

Howie's FA Luton first

SOUTHEND 0 HATTERS 3

STEVE Howard's first ever FA Cup goals for Luton Town helped Hatters sail through to the second round on the coast at Southend.

Howard, the Town's leading scorer for the past three seasons and who is leading the net-busting charts again this term, has surprisingly never scored for Hatters in the competition before.

But the 28-year-old put that right with two early strikes in four minutes at Roots Hall before in-form Ahmet Brkovic put the result beyond doubt with a 33rd minute third for his ninth of the season.

Howard told The News-Gazette: "I must admit I was quite surprised to hear that they were my first FA Cup goals for Luton. I've scored before in the competition for Hartlepool, but not for Luton.

"It hadn't registered really because I thought I'd scored at Kenilworth Road against Thurrock last season, but that was actually against Yeovil in the Carling Cup! It's funny because people always ask me about my goals and I can't remember them all. There are odd ones that stick in your mind, but it's hard to remember ones at specific times."

Howard's double, his first Luton brace of the current season, took him into double figures for the 2004-05 campaign. And his exploits this season have seen him climb up Hatters' all time scorers list.

He now has 76 goals from 157 games in all competitions putting him sixth in the chart of post-war Luton scorers behind Gordon Turner (276 goals from 450), Brian Stein (154 from 496), David Moss (94 from 245), Mick Harford (92 from 216) and Tony Thorpe (84 from 190).

But in terms of league goals, Howard is fourth in the club's post-war scorers list ahead of Thorpe and Harford, the

Steve breaks his Hatters' FA Cup duck

man who Howard admits helped turn his career around.

Howard added: "We were all gutted when Harford left, but we've pulled together and you have to get on with it.

"I learned a lot from Mick and personally I would say that from the way I was at Northampton, I'm a completely different player now. He helped me to score more goals by telling me to look forwards more often rather than just laying the ball off and setting people up."

On the change since Harford's departure, Howard said: "Brian Stein's taken over the reins now and the lads have really responded to him. It's a difficult situation to be put in to, but it's working really well. Mick used to take most of the sessions with Brian doing more work with the reserves, but Brian's taken it on now and has put his own input in, which the lads are really pleased with.

"The gaffer's also getting more involved which is great because I've always said if anyone could have half the career he's had they'd be doing well."

Howard bagged his first at Southend in the 12th minute converting Brkovic's deflected shot before firing home Rowan Vine's centre in the 15th minute. Brkovic rounded the keeper to slot home the third from Vine's pass and Town comfortably soaked up the second-half pressure to set up a second round trip to Wycombe.



NET GAIN: Steve Howard celebrates his second goal at Southend.

MIKE NEWELL'S VERDICT



"IT'S all about getting through to the next round and we did that with a fully professional performance, particularly in the first-half.

"It would have been asking a lot for them to produce the same kind of performance in the second-half, but we took an advantage and it was all about keeping hold of it.

"It's a difficult place to go to Southend; they had

won six on the bounce at home before the game. But people will be able to see from our first-half performance why we are in the position that we are in the league.

"We were winning all the first and second balls all over the place in the first-half and the goals were a bonus. The second and third goals especially were really good foot-balling goals."