

# It's Thorpe

## LUTON TOWN 1 PLYMOUTH ARGYLE 0

DAVE FLETT reports from  
Kenilworth Road

TONY Thorpe's 11th goal of the season fired Luton Town to victory at Kenilworth Road last night.

The Hatters' goal poacher struck from close range on 50 minutes against last season's Division Three championship rivals Plymouth to boost his team's play-off push.

Plymouth brought an impressive travelling army of supporters, but the Devon club's chances of successive promotion campaigns now look slim.

Joe Kinnear dropped goalkeeper Carl Emberson for the fifth time this season to give on-loan Spurs keeper Lars Hirschfeld his Hatters' debut.

Croatian midfielder Ahmet Brkovic was also relegated to the bench, making way for the return of Steve Howard from suspension, with Dean Crowe starting on the right-wing.

Ian Hillier was the third change from Saturday's team against Brentford, replacing the injured Alan Neilson at right-back.

Brian McGlinchey should have fired Plymouth in front after seven minutes, but lifted his shot over the bar from eight yards after David Norris had charged past Sol Davis and delivered a low cross.

At the other end, Tony Thorpe's effort sailed wide after Plymouth keeper Romain Larrieu misjudged his charge off his line on nine minutes.

Hirschfeld displayed his agility on 23 minutes by keeping

### match facts

**LUTON TOWN:** Lars Hirschfeld, Ian Hillier, Chris Willmott, Chris Coyne, Sol Davis, Dean Crowe, Kevin Nicholls, Matthew Spring (sub 46 mins, Ahmet Brkovic), Paul Hughes, Steve Howard, Tony Thorpe. Other subs: Russell Perrett, Carl Emberson, Alan Kimble, Michael Leary.  
**PLYMOUTH ARGYLE:** Romain Larrieu, David Worrell (sub 85 mins, Nathan Lowndes), Brian McGlinchey (sub 73 mins, Marino Keith), Graham Coughlan, Mickey Evans, Ian Stonebridge, Jason Bent, David Norris, Lee Hodges, Paul Wotton, David Frlio. Other subs: Luke McCormick, Martin Phillips, Steve Adams.

**REFEREE:** Tony Bates (Staffs).

**ATTENDANCE:** 7,589.

**TOP HATTER:** Ian Hillier - he hardly put a foot wrong.

out Mickey Evans' looping header.

Matthew Spring hit the back of the net two minutes later, but an offside flag had been raised long before his low drive whistled past Larrieu.

The French keeper then tipped Howard's header over and was rescued by a goal-line clearance from McGlinchey after Coyne's header from Kevin Nicholls' corner had beaten him.

Nicholls' free-kick was theatrically turned behind by Larrieu on the half-hour mark and Davis' shot from the edge of the area just cleared the crossbar moments later.

Both sides went very close to taking a half-time lead seconds before the break.

First, Howard fired straight at Larrieu after Thorpe had stolen possession and sent the Hatters' top scorer clear on goal with a clever reverse pass.

Then, McGlinchey's low volley beat Hirschfeld but finished inches wide.

Brkovic replaced Spring at half-time for the Hatters, with Paul Hughes moving into the centre of midfield.

Thorpe broke the deadlock five minutes after the break when Hillier's long throw from the right landed in Plymouth's six-yard box.

The Hatters striker reacted quickest, crashing a low shot on the turn past Larrieu.

Howard's header was kept out by Larrieu three minutes later after a real up-and-under into the penalty box from Crowe.

Hillier, who enjoyed an impressive performance in his favourite position, then placed an excellent cross on to the head of Howard but, this time, the Hatters' target man directed the ball wide from five yards.

Hirschfeld, who had looked confident and positive coming off his line all evening, then showed off his shot-stopping capabilities by turning behind a fierce Ian Stonebridge drive from 30 yards.

A half-cleared corner fell to Hughes on the edge of the box shortly afterwards and his low volley was inches away from doubling the home side's lead.

Howard headed another close-range effort over on 76 minutes after Hillier had again sent in a dangerous cross from the right.

Plymouth sent on strikers Marino Keith and Nathan Lowndes but all to no avail.



REACH FOR IT! Steve Howard and Tony Thorpe (right) in the thick of the action for Hatters against Plymouth Argyle last night.  
Picture: JOANNA CROSS