



DOUBLE DELIGHT: Hatters strikers Andrew Fotiadis and Tony Thorpe filled the void left by suspended top scorer Steve Howard at Oldham on Saturday. Fotiadis is pictured far left firing in the Hatters equaliser - his fourth league goal in as many games. Thorpe later grabbed the winner and is pictured fighting for possession with home defender Chris Armstrong.

PICTURES: GARETH OWEN

Five in a row for Hatters

JOE KINNEAR watched Luton win their fifth successive league game at high-flying Oldham but admitted afterwards that he is struggling to comprehend his depleted side's great form.

Hatters boss Kinnear travelled to Boundary Park without top scorer Steve Howard, captain Kevin Nicholls and, arguably, his two first-choice wide players in Adrian Forbes and Paul Hughes.

The continued absence of Carl Griffiths, David Bayliss and Alan Neilson also left Kinnear with few squad selection headaches on Saturday.

In fact, Luton's 16 men on duty at Oldham were, bar Lee Mansell, Mark Ovendale and Marvin Johnson, the only members of the Kenilworth Road playing staff left fit or available for selection.

Ovendale, who has only just resumed reserve action after a summer hip operation, was obviously not required with Cedric Berthelin and Carl Emberson making Saturday's trip.

Former club captain Johnson has not played a competitive match all season and will only be used in an emergency

Joe view



We were always a threat on the counter attack and if our final ball had been better we could have scored more. We did not always find the killer pass but we created things going forward and worked hard to get a result against the division's form team.

as he moves towards retirement and a career in coaching which leaves Mansell, whose failure to make the bench at Oldham marks how far he has fallen from favour in the last 12 months.

The Hatters were also dealt a further blow just nine minutes into Saturday's game

when Dean Crowe, replacing the suspended Howard, limped off with a hamstring injury.

But the visitors still proved too strong for an Oldham side that had won eight and drawn one of their last nine games with Andrew Fotiadis scoring for the fourth successive league match and Tony Thorpe, who replaced Crowe, grabbing the winning goal in a 2-1 victory.

An elated Kinnear said afterwards: "It was a well-fought victory and the boys that came in and took the places of the seven regulars that were missing did their jobs. I was delighted because we were playing the form team in the league and it's nice to come away with maximum points.

"We've got a list of injuries as long as my arm. We got two new ones last week and we lost Dean Crowe today with a torn hamstring.

"How we are getting results I do not know."

Oldham also had seven players unavailable and, no doubt, missed the talismanic presence of injured top scorer Clyde Wijnhard.

Saturday's display certainly suggested that Oldham, without Wijnhard, would not be serious promotion contenders

while the goalscoring performances of Fotiadis and Thorpe highlighted the competition for forward places at Kenilworth Road and proved the side can still be a force without Howard.

Oldham managed just one more shot on target after Dean Holden's fourth-minute goal with neither striker - Chris Killen or Carlo Corazzin - troubling Hatters keeper Berthelin.

Whether Wijnhard would have fared better against the Hatters' twin towers of strength Russell Perrett and Chris Coyne is debatable.

Both were in uncompromising and imperious form with Perrett playing through the pain barrier to ignore his groin injury, at the request of Kinnear, and partner Coyne at the centre of the Hatters defence.

Aaron Skelton is one of the players to emerge from the Kenilworth Road wilderness because of injuries and his 25-yard drive whistled over the crossbar in the first minute.

But the Hatters defence was breached moments later when Tony Carss fed overlapping right wing-back Holden, who had charged unnoticed and unmarked into the visitors penalty box.

Holden then fired a low shot across Berthelin and in off a post. A cross-cum-shot by Peter Holmes, at the other end almost caught out home keeper Leslie Pogliacomini before sailing over on 14 minutes.

Killen's shot on the turn then went narrowly wide of Berthelin's goal before Luton took control of proceedings.

Steve Robinson's 30-yard lob beat Pogliacomini but was wide of goal on 17 minutes.

Skelton, playing in midfield, then fed a 31st-minute through ball to Fotiadis who teased back-peddalling Oldham skipper Lee Duxbury before firing into the home crowd from six yards.

But the pair again combined two minutes later to fashion the Hatters' equaliser.

Skelton's perfectly-weighted pass sent Fotiadis clear on goal and the ex-England schoolboy international drove a low shot in between Pogliacomini's legs to continue his scoring spree and silence home supporters, who had been booing him after an earlier foul on the keeper that resulted in a yellow card.

Thorpe's winning goal arrived on 58 minutes when he sidefooted coolly into the bottom corner from 10 yards after

Coyne had headed down Matthew Spring's corner into his firing range.

Oldham, in response, struggled to find the form that had made ex-Hatter Iain Dowie a Division Two Manager of the Month just weeks into his new occupation.

Dowie's team have now taken just one point from a possible six after a run of eight consecutive victories.

Defender Chris Armstrong did manage his side's second on-target goal attempt after 60 minutes but his 20-yard effort was comfortably saved by Berthelin.

The French keeper also enjoyed an element of fortune when he dropped two crosses, earning a generous free kick on one occasion and fortunately gathering the other at his second attempt.

But the former Lens and Valence player also claimed the ball amid a crowded penalty box later on as Oldham threw long balls and bodies forward in search of an equaliser.

It was the Hatters, though, who came closest to giving the game another goal when a 25-yard drive from Spring in injury time was spectacularly pushed behind for a corner by Pogliacomini.

matchfacts

OLDHAM 1 LUTON TOWN 2

●OLDHAM: Leslie Pogliacomini, Fitz Hall, Chris Armstrong, Lee Duxbury (Will Haining, 67), Darren Sheridan, Tony Carss, Dean Holden (Lourenco, 72), John Eyre, Chris Killen, Carlo Corazzin (Wayne Andrews, 60), David Eyres. Subs not used: David Miskelly, Scott Vernon.

●HATTERS: Cedric Berthelin, Emmerston Boyce, Russell Perrett, Chris Coyne, Sol Davis, Steve Robinson, Aaron Skelton (Ahmet Brkovic, 59), Matthew Spring, Peter Holmes (Ian

Hillier, 90), Andrew Fotiadis, Dean Crowe (Tony Thorpe, 9). Subs not used: Carl Emberson, Alan Kimble. ●Shots on target: Oldham 2 Luton 4. ●Off target: Oldham 4 Luton 6. ●Corners: Oldham 1 Luton 5. ●Referee: C Boyeson.

●TOP HATTER: Chris Coyne - another commanding display from the Hatters' Australian centre back at the heart of the defence. Brilliant in the air, he made several excellent tackles and just pipped defensive partner Russell Perrett as top man.



SPOTLIGHT: Holmes.

playerwatch

HATTERS MIDFIELDER PETER HOLMES...

- Time on pitch: 90 minutes
- Shots on target: 0
- Shots off target: 1
- Blocked shots: 0
- Passes to own player: 16
- Passes to opposition: 5
- Crosses to own player: 0
- Crosses to opposition: 4
- Pass completion rate: 64 per cent
- Dribble ball retained: 1

Holmes in that wide-left role

- Dribble ball lost: 4
- Dribble completion rate: 20 per cent
- Tackles: 4
- Headers: 6
- Clearances, blocks and interceptions: 1
- Offsides: 0
- Free kicks won: 2
- Free kicks conceded: 2
- FINAL VERDICT: Holmes,

sometimes a peripheral figure when called into the first team, played an active role in the win. The 21-year-old midfielder filled the troublesome wide-left position and his passing was generally accurate although his cross success rate was low. A lack of pace and power was highlighted by his low dribble success rate.