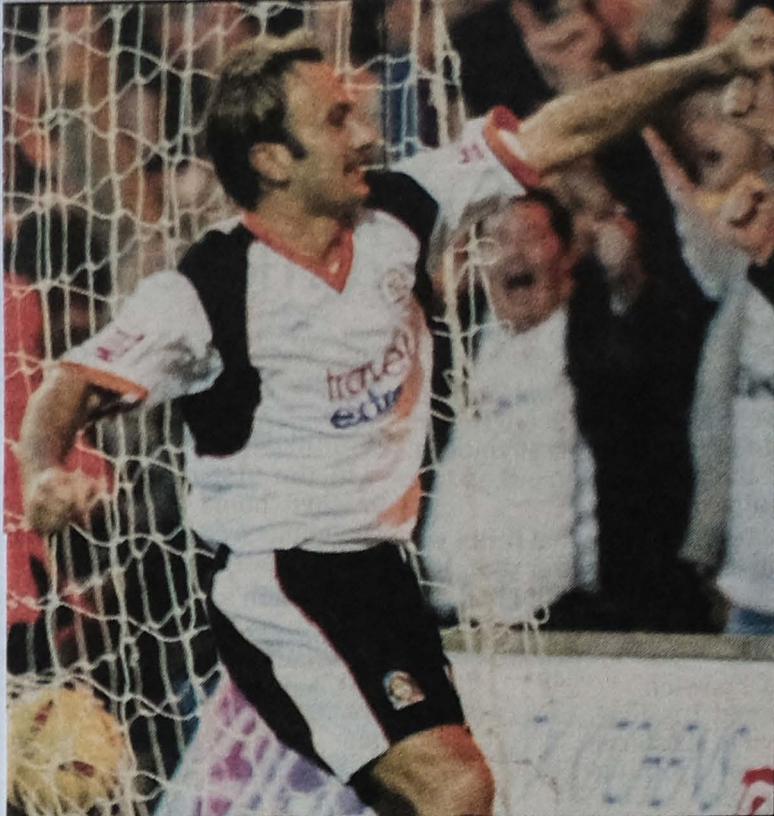




Impression: Ahmet Brkovic was always in the thick of the action

Holmes makes sure for Luton as the leaders keep the Robins on the ground

04/05
LUTON TOWN3

Nicholls (13pen), Brkovic (27),
Holmes (84)

SWINDON TOWN1

Proctor (34)

BY BRIAN GRAHAM

LEAGUE ONE leaders Luton were pushed all the way by a determined Swindon side as they continued their march towards the title.

Goals from midfielders Kevin Nicholls, Ahmet Brkovic and Peter Holmes gave Hatters the points against the Robins, who scored through Rotherham loan man Michael Proctor.

But Town were relieved to hear the final whistle in the end after a jittery showing that was a far cry from the previous week's slick 5-0 win over Bristol City.

Luton assistant boss Brian Stein, who on Thursday signed a new two-year deal at Kenilworth Road along with manager Mike Newell, said: "The lads are disappointed that they didn't put on a show like they did the week before, but we've told them they can't play champagne football every week.

"Teams will come here to make things hard for us and will force us to battle, and that was a battling performance from us out there.

"We didn't start well, but still found ourselves 2-0 up, and that tells you a lot about our team.

"Even at that point we had a lot of defending to do, but we defended magnificently and proved it's about 11 players, not individuals."

The game also signalled a return to Bedfordshire for Robins assistant boss Mick Harford, who left the Hatters for Nottingham Forest in November last year, before joining up with Andy King at Swindon three weeks ago.

Harford said: "It was a great reception from the Luton fans, and I thank them for that, but the gloss was taken off it by us

LUTON		SWINDON
45	Possession %	55
2	Corners	7
5	Offsides	7
14	Fouls	9
1	Yellows	2
0	Reds	0
5	Shots On	4
4	Shots Off	2
1	Hit Woodwork	0

LUTON: Beresford 6, Keane 6 (Leary 80), Davies 8, Perrett 7, Davis 7, Brkovic 7 (Foley 72), Nicholls 6, Holmes 6, Underwood 7, Vine 6 (Showunmi 72), Howard 6.

NEXT GAME: OLDHAM (A) 19/03

SWINDON: Evans 6, Jenkins 8, Heywood 6, Ifil 5, O'Hanlon 8, Duke 6, Miglioranza 6 (Holmes 77), Smith 7, Igoe 6, Proctor 6 (Roberts 67), Parkin 6.

NEXT GAME: WREXHAM (H) 19/03

losing the match. Possession-wise and football-wise, we were much better than Luton, but we ended up losing, and that's the bottom line.

"There were some outstanding performances and we'll keep chasing the play-off places."

Swindon started much the better, but fell behind after 13 minutes when the otherwise impressive Matthew Heywood went in late on Brkovic in an aerial challenge inside the box, and Nicholls slotted home his 11th of the season from the spot.

Luton grabbed the second after 26 minutes when Paul Underwood teed up Sol Davis for a 20-yard drive that deflected into the path of Brkovic, who slipped home past Rhys Evans from close in.

The Robins got the goal their possession deserved after 34 minutes when Grant Smith's dangerous in-swinging corner was touched home by Proctor at the near post.

The second period saw Nicholls fire a free kick just wide and Underwood hit the bar, but it was Swindon who dominated without creating clear chances.

The result was put beyond doubt six minutes from time when Evans fumbled Nicholls's deep cross and Holmes walked the ball into the empty net.