

Tony Thorpedoes Hatters to victory

02/03

BATTLING Hatters survived a first minute gaffe, a controversial sending-off and a late penalty to leave Oakwell with three points.

Carl Emberson was dismissed on 35 minutes to add insult to injury after his blunder gave Barnsley the lead, but goals from Matthew Spring, and two from an inspired Tony Thorpe gave Luton their revenge for an August defeat at Kenilworth Road.

It keeps them in seventh place and maintains their charge for a play-off place in Division Two.

Luton were hampered by suspensions to Sol Davis and Ahmet Brkovic, who were replaced by Alan Kimble and Paul Hughes respectively.

Emmerson Boyce did not travel due to a groin strain and Ian Hillier filled in at right back.

There was a protest outside the ground before the start by almost 100 Oakwell fans, ranting against the board as they have seen their club go into administration.

They have also been suffering of late on the pitch, starting the day in 20th position and remarkably not having kept a clean sheet in a single Division two game.

But they a dream start with a goal in the opening minute that will give Emberson nightmares for weeks to come.

An innocuous long ball from left back Robbie Williams seemed to be covered by Chris Coyne. However, the Australian defender appeared to receive a call from the goalkeeper and let it fly over his head. Unfortunately, Kevin Betsy chased the pass and got there first before rounding Emberson and tapping into an empty net.

Coyne was furious and squared up to Emberson, the pair only being separated by captain Kevin Nicholls who calmed the situation down.

Barnsley did not seem to know what to do at being a goal up and looked nervous in their counter-attack attempts.

Thorpe was prominent in the early stages but for all his hard work, the only effort from the Hatters was a long-range shot on 15 minutes from Ian Hillier.

A minute later Barnsley almost made it two when a Gary Jones volley from the edge of the box hit an upright.

Suddenly Barnsley were a team transformed and on 35 minutes Luton's troubles deepened with Emberson's dismissal.

Another long ball was hoofed into the Hatters' half for Betsy to chase, forcing Emberson to rush off his line but the ball fell just outside his area. As he fell to the floor, Emberson appeared to grab the ball while still inside his area.

The linesman thought differently,



flagging for handball, although from the Press Box that looked a harsh decision.

But Emberson received a straight red and Steve Robinson was sacrificed to allow Mark Ovendale to take over in goal.

Rather than sulking, Luton kept two up front and came alive with an equaliser just before half time with a magnificent Spring finish.

He won the ball in midfield and strode past two half-hearted challenges and then let rip with a left-foot pearler into the top corner.

It galvanised the Hatters and Barnsley had a gaffe of their own waiting that gave Joe Kinnear's men the lead two minutes into the second half.

Thorpe chased down Brian O'Callaghan and forced the centre back into a poor back pass. Goalkeeper Andy Marriott was already committed to coming out and Thorpe rounded him and gleefully put the ball into an empty net.

If that was a stroke of luck, their third was a stroke of genius. It was straight from the training ground.

Spring broke before passing to Hughes, whose intelligent ball found Thorpe. The striker passed to Steve Howard in the box. He chested it back to Thorpe to coolly slide the ball under Marriott.

Luton were now in control and despite plenty of long-range efforts Ovendale was rarely troubled.

They got a lifeline on 77 minutes when a mistimed lunge by Alan Neilson scythed down Jones in the box. Bruce Dyer converted to give ten-man Luton the jitters for the



final minutes.

Despite being under siege for the rest of the match, some resolute defending and confident goalkeeping gave Luton the win they deserved.

Kinnear was naturally delighted with the win. "We were a bit rusty but we have won. Only three points will do now as it so tight at the top.

"It was a great result and doing it with ten-men made it even better."

Of the sending-off, Kinnear insisted they would appeal and dismissed the bust-up. "It shows they both care - there is nothing wrong with our dressing room"

■ **Action from Oakwell: Top - Matthew Spring prepares to pull the trigger for the opening goal. Centre: Mick Harford and Joe Kinnear celebrate the goal. Right: Steve Howard appears to lose this argument**



MATCH FACTS



LUTON TOWN (4-4-2): Emberson; Hillier, (Bayliss 77), Coyne, Neilson, Kimble; Robinson (Ovendale 35m), Spring, Nicholls, Hughes; Howard, Thorpe (Crowe 90). Subs not used: Leary, Mansell

Referee: Scott Mathieson (Cheshire)

GOALSCORERS:

Barnsley: Betsy (1), Dyer (77)

Luton: Spring (45), Thorpe (49, 65)

SHOTS ON TARGET

Barnsley: 7

Luton: 5

SHOTS OFF TARGET

Barnsley: 10

Luton: 3

CORNERS

Barnsley: 3

Luton: 3

OFFSIDE

Barnsley: 2

Luton: 7

BOOKINGS

Barnsley: Jones (26), Betsy (43), Barrowclough (80), Crooks (88)

Luton: Emberson (red - 35), Nicholls (25), Bayliss (78)

ATTENDANCE: 9,079

HATTERS' STAR MAN: TONY THORPE

Two goals and covered every blade of grass

Division Two results

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

How they stand

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Wigan	27	20	5	2	46	15	65
Oldham	28	15	9	4	44	22	54
Crewe	27	16	5	6	45	21	53
Cardiff	26	16	5	5	44	22	53
Bristol City	27	15	5	7	52	31	50
QPR	28	13	7	8	36	30	46
Luton	26	11	7	8	40	35	40
Blackpool	26	11	6	9	35	36	39
Tranmere	27	11	6	10	37	41	39
Brentford	26	10	7	9	32	30	37
Chesterfield	27	11	4	12	24	32	37
Plymouth	26	9	9	8	34	32	36
Wycombe	28	9	8	11	40	38	35
Swindon	27	9	7	11	37	40	34
Port Vale	26	8	6	12	31	40	30
Northampton	27	8	5	14	24	42	29
Stockport	27	8	4	15	36	46	28
Mansfield	27	8	4	15	43	59	28
Notts County	26	5	12	9	37	40	27
Peterborough	28	6	9	13	29	38	27
Colchester	27	6	9	12	28	39	27
Barnsley	27	7	6	14	31	44	27
Cheltenham	26	5	8	13	24	40	23
Huddersfield	27	5	7	15	19	35	22