

Horton anger at Mason

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Port Vale 1 Luton Town 2

By Bruce Geller

A STIRRING second-half display secured Luton's eighth away win of the season.

Tony Thorpe broke the deadlock four minutes into the second-half and a controversial penalty, put away by Kevin Nicholls, sealed the points.

Vale had started brightly and were within inches of taking a 10th-minute lead when Steve McPhee's looping header came back off the crossbar.

Vale continued to press forward with Mark Boyd warming Ovendale's fingers from 20 yards after his neat skills had left two defenders trailing.

The visitors only real chance of the first period came in stoppage time when Nicholls' drive went too high.

But Luton were a transformed outfit in the second period.

They pushed forward to win two corners in rapid succession with the second leading to Thorpe's opening goal. Nicholls drove his cross to the far post where Thorpe rose unchallenged to bury a firm header from six yards.

Luton continued to dominate with Thorpe firing over, Steve Howard striking the side netting and substitute Dean Crowe hitting a shot which was

deflected narrowly wide. Steve Rowland's 20-yard volley flashed agonisingly wide for Vale before Steve Brooker's shot flicked off a defender into the side netting.

But the points were as good as Luton's 15 minutes from time when Ian Brightwell conceded a penalty for up-ending Thorpe. Nicholls sent Mark Goodlad the wrong way from the spot to signal a mass exodus from hundreds of Vale fans.

Mark Boyd's 86th-minute goal, a shot which bounced up past Ovendale following a Marc Bridge-Wilkinson corner, was scant consolation.

Vale manager Brian Horton launched a stinging attack on referee Lee Mason saying: "If that was a penalty I will eat my hat. Ian Brightwell played the ball. We are told not to criticise referees but he was appalling."

Horton also criticised his defence, while Luton manager Joe Kinnear said he had to give his players a half-time slating to spark an improvement.

He said: "It had been a nothing game so I put on an extra forward and told the players to have a real go.

"Their response was excellent and we now have four successive home games to capitalise on our very good away form."