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STEVENAGE 3 **LUTON TOWN 4**

DAVE FLETT reports from Broadhall Way

A SENSATIONAL six minute hat-trick by makeshift striker Ahmet Brkovic saw Luton Town win a seven-goal LDV Trophy Vans Trophy thriller at Stevenage last night.

Brkovic was playing up front only because of an injury crisis that has left the Hatters with just two fit senior strikers. But his three goals between 54 and 60 minutes booked his team a place in the competition's third round draw.

Tony Thorpe was also on target for the Hatters, who twice fell behind to their non-league Hertfordshire neighbours.

Only Kevin Nicholls, Thorpe and Peter Holmes were retained in Joe Kinnear's starting lineup from the side that drew 0-0 against Port Vale on Saturday.

But teenage defenders Joe Deeney and Kevin Foley were the only Hatters players in the team without previous football league experience.

Stevenage included ex-Stirling in their side.

The Hatters fell behind on six minutes. minutes after failing miserably to deal with a Stirling long played all his opportunist abilithrow.

weak punch from the 6ft 3in sailed over Westhead and findefender's throw hit Nicholls on ished just inside the Stevenage the back and floated into an keeper's post. unguarded goal.

for the Hatters and Emberson ing the lead for his side on 38 had to be alert to stop Richard minutes but headed Scott's Scott doubling the home side's cross narrowly wide. lead on 15 minutes with a volley

match facts

STEVENAGE: Mark Westhead. Simon Travis, Stuart Fraser, Simon Wormull (kirk Jackson 68), Richard Howell (Michael Blackwood 46), Louis Riddle, Jude Stirling, Jack Midson (Jean-Michel Sigere 57), Richard Pacquette, Richard Scott, Gary MacDonald. Subs not used: Phil Wilson, George Boyd. LUTON TOWN: Carl Emberson, Aaron Skelton, Kevin Nicholls (Michael Leary 46), Tony Thorpe, Ahmet Brkovic, Peter Holmes, Paul Hughes, Lee Mansell (Matthew Judge 46), Kevin Foley (Marvin Johnson 70), Alan Kimble, Joe Deeney. Subs not used: Mark Ovendale, Leon Barnett. REFEREE: P. Rejer.

ATTENDANCE: 2,601

TOP HATTER: Ahmet Brkovic.

from the edge of the box.

Holmes had the Hatters' first shot of the night on 18 minutes but his low long-range drive was turned behind for a corner home keeper Mark by Westhead.

Scott then sent a 25-yard effort whistling over before Thorpe scored his third goal of Hatters Stuart Fraser and Jude the season to put the visitors back on level terms after 32

The 28-year-old striker disty to meet Nicholls' cross with a Keeper Carl Emberson's clever looping header that

It was an embarrassing start Pacquette went close to regain-

Pacquette then missed a bet- in injury time.

ter opportunity when he fired straight at Emberson before Travis brushed the top of Luton's cross bar with a mishit

Pacquette eventually fired Stevenage back in front during first-half stoppage time when he turned Aaron Skelton far too easily before firing his fierce shot past an exposed Emberson from 15 yards.

The Hatters started the second half in brighter fashion with Thorpe's header after a Holmes corner bouncing off the top of Westhead's crossbar on 49 minutes.

Brkovic scored his first goal of the evening five minutes later. Teenage substitute Matthew Judge's intelligent flick after a Holmes pass released Brkovic, who shot low past Westhead.

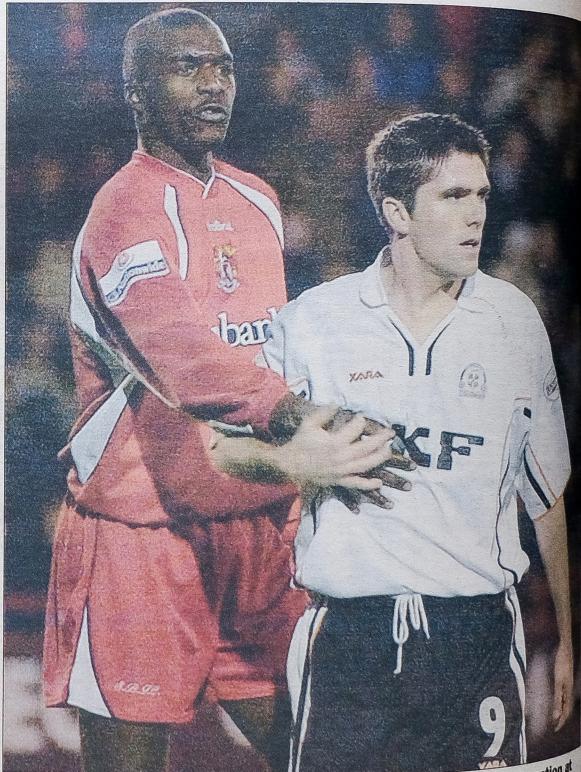
The diminutive Croatian put Luton in front on 56 minutes when he side-footed in after Paul Hughes' accurate cross into the penalty box.

Brkovic then volleyed inches wide from 25 yards moments later before completing his sensational six-minute hat trick on the hour mark.

Thorpe was denied a shootchance by MacDonald's block but Brkovic seized on the loose ball to fire confidently into Westhead's bottom corner from 12 vards.

Spirited Stevenage pulled an excellent goal back on 70 minutes with Scott's curling low free kick. Substitute Jean-Michel Sigere's header then Home striker Richard brushed the top of the netting as the home side looked to force extra time.

Emberson then pulled off a terrific save to deny MacDonald



IN TOUCH: Luton's Tony Thorpe and former Hatter Jude Stirling in action at Stevenage last pight Picture: GARETH OWEN Stevenage last night.