



Luton Town FC

TOM LEECH reports from
Bloomfield Road



**MATCH
FACTS**



And here's to you Stevie Robinson

**Blackpool 0
Luton Town 1**

DESPITE the lousy weather, Steve Robinson ensured Luton enjoyed their day out at the seaside and left Bloomfield Road with all three points.

Robinson's first-half strike lit up a game that petered out after an exciting first half.

It was a professional performance as Luton defended superbly in the second half – kept their shape and refused to be bullied into submission.

The win capped a welcome return to the last club of his playing career.

Luton suffered their first defeat in ten matches with a below-par performance in the LDV Vans Cup in midweek and manager Mike Newell reacted by bringing back Emmerson Boyce – rested on Tuesday – in the heart of defence and fit-again Kevin Foley at right back.

Matthew Spring also returned from a spell in the treatment room to replace Peter Holmes in midfield. Surprisingly Holmes did not make the squad.

Bar the result the main talking point from Tuesday night was the absence of club captain Kevin Nicholls.

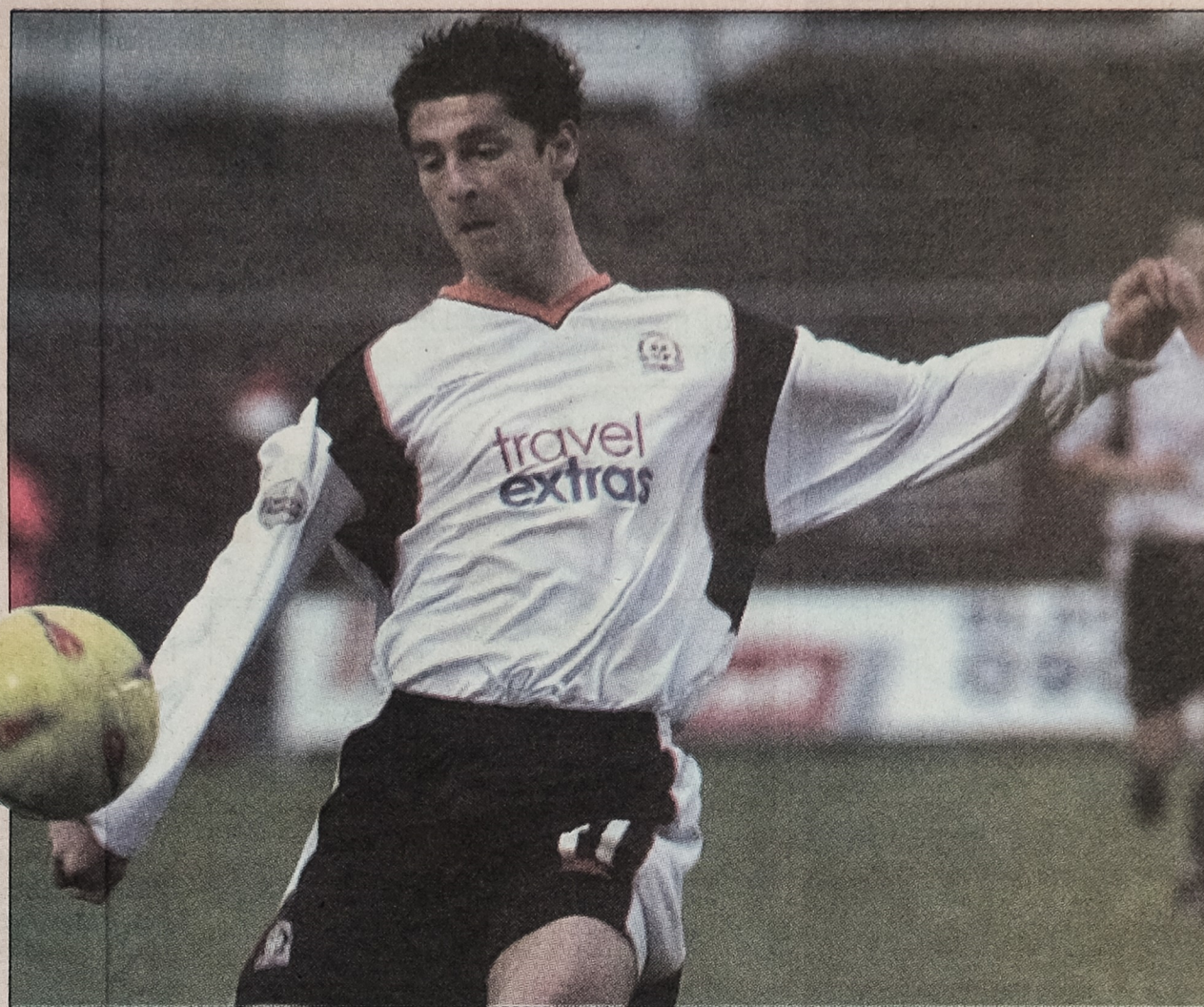
Despite a return to fitness, the combative Nicholls did not feature at Southend, after Newell declared his skipper's 'mind was not right'.

Where Luton failed Blackpool blasted their way to the LDV Vans semi finals winning 2-1 at Stockport.

Only Luton's superior goal difference separated the teams before the kick-off and the two sides were equally matched from the first kick, making for an open and entertaining 20 minutes.

Adrian Forbes looked lively and Spring was inventive in midfield.

Hatters' best chance came in the half's



■ Steve Robinson's first-half strike secured the points for the Hatters

most controversial moment after six minutes. A Luton breakaway formed down the right wing when Blackpool goalkeeper Brad Jones rushed 40 yards out of his box to poleaxe the onrushing Steve Robinson, earning himself a yellow card. The fact that Robinson was heading away from goal saved him from a possible red.

From the free kick Spring picked out Steve Howard unmarked but his header lacked precision and was parried to safety.

Blackpool – led by the skills of attacking midfielder Martin Bullock – also produced a real scoring opportunity on 17 minutes.

Bullock worked his magic in the penalty box and found veteran striker Mike Sheron

whose shot was bravely blocked by Chris Coyne.

Blackpool had more than their fair share of possession but the Hatters were always dangerous on the break and looked the more likely to open the scoring.

And they did just that on 36 minutes with a cracking goal from Robinson.

Hatters retaining the ball well in the Blackpool half when Howard laid a pass off to Robinson on the D.

He turned on a sixpence and lashed a right-foot 20-yarder into the left-hand corner. He ran the length of the pitch to celebrate the strike with the Hatters fans, who had braved the elements to make the trip.

Six minutes from the break Blackpool had the chance to equalise when Sheron's hooked volley bounced off the crossbar from ten yards out.

The Seaside's came out for the second half determined to register more shots on goal.

But for all their posturing in the Hatters' half, their only real chance came after 64 minutes.

Simon Johnson – on loan from Leeds United – hit a powerful sidefoot shot that Marlon Beresford did well to save, but the keeper spilled it at the feet of Scott Taylor. His snapshot was cleared by Boyce and fortunately into the grateful arms of Beresford.

Bar a Howard half-chance it was all Blackpool in the second half but Luton's defence was solid and did not bend an inch.

Ten minutes from the end Blackpool boss Steve McMahon threw on ex-Hatter Steve Davis to add some aerial threat, but this was counteracted by pushing Howard back into defence.

On 88 minutes a rare opportunity came Blackpool's way when Johnson's 30-yard screamer which flashed past Beresford's left-hand post.

Newell was less than impressed with the home side. "They hit the bar in the first half but they didn't create anything in the second.

"It was a long final 45 minutes but if it is meant to be your day you hang on."



■ Steve Howard is beaten to the ball by two Blackpool defenders

Luton Town: Beresford; Foley, Coyne, Boyce, Davis; Mansell, Spring, Robinson, Brkovic (Leary 90m); Forbes, Howard. Subs not used: Brill, Hillier, Showunmi, Crowe

Referee: Mark Warren (West Midlands)

GOALSCORERS:

Blackpool: -

Luton: Robinson (36)

SHOTS ON TARGET

Blackpool: 3

Luton: 3

SHOTS OFF TARGET

Blackpool: 3

Luton: 6

CORNERS

Blackpool: 5

Luton: 3

OFFSIDE

Blackpool: 4

Luton: 5

BOOKINGS

Blackpool: Jones (6m), Flynn (45)

Luton: Spring (29), Boyce (41)

ATTENDANCE: 5,739

**HATTERS STAR MAN:
STEVE ROBINSON**

Ran his heart out for 90 minutes and a great goal

How they stand

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
QPR	21	11	8	2	39	15	41
Plymouth	21	11	7	3	45	25	40
Brighton	21	10	5	6	32	24	35
Barnsley	21	9	7	5	29	26	34
Colchester	21	10	4	7	26	28	34
Luton	21	9	6	6	34	33	33
Bournemouth	21	8	7	5	28	23	31
Port Vale	21	9	5	7	27	26	32
Bristol City	21	7	10	4	26	18	31
Hartlepool	21	8	7	6	33	28	31
Wrexham	21	9	4	8	24	22	31
Blackpool	21	9	3	9	25	28	30
Rushden & D	21	8	4	8	22	22	28
Swindon	21	7	5	8	25	28	26
Grimsby	21	7	6	8	25	28	27
Brentford	21	8	3	10	24	31	27
Sheffield Wed	21	6	8	7	24	27	26
Tranmere	21	6	8	7	22	30	26
Oldham	21	5	8	8	31	33	23
Stockport	21	4	9	8	28	36	21
Peterborough	21	4	8	9	24	31	20
Notts County	21	5	5	11	19	31	20
Chesterfield	21	2	8	11	16	29	14
Wycombe	21	2	7	12	22	36	13

Division Two results

Barnsley	1	Sheffield Wed	1
Blackpool	0	Luton Town	1
Bournemouth	0	Grimsby	0
Chesterfield	2	Tranmere	2
Colchester	2	Oldham	1
Notts County	1	Wycombe	1
QPR	4	Hartlepool	1
Rushden	1	Bristol City	1
Stockport	1	Brentford	1
Swindon	2	Plymouth	3
Wrexham	2	Peterborough	0