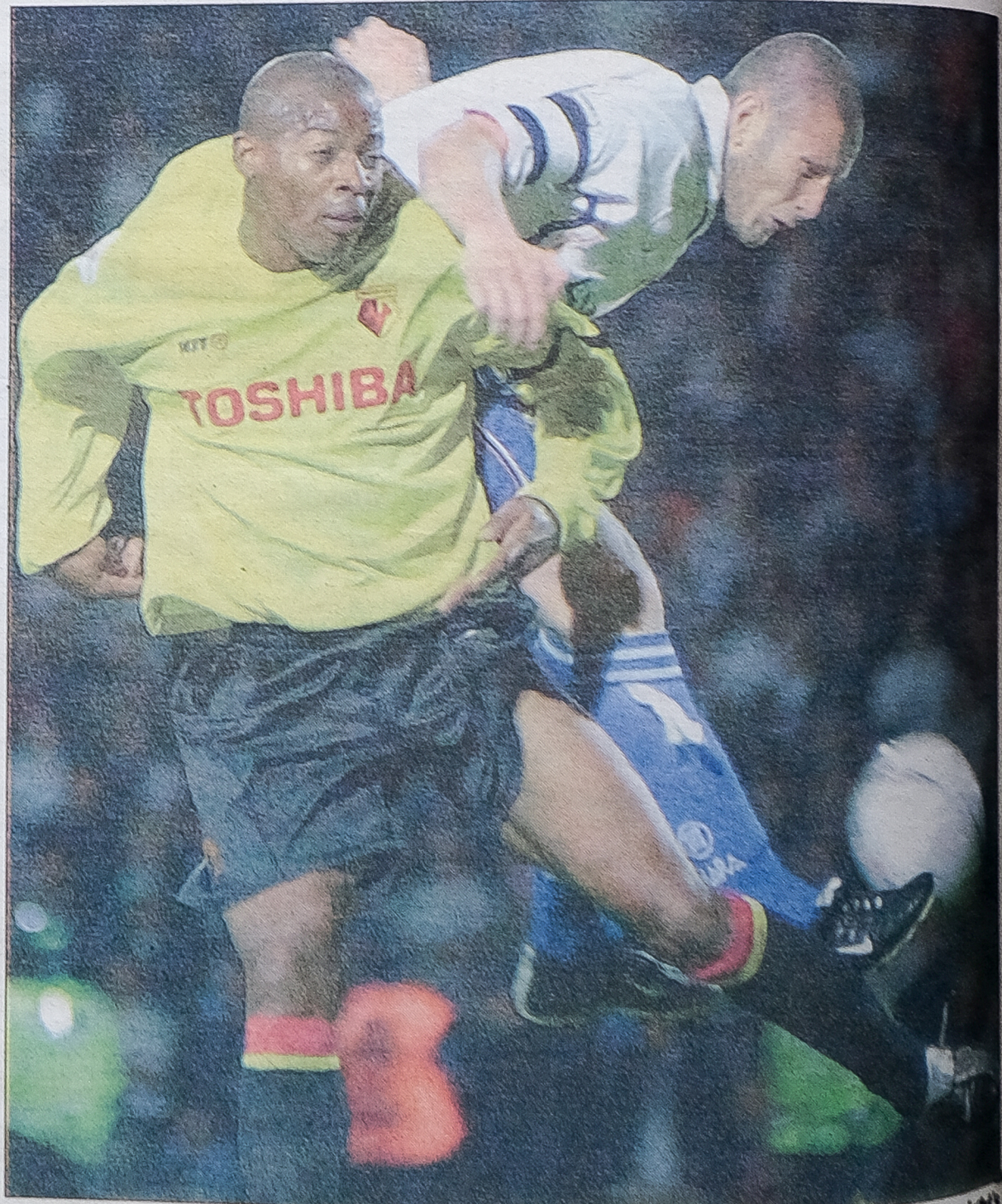
A frustrated Dyché, losing his aerial battle against Howard, only received a lecture from referee Walton after flattening the Hatters' striker on 51 minutes and was even luckier to escape punishment soon afterwards when he elbowed the robust target man.

Russell Perrett should have netted a third goal for the Hatters on 53 minutes, but headed over from six yards after rising unchallenged to meet Davis' corner.

Emberson then protected his side's two-goal cushion by racing off his line to block Dominic Foley's shot after a pass by lively Hornets' substitute Anthony McNamee.

But Watford did pull a goal back on 75 minutes when Hyde shrugged off a challenge by Spring before delivering an accurate cross into the box where Foley leaped high to head into Emberson's bottom corner.

The Hatters survived a nervous last five minutes of Watford pressure but Howard almost grabbed a third.



ACTION MAN: Skipper Kevin Nicholls in the thick of the action during last night's big Worthington Cup tie against Watford at Vicarage Road. Picture: GARETH OWEN