



From zero to hero

THIRD TIME LUCKY: Some fans called for Andrew Fotiadis' substitution after he missed a second easy chance against Cheltenham. He's pictured left holding his head after that howler but he went on to net the winner and earn the congratulations of the fans and his team-mates. Pictures: JANE SHERLOCK



Kinnear raps 'doughnuts'

LUTON boss Joe Kinnear dismissed a section of his side's supporters as "doughnuts" for their criticism of eventual match-winner Andrew Fotiadis.

Kinnear, who has spoken harshly himself of Fotiadis in the past, objected to some fans calling for the 25-year-old striker to be substituted after he missed two tasty chances against Cheltenham on Saturday.

The Hatters manager stubbornly refused to grant the wishes of the supporters and his faith in Fotiadis was rewarded when the former England schoolboy international belatedly found the net on 70 minutes and secured a 2-1 win.

A delighted Kinnear threw his arms around Fotiadis at the final whistle and then rebuffed sections of the home crowd for their lack of "patience".

Kinnear, normally gushing in his praise for Hatters supporters, said: "The difference between supporters and myself is that a lot of fans are doughnuts."

"There were people screaming at me to get Andrew Fotiadis off but they can't remember that he scored last week."

Joe view



The difference between supporters and myself is that a lot of fans are doughnuts. People were screaming at me to get Andrew Fotiadis off but they can't remember that he scored last week. If I had listened to everyone in the stadium he'd not have been there to score the winner.

"Fans sometimes just see a result-orientated picture but sometimes you have to let the players get on with it."

"Foty is well aware that he could have had a hat-trick but if I had listened to everyone in the ground he would not have been there to score the third chance."

"Some people have got no patience. Sometimes you have to persevere with players."

"Tony Thorpe is struggling with a dodgy back so Foty's the quickest and the fittest striker we have got at the moment and is fighting with Dean Crowe for a position."

"Football's a funny game. Everybody in the stadium was chanting for me to get him off but I thought leave him alone and he will come up trumps."

"I can't remember a game when he has not missed chances and that's our biggest criticism of him."

"The other two that he missed were far more comfortable and easy opportunities but he took his goal exceptionally well."

"He can finish but he's not a clinical finisher and I wish he could improve on that."

Fotiadis scored for the third successive league game after Chris Coyne's second-half deflected long-range strike had cancelled out Russell Milton's early goal for bottom-of-the-table Cheltenham.

The Hitchin-born forward's effort also lifted Luton six places up the Division Two table into 10th spot.

Kinnear's side have now enjoyed four consecutive league victories after only winning one of their first nine

Division Two fixtures. Saturday's result was also achieved without sidelined players Russell Perrett, Kevin Nicholls, David Bayliss, Ian Hillier, Adrian Forbes and Carl Griffiths.

The unavailability of Perrett, Bayliss and Hillier saw utility man Alan Neilson drop back into the centre of defence from midfield, where he was replaced by Aaron Skelton, who completed his first league match since last November.

Skelton then played the second-half as Coyne's central-defensive partner after Neilson tore a hamstring to join the congested Hatters treatment room just 10 minutes after midfielder Paul Hughes had become physio Bruce Sewell Hobbs' latest patient, limping out of the action with a bruised shin.

Cheltenham went ahead on 12 minutes when Lee Williams was allowed to carry the ball across the edge of the home penalty box before teeing up Milton, who rifled a low shot across French keeper Cedric Berthelin and into the bottom corner from 15 yards.

The Hatters responded with a stinging 30-yard drive from Skelton that was pushed over the bar by visitors keeper Steve Book.

Fotiadis then squandered

his first simple chance of the afternoon when he broke the offside trap but lobbed over a fully-committed Book and the crossbar when rounding the keeper would have led to a certain goal.

Top scorer Steve Howard headed against the bar moments later after meeting Emmerson Boyce's right-wing cross.

Australian defender Coyne, who enjoyed another dominant display at the back for the Hatters, headed over from Matthew Spring's corner on 52 minutes before equalising shortly afterwards.

Substitute Peter Holmes over-ran the ball and gave away possession on the edge of the visitors penalty box but Coyne reacted swiftly to send a deflected shot into Book's bottom corner from 25 yards.

Holmes, who was an effective and tidy replacement for Hughes on the left side of midfield, then released Fotiadis for a clear run on goal.

What followed stunned home supporters and will face no competition in any compilation of missed chances this season.

The Hatters striker delayed his shot for an eternity, as if gripped by some form of debilitating inertia that prevented him from swinging his leg,

before eventually sending a weak effort straight at the grateful Book from five yards.

But it was a case of third time lucky for the relieved Fotiadis when he netted on 70 minutes.

Sprightly substitute Dean Crowe set up the chance by bursting into the penalty box and firing in a shot from an acute angle that Book could only parry.

Fotiadis then spun and fired the rebound into the bottom corner and, suddenly, his earlier misses while not forgotten were forgiven.

Cheltenham searched for an equaliser and managed their second shot on target when giant striker Julian Alsop beat Skelton in the air but his header was saved comfortably by Berthelin.

Sol Davis also survived a penalty appeal after a clumsy challenge.

Cheltenham finished the game with three strikers and could have levelled the score on 88 minutes but John Finnigan fired wide under pressure from Spring.

Crowe, once more impressive after climbing off the bench, almost grabbed his first goal since August in injury time but headed wide of a gaping goal after charging into the box to meet Howard's cross.

matchfacts

LUTON 2 CHELTENHAM 1

●HATTERS: Cedric Berthelin, Emmerson Boyce, Alan Neilson (Dean Crowe, 46), Chris Coyne, Sol Davis, Steve Robinson, Aaron Skelton, Matthew Spring, Paul Hughes (Peter Holmes, 35), Steve Howard, Andrew Fotiadis (Ahmet Brkovic, 85). Subs not used: Carl Emberson, Tony Thorpe.

●CHELTENHAM: Steve Book, Jamie Victory, (John Brough, 85), Neil Howarth, Michael Duff, Richard Walker, Russell Milton, Richard Forsyth, Lee Williams (Damian Spencer, 79), John

Finnigan, Tony Naylor (Paul Brayson, 62), Julian Alsop. Subs not used: Mark Yates, Shane Higgs.

●Shots on target: Luton 9 Cheltenham 2.

●Off target: Luton 10 Cheltenham 6.

●Corners: Luton 13 Cheltenham 3.

●Referee: C Penton.

●STAR MAN: Chris Coyne - finding his true form after a tricky start to the season.

Another dominant display at the back, which was capped by his second-half goal.



SPOTLIGHT: Berthelin.

playerwatch

LUTONTOWN KEEPER CEDRIC BERTHELIN...

- Time on pitch: 90 minutes
- Saves: 1
- Opposition on-target shots: 2
- Saves-to-shots ratio: 50 per cent
- Long kicks to own player: 18
- Long kicks to opposition: 8
- Long kick completion rate: 69 per cent
- Short kicks to own player: 1
- Short kicks to opposition: 0

Berthelin's easy home debut

- Short kick completion rate: 100 per cent
- Throws to own player: 5
- Throws to opposition: 0
- Throw completion rate: 100 per cent
- Crosses caught: 6
- Crosses punched: 1
- FINAL VERDICT: Cedric Berthelin has still not faced a serious test of his goalkeeping skills

since arriving on a free transfer at Kenilworth Road. The French keeper only faced two on-target shots against Cheltenham. He could do little to save Russell Milton's goal and his stop from Julian Alsop's header was routine. The length, reliability and accuracy of his kicking continues to impress but he was hesitant on occasions.