

10 OUT OF 10!



HE'S BACK: Steve Howard on the ball during last night's FA Cup first round replay against non-league Thurrock.

LUTON TOWN 3 THURROCK 1

**ANDY MacKENZIE reports
from Kenilworth Road**

A HAT-TRICK by Adrian Forbes sent Luton Town through to the second round of the FA Cup.

Luton welcomed back goal star Steve Howard after an absence of six weeks but it was man-in-form Forbes who knocked out the Ryman League minnows in last night's first round replay.

He struck in the 38th and 76th minutes and from the penalty spot three minutes from time to make it 10 goals from his last 10 games.

Mike Newell's men now travel to meet Third Division Rochdale on December 6.

Unimpressive Hatters had to fight all the way after a goal by former Luton trainee Cliff Akurang in the 49th minute had pulled Thurrock level.

Luton showed two changes from the side that beat Wrexham on Saturday. With Gary McSheffrey still not being given permission to play by

match facts

LUTON TOWN: Marlon Beresford, Matthew Spring, Adrian Forbes, Steve Robinson, Chris Coyne, Emmerson Boyce, Ahmet Brkovic, Steve Howard, Lee Mansell, Kevin Foley, Leon Barnett, Subs: Ian Hillier, Dean Brill, Dean Crowe, Michael Leary, Parys Okal.

THURROCK: Paul Gothard, John Purdie, Mark Goodfellow, David Collis, Jimmy McFarlane, Paul Linger, Steve Heffer, Trevor Kandol, Cliff Akurang, Terry Bowes, Gary Howard. Subs: Michael Basham, Kris Lee, Martyn Lawrence, Lee Allen, Jason Broom.

Referee: Mike Thorpe (Suffolk). Attendance: 3,667.

parent club Coventry City. Howard made a quicker-than-anticipated return to action after his hernia operation.

Teenager Leon Barnett came in for the suspended Sol Davis and Thurrock again included ex-Hatters trainees Trevor Kandol and Akurang.

Luton were given an early injury scare when Matthew Spring had to leave the field for treatment to a shin injury

in the seventh minute.

Fortunately, the midfielder was able to carry on, but that wasn't the case for Kevin Foley, who appeared to suffer a recurrence of his thigh injury when he pulled up after a clearance. He made way for Ian Hillier in the ninth minute and four minutes later Hillier entered the referee's book for a foul on Gary Howard.

With only 15 minutes on the clock, fellow full-back Barnett was also booked after a clash of heads with Terry Bowes.

Luton's first shot on target came in the 25th minute when Forbes' left-footed shot on the turn was easily saved by Paul Gothard after a flowing Hatters move.

But after a tentative start Hatters took the lead in fortuitous circumstances after 38 minutes.

McFarlane and John Purdie failed to deal with a routine ball into the box and combined to head against each other, allowing the ball to fall perfectly to unmarked Forbes six yards out.

Even then, Forbes enjoyed a slice of luck when he blasted

straight at Gothard, but saw the ball rebound back off his shin and bobble into the gaping goal for his eighth goal in 10 games.

Thurrock came out for the second-half with renewed vigour and drew level four minutes after the break.

Barnett's complete miskick in the Thurrock half let Akurang run clear at Chris Coyne.

The ex-Luton trainee turned the Hatters' skipper inside-out before drilling past Beresford with his right foot from inside the penalty area for his 19th goal of the season.

With time ticking away Luton went back in front in spectacular style. After a fine run and cross by Steve Robinson, Forbes arched to send a header flying past Gothard in the 76th minute.

Hillier saved the Hatters three minutes later with a last-ditch tackle to deny Kandol after Boyce had missed Akurang's cross.

Forbes completed his hat-trick from the penalty spot three minutes from time after Ahmet Brkovic had been tripped by David Collis.