



Forrester scythes down sad Hatters

LUTON'S seven-game unbeaten run came crashing to an end as lowly Northampton Town came up with the day's shock result in this full-blooded derby.

The Hatters never got out of first gear and can have few complaints about the defeat.

A first half double from Jamie Forrester gave the Cobblers the advantage and a cheeky lob from Marco Gabbiadini settled the match.

Rampant Cobblers were first to every ball and stretched Luton's injury-ravaged squad to the limit.

Boss Joe Kinnear kept faith with the team that finished at Crewe with Tony Thorpe up front in place of Andrew Fotiadis, who came off injured at Gresty Road.

Northampton were coming off the back of four straight league defeats and looking for points to avoid slipping into the relegation quagmire, whereas Hatters were aiming to make further progress towards the leaders.

Luton were first out of the blocks, looking like the form team, but against the run of play it was Northampton who grabbed the opening goal with their first meaningful attack on nine minutes.

Winger Paul Harsley played an innocuous ball left that Ian Hillier seemed to have covered but the defender fell over on the slippery surface and Forrester's confident finish from ten yards put the Cobblers ahead.

Ten minutes later Forrester did it again. A well-worked goal was initiated by some great skill in the middle of the park by the lively Derek Asamoah, who burst through the Hatters defence before laying the ball right to veteran Gabbiadini. He played a teasing ball across goal for the unmarked Forrester, who slotted home from close range.

Despite the two goals Luton were not outplayed by Northampton and on 25 minutes had an effort controversially disallowed.

An Aaron Skelton 20-yard drive ricocheted off a defender, resulting in a 50-50 ball between Steve Howard and goalkeeper Lee Harper. Both played the ball but Harper stayed injured on the ground as Thorpe placed it into an empty net. Premiership referee Paul Durkin found in favour of Harper and awarded a free kick for Howard's challenge.

Luton had the chance to drag a goal back on 32 minutes. A Chris Coyne long ball from the back found Howard, whose headed through-ball gave Thorpe a one-on-one but he blasted straight at the 'keeper's feet and Luton were left to rue the miss.

At half time Kinnear replaced Skelton (hamstring injury) with Alan Neilson in midfield as Luton looked for an early goal to revive their chances.

But it went from bad to worse as Gabbiadini made it 3-0 four minutes into the half.

Goalkeeper Cedric Berthelin went AWOL on the edge of his box. Gabbiadini spotted the Frenchman's absence and duly lobbed him from 30 yards for a fantastic finish.

From thereon in there was to be no gallant comeback from the Hatters as they capitulated under immense Northampton pressure.

The one consolation was that the scoreline remained the same.

Luton may have felt aggrieved to be behind at half time but the second half was all Northampton as Luton's midfield failed to



impose themselves and Gabbiadini rolled back the years.

He almost got his second on 52 minutes when put through but Berthelin made amends for his earlier walkabout with a super stop.

Other than futile long shots, Luton rarely threatened until on 74 minutes a deep Sol Davis cross found Howard in the box but his header went over the bar.

Howard, who left the Sixfields stadium 18 months ago for Luton, had his every touch jeered the home crowd and how he must have wanted to silence the boo boys to give Luton a late lifeline. It was not to be as Luton were turned over by the hungrier team.

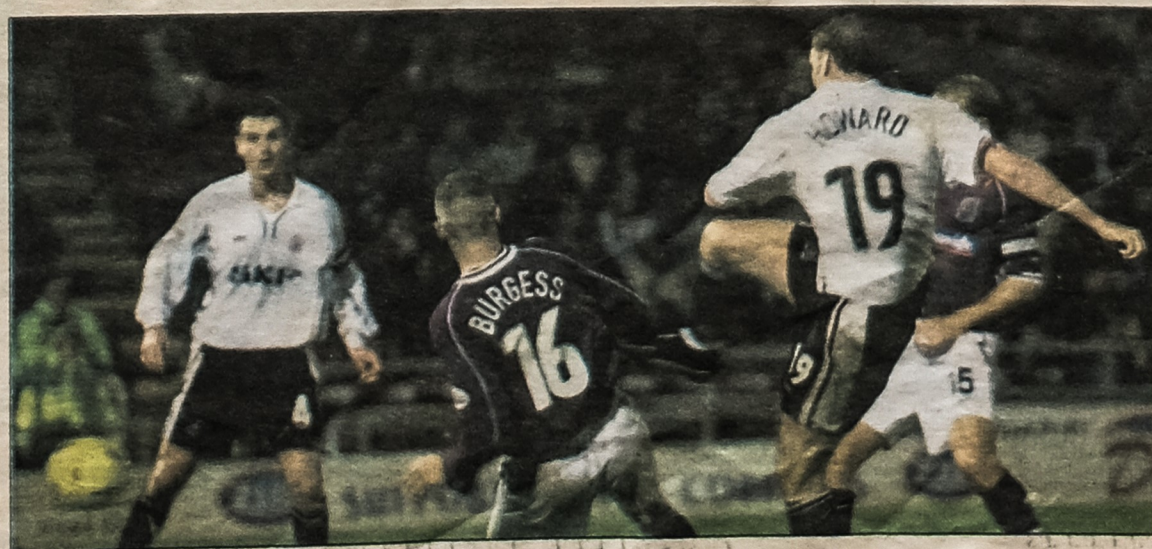
Kinnear was disappointed to see the unbeaten run come to such a shock end.

"We lost one game in 12 - it was a fantastic run. But today they played exceptionally well and when you make errors you lose. It was one of those days.

"Up until today we have been magnificent but we gave away sloppy goals and didn't take our chances. We were poor in both boxes."

Kinnear will be hoping the team begins a similar run starting with Port Vale at Kenilworth Road next Saturday.

■ Hatters' star man Sol Davis keeps a watchful eye on Derek Asamoah, while (below) Luton's ex-Cobbler Steve Howard, booed unmercifully by the home crowd throughout the game, gets in a shot which did not trouble the Northampton defence



MATCH FACTS



LUTON TOWN (4-4-2): Berthelin; Boyce, Coyne, Hillier, Davis; Robinson (Holmes 78m), Spring, Skelton (Neilson 46), Brkkovic (Nicholls 78); Thorpe, Howard
Subs not used: Emberson, Kimble

Referee: Paul Durkin

GOALSCORERS

Northampton: Forrester (9, 19), Gabbiadini (49)
Luton: -

GOAL ATTEMPTS

Northampton: 12
Luton: 9

CORNERS

Northampton: 2
Luton: 4

BOOKINGS

Northampton: -
Luton: -

ATTENDANCE: 5,5750

HATTERS' STAR MAN: SOL DAVIS

Difficult decision gets it for a high work-rate

Nationwide Div Two results

Brentford	5	Blackpool	0
Bristol City	0	Notts County	1
(match abandoned)			
Cardiff	3	Peterborough	0
Cheltenham	1	Huddersfield	0
Chesterfield	1	Barnsley	0
Northampton	3	LUTON	0
Oldham	2	Stockport	0
Port Vale	0	QPR	0
Tranmere	2	Plymouth	1
Wigan	2	Crewe	0
Wycombe	2	Swindon	3

How they stand

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cardiff	17	11	4	2	28	12	37
Oldham	17	11	3	3	30	10	36
Wigan	17	10	5	2	30	13	35
Bristol City	16	11	0	5	31	15	33
QPR	17	8	5	4	28	17	29
Brentford	17	8	5	4	24	19	29
Crewe	17	8	4	5	23	14	28
Blackpool	17	8	3	6	24	22	27
Chesterfield	17	8	3	6	16	19	27
Luton	17	7	4	6	27	26	25
Tranmere	17	7	2	8	17	28	23
Wycombe	17	6	4	7	24	25	22
Port Vale	17	6	4	7	21	25	22
Stockport	17	6	2	9	21	23	20
Plymouth	17	5	5	7	21	25	20
Northampton	17	5	4	8	17	24	19
Swindon	17	5	3	9	19	26	18
Notts County	16	3	8	5	20	22	17
Huddersfield	17	4	5	8	13	20	17
Colchester	17	4	5	8	14	22	17
Barnsley	17	4	5	8	16	26	17
Cheltenham	17	4	4	9	17	24	16
Peterborough	17	3	5	9	19	25	14
Mansfield	17	4	2	11	24	42	14