



AT LAST: Andrew Fotiadis ends his 13-month wait for a first-team goal against Swindon at Kenilworth Road. Picture: JANE SHERLOCK

Fotiadis back with a bang!

ENIGMATIC, frustrating, unlucky and fragile are just four adjectives used to label Andrew Fotiadis during six years as a professional footballer at Kenilworth Road.

All four words provide a fair assessment of a career that has had more false starts than a 100m sprinter.

But most observers add talented to the list of Fotiadis' many irritating attributes and that is why he has survived half-a-dozen years as a Hatters first-team striker despite averaging just two goals a year in that time.

The former England schoolboy international has spent more time in the treatment room than he has on the playing field for the Hatters but, on Saturday, he gave further indication that he might now be ready to fulfil his potential at the age of 25.

Making his first league start at Kenilworth Road since December 2000, Fotiadis looked set for another frustrating afternoon when three first-half chances were saved by Swindon keeper Bart Griemink.

Hatters boss Joe Kinnear held his head after each miss and, as Fotiadis

retreated into his shell towards the end of the half, another opportunity to stake a claim for a regular starting place appeared to be slipping away.

But the Hitchin-born striker, willed on by a home crowd desperate to see him do well, showed a nerve hitherto rarely seen at Kenilworth Road to grab his side's crucial second goal – and his first in 13 months – straight after half-time. The goal helped settle Fotiadis' and his side's anxieties and gave Kinnear's men an overdue reward for their dominance.

It was Steve Howard's turn to choose his favourite record as part of the pre-match entertainment on Saturday. Howard's selection was "Mack the Knife" by Frank Sinatra and the blue-eyed striker enjoyed a sharp start to the game before proving he is a cut above most Division Two strikers when it comes to the important business of putting the ball in the back of the net.

The 6ft 3in forward volleyed over from the edge of the area after just 20 seconds and then smacked another shot against the crossbar from the same distance after Fotiadis' lay-off on 12 minutes.

Russell Perrett also went close with an early header and Fotiadis had a firm shot from six yards saved by Griemink before Howard bagged his eighth goal of the season.

Cardiff's Rob Earnshaw and Oldham's Clyde Wijnhard are now the only Division Two strikers that have scored more league and cup goals than Howard.

The 26-year-old forward turned and shot powerfully into Griemink's bottom corner from 10 yards on 14 minutes after a cross from Paul Hughes, who again worked diligently as an out-of-position left-sided midfielder.

Fotiadis then fired straight at Griemink after being put clear on goal by Matthew Spring and, on 22 minutes, saw his point-blank header tipped over by the Swindon keeper.

His failure to take those chances, despite a skillful and lively start to the game, could have seen Fotiadis face serious retribution from Kinnear at half-time had Swindon converted their only opportunity of a one-sided first-half.

John Jackson skipped past ineffective challenges from Fotiadis, Sol Davis and Hughes down the right

flank before delivering a cross that Eric Sabin headed wastefully over.

Sabin was the visitors' most dangerous player and his potent mixture of pace and power posed a few problems for former team-mate Davis, but it was the Hatters who scored the game's crucial second goal.

Davis' overhead kick into the penalty box was headed down by Howard and Fotiadis spun to fire in the bottom corner from eight yards.

The subsequent shared emotions of joy and relief between Fotiadis, his team-mates and the Hatters fans were similar to those that greeted Manchester United's mis-firing striker Diego Forlan's first goal in English football. Chris Coyne stuck out a boot to turn Matty Heywood's low shot behind for a corner on 63 minutes before Steve Robinson sent a low shot inches wide at the other end after a through ball by Peter Holmes, who had replaced injured skipper Kevin Nicholls in the first-half.

Fotiadis sent an attempted lob into the hand of Griemink on 76 minutes and, moments later, was applauded off the pitch by an appreciative home crowd and manager Kinnear. Dean

Crowe replaced Fotiadis and, as he has done on previous occasions when dropped to the bench, provided an energetic cameo appearance.

The pacy striker was tripped by Andy Gurney on 86 minutes after cutting inside the Swindon captain and won his side a penalty.

Robinson assumed spot-kick duties in the absence of Nicholls and dispatched his effort confidently into Griemink's left-hand corner.

A fired-up Crowe then went close to grabbing his third goal of the season but Griemink stretched every sinew to keep out his attempted lob.

The result lifted Luton to 15th in the Division Two table and Kinnear's side has now lost just one of their last eight matches.

Swindon, meanwhile, managed by ex-Hatter Andy King, have now lost eight of their last nine games and look realistic relegation candidates.

King's side only mustered four shots against a Hatters defence superbly marshalled by a determined Perrett and the aerially dominant Coyne, with right-back Emmerson Boyce also enhancing his reputation as one of the club's cleanest tacklers.

Joe view



Andrew Fotiadis missed three magnificent chances and, if he's only six yards out, you expect him to score. The keeper should not have a chance and I was disappointed it was only 1-0 at half-time. But he took his goal remarkably well early in the second-half. He has got that in him. I've been hard and harsh on him but I've got to get it out of him. He was running forward with more purpose and was always a thorn in their side. He could easily have had a hat-trick and, if he wants to stay in the side, he's got to keep playing like that.

matchfacts

LUTON 3 SWINDON 0

●HATTERS: Carl Emberson, Emmer-son Boyce, Russell Perrett, Chris Coyne, Sol Davis, Steve Robinson, Kevin Nicholls (Peter Holmes, 36), Matthew Spring, Paul Hughes, Steve Howard, Andrew Fotiadis (Dean Crowe, 78). Subs not used: Alan Nelson, Ian Hillier, Ahmet Brkovic.
●SWINDON: Bart Griemink, Andy Gurney, Matthew Heywood, Adam Willis, David Duke, Steve Robinson (Gareth Edds, 58), Matthew Hewlett, John Jackson, Danny Invincible (Alan

Young, 79), Sam Parkin, Eric Sabin. Subs not used: Nathan Edwards, Alan Reeves, Craig Farr.

●Shots on target: Luton 9 Swindon 2.

●Off target: Luton 8 Swindon 2.

●Corners: Luton 5 Swindon 7.

●Referee: Phil Joslin (Nottingham).

●STAR MAN: Russell Perrett – a flawless performance at the heart of the Hatters defence. He attacked every ball and made several crunching tackles during a one-sided battle against the Swindon front-line.



GOOD AIR DAY: Coyne.

playerwatch

LUTON TOWN DEFENDER CHRIS COYNE...

●Time on pitch: 90 minutes
●Shots on target: 0
●Shots off target: 0
●Passes to own player: 5
●Passes to opposition: 4
●Crosses to own player: 0
●Crosses to opposition: 0
●Pass completion rate: 55.6 per cent
●Dribbles ball retained: 0
●Dribbles ball lost: 0

It's heads we win for Coyne

●Headers: 24
●Tackles: 7
●Clearances, blocks and interceptions: 6
●Free-kicks won: 2
●Free-kicks conceded: 0
●Offsides: 0
●Bookings: 0
●FINAL VERDICT: Chris Coyne was immaculate in the air for the Hatters against Swindon,

winning 24 headers during a dominant display. The Australian defender climbed brilliantly to clear the danger on several occasions and, in doing so, never once fouled a player. Coyne also made an important intervention to block one of Swindon's two shots on target and his tackle tally was respectable. His passing was unusually hit and miss.