

'Awesome' Howie stuns Layer Road

COLCHESTER 0 LUTON 5 STEVE SIMS REPORTS

● **COLCHESTER UNITED:** Richard McKinney, Scott Fitzgerald, Karl Duguid, Scott McGleish, Kem Izzet, Dean Morgan, Marc Canham (Thomas Pinault, 46), Alan White, Greg Halford (Pat Baldwin, 78), Ben May, Mike Edwards. Subs not used: Adrian Coote, Bobby Bowry, Dean Gerken.

● **HATTERS:** Robert Beckwith, Emmerson Boyce (David Bayliss, 75), Chris Willmott, Alan Neilson, Sol Davis, Paul Hughes, Kevin Nicholls, Matthew Spring (Aaron Skelton, 87), Peter Holmes, Steve Howard, Carl Griffiths (Matthew Judge, 87). Subs not used: Alan Kimble, Dean Brill.

● **Shots on target:** Colchester 3 Luton 9.

● **Shots off target:** Colchester 6 Luton Town 4.

● **Corners:** Colchester 12 Luton 1.

● **Booked:** Luton: Spring 35, Nicholls 82. Colchester: McKinney 43, White 53.

● **Attendance:** 3,967.

● **Referee:** Clive Penton (Sussex).

● **Top Hatter:** Steve Howard – led the line well and netted a superb hat-trick.

STEVE Howard bagged a hat-trick as Luton gave their fans an Easter treat by destroying in-form Colchester on Monday.

The big striker – whose performance was described as “awesome” by manager Joe Kinnear – followed up his double against Bristol City at the weekend with three well-taken goals and also had a hand in the other two.

It was Luton's best away result since their 4-0 demolition of Hull last season – when Howard also earned himself the match ball.

And it was emphatic revenge for a 2-1 home defeat against the Layer Road outfit in December – a game Howard missed through suspension.

Colchester had gone into the game on the back of an eight-game unbeaten run, including an impressive 3-0 win at Cardiff on Saturday.

But by half-time they had been buried under an avalanche of goals – two of which were gifts from home keeper Richard McKinney.

Luton took the lead on 14 minutes when a good build-up on the left saw Sol Davis feed Peter Holmes, who crossed low for Howard to slide in to the net from close range.

That advantage was doubled seven minutes later when Emmerson Boyce found Howard on the right. His cross was fumbled by McKinney and Carl Griffiths pounced to gleefully prod the ball in for his first goal since a hat-trick against Torquay in September 2001.

Colchester almost found a way back into the game on 31 minutes when Scott McGleish's powerful header beat Robert Beckwith but smashed against the youngster's crossbar.

Two more Luton goals in the closing minutes of the first period made the game safe.

In another moment of McKinney madness the keeper dropped Davis' long free-kick under challenge from Howard on 43 minutes.

As he desperately tried to rectify the error he hauled back Griffiths to prevent him rolling the ball into the unguarded net.

McKinney was fortunate to escape with a booking for the indiscretion, but was punished further by Kevin Nicholls' confident spot-kick into the bottom left corner.

On the stroke of half-time Nicholls won the



YES! Carl Griffiths celebrates his first goal of the season after that long injury lay-off.

Joe's view

‘We played some great football at times. Colchester's win at Cardiff was a warning shot to the players so no-one was going to be complacent. We started where we left off against Bristol City. We were always dangerous and passed the ball well. We've got to finish the season on a high.’

Colchester enjoyed more possession.

This allowed Luton's teenage keeper Beckwith to show that Saturday's impressive debut was no one-off, producing fine saves from two McGleish headers.

His best stop came on 73 minutes when substitute Thomas Pinault looked to have him beaten with a 20-yard chip, only for the youngster to spring athletically backwards and tip the ball over the bar.

At the other end, Griffiths had the ball in the net on 79 minutes after touching in Paul Hughes driven cross, but he was denied by a marginal offside decision.

But the Hatters did get their fifth a minute into stoppage time when Howard latched on to Nicholls' through ball, rounded McKinney and stroked home his 22nd goal of the season.

WARDEN HILLS TIGERS FC

UNDER 12's

WANTED

New players to strengthen the squad for season 2003/04.

Phone for more information

Steve: 01582 581810

Mobile: 07742 461607

back in touch

FOOTBALL TEAMS WANTED

For the LUTON SOCCER SIXES

at Lea Manor Recreation Centre, Northwell Road, Luton

Wednesday Evenings on the Astro turf

New Summer season starts 4 June

The league is professionally organised with FA referees and on-site administration

For further info and an application form call Paul on

(0113) 236 1000

during office hours

INSIDE YOUR SPORTS SECTION: Local football results, reports and ta

● Advertising (01582) 700600 ● Reporters (01582) 526000 ● Web