

Forgotten striker Thorpe seals win

02/03

A FIRST rate performance from an under-strength Hatters side left ex-Luton ace Iain Dowie a disappointed Oldham boss.

Luton's fifth straight league – and third away victory – was sealed by goals from Tony Thorpe and Andrew Fotiadis with his fourth in as many games.

Before the game, Oldham fans learned the club is on the brink of administration. Despite that they have made a flying high start to the season but a professional display from the Hatters clinched a workmanlike victory.

Russell Perrett passed a late fitness test to take his place in defence and there was a recall for Peter Holmes in midfield, while forgotten striker Tony Thorpe was back in the squad.

He started on the bench with Dean Crowe taking the place of suspended top scorer Steve Howard.

Injury-plagued Hatters got off to the worst possible start. Early pressure from the Latics resulted in Luton conceding a goal on four minutes.

The Hatters defence backed off right winger Dean Holden's run, tempting him to shoot just inside the box. His effort beat Cedric Berthelin and nestled into the far corner.

Manager Joe Kinnear was forced into a substitution on nine minutes. A minute earlier Crowe appeared to fall awkwardly and came off for Thorpe, playing his first game since August's home defeat to Barnsley.

With 15 minutes gone, a cross-cum-shot from Holmes on the left was Luton's best effort.

There had been some good play, but so often they were let down by a poor final ball.

Just after the half hour mark, Fotiadis popped up with the equaliser. Aaron Skelton had to be brave to win a 50-50 header and played a one-two with Thorpe. A precision through-ball gave Fotiadis a one-on-one with Leslie Pogliacomini and he slotted home in some style.

Luton began to play with more panache and had a good chance when Matthew Spring's deflected 30-yard free kick produced a competent save from Pogliacomini.

With no target man in the style of Howard, Luton were forced to attack through the middle of the park and on 40 minutes only a last-ditch block from Oldham skipper Lee Duxbury denied Spring a shooting chance form ten yards out.

After finishing the 45 minutes strongly, Luton were put on the back foot in the second half by a resurgent Oldham.



But Berthelin, who had his best performance in a Luton jersey, dealt with every high ball and cross into his area.

Then on the hour Thorpe put Luton ahead from a Spring corner. The deep cross found Chris Coyne at the back post, whose downward header set up Thorpe, unmarked on the penalty spot, and he gleefully volleyed in for his second of the season.

The next 20 minutes were frantic but without either side managing a shot on goal.

Perrett and substitute Ahmet Brkovic picked up yellow cards as every ball was fiercely contested.

Only a 15-yard volley from striker David Eyres on 80 minutes threatened Berthelin's goal but the Frenchman was equal to the task.

Resolute defending and a tenacious midfield ensured the Hatters held the Latics at bay, leaving the visitors with all three points.

The result gave the travelling Hatters fans premature dreams of promotion as the team moved into tenth spot, nine points behind leaders Wigan, who visit Kenilworth Road next Saturday.

Kinnear was particularly pleased with the win considering the unavailability of so many players.

"This was a well thought out victory. The boys who have come in have done exceptionally well," said the Hatters boss.

"We have seven long term injuries so I will be looking to bring in a loan player in the week.

"I am very pleased for my strikers – that is four in four for Fotiadis, who took his goal really well. And I was happy for Thorpe as the goal will do wonders for his confidence.

"We always looked dangerous on the counter-attack but with a better killer-ball we could have scored more."

■ Hatters step out in style: Steve Robinson (above) tussles for the ball and (below) Tony Thorpe turns to celebrate his winning goal with Andrew Fotiadis



MATCH FACTS



LUTON TOWN (4-4-2): Berthelin; Boyce, Perrett, Coyne, Davis; Robinson, Skelton (Brkovic 60), Spring, Holmes (Hillier 90); Fotiadis, Crowe (Thorpe 9m)
Subs (not used): Emberson, Kimble

Referee: Mr C Boyeson

GOALSCORERS

Luton: Fotiadis (33), Thorpe (60)
Oldham: Holden (4)

GOAL ATTEMPTS

Luton: 6
Oldham: 4

CORNERS

Luton: 5
Oldham: 1

BOOKINGS

Luton: Fotiadis, Brkovic, Perrett
Oldham: Eyre

ATTENDANCE: 6,916

HATTERS' STAR MAN:

MATTHEW SPRING
Outstanding midfield display

Nationwide Div Two results

Blackpool	1	Cardiff	0
Brentford	1	Port Vale	1
Bristol City	2	Swindon	0
Cheltenham	1	QPR	1
Crewe	0	Plymouth	1
Mansfield	0	Huddersfield	2
Notts County	2	Northampton	1
Oldham	1	LUTON	2
Tranmere	1	Barnsley	0
Wigan	2	Stockport	1
Wycombe	3	Peterborough	2

How they stand

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Wigan	14	9	3	2	26	11	30
Cardiff	14	8	4	2	20	12	28
Bristol City	14	9	0	5	27	14	27
Oldham	14	8	3	3	22	9	27
QPR	14	8	3	3	26	14	27
Crewe	14	7	4	3	21	10	25
Blackpool	14	7	3	4	20	13	24
Chesterfield	14	7	2	5	15	17	23
Brentford	14	6	4	4	16	17	22
Luton	14	6	3	5	25	22	21
Plymouth	14	5	4	5	19	20	19
Tranmere	14	6	1	7	14	22	19
Wycombe	14	5	3	6	19	21	18
Port Vale	14	5	3	6	19	23	18
Stockport	14	5	2	7	16	17	17
Northampton	14	4	4	6	13	18	16
Huddersfield	14	4	4	6	12	17	16
Notts County	14	3	6	5	19	21	15
Colchester	14	4	3	7	10	16	15
Barnsley	14	4	3	7	14	23	15
Peterborough	14	3	4	7	17	18	13
Swindon	14	3	2	9	13	22	11
Mansfield	14	3	2	9	19	37	11
Cheltenham	14	2	4	8	14	22	10