

INCE-PERFECT STRIKE

Wolves.....2
Luton1

By BEN RUMSBY

PAUL Ince scored a spectacular first goal of the season to crank up the pressure on Luton boss Mike Newell as Wolves won a real game of two halves at Molineux.

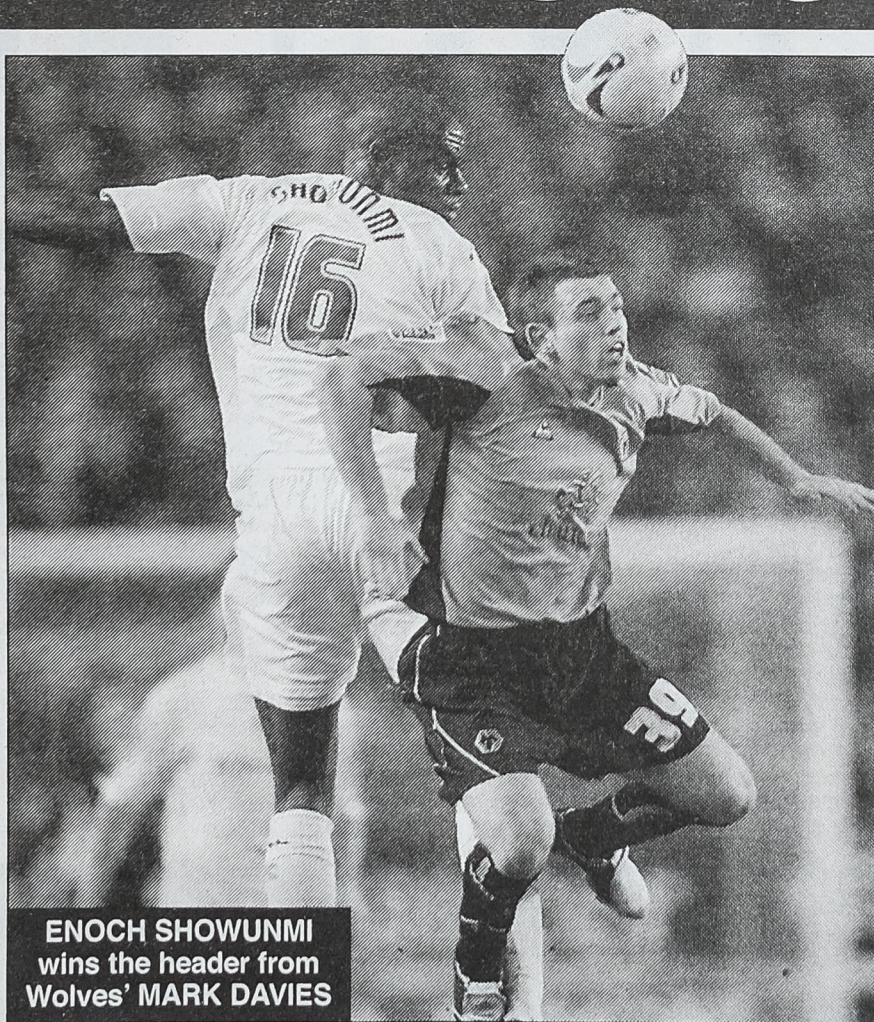
Following a dire first 45 minutes, 17-year-old Mark Davies scored his first professional goal to put Wanderers ahead before Steve Howard looked to have claimed a point for the Hatters.

But Ince, two decades Davies' senior, stole the headlines with a brilliant winner with barely five minutes remaining.

Carl Cort started his first game for Wolves since October, with Jody Craddock and Rob Edwards also drafted into the side that beat Plymouth in the FA Cup the previous week.

New signing David Bell was on the bench for Luton, who made only one change from their extraordinary cup tie with Liverpool, bringing in Enoch Showunmi for Steve Robinson.

Cort was involved in Wolves' first opportunity, cleverly bending his run onto Tom Huddlestone's clipped through-ball before feeding Davies, whose cross was fired over by Leon Clarke.



ENOCH SHOWUNMI wins the header from Wolves' MARK DAVIES

Long straight balls were getting Cort and Clarke in behind Luton's defence but Wolves were too slow getting numbers in support.

Wolves put only their second

decent move together moments before the break, but Mark Kennedy's near post strike was plucked from the air by the diving Marlon Beresford.

A truly dire game was in desperate need of one of the sides to take a gamble — and Wolves duly obliged.

They began committing more men forward and it paid off on the hour as first Davies, then Ince burst through.

The skipper fed Kennedy out wide and his cross found the head of Clarke, with Beresford only able to parry his effort to a grateful Davies.

Wolves suddenly exploded to life and Kennedy cut inside before firing a shot which was again too hot for the Hatters keeper to handle.

Encouraged by his foray infield, the Irish winger repeated the trick minutes later, this time finishing with a low shot that brushed the outside of the post.

The home side went close again when Maurice Ross pumped the ball forward and Ince caused enough havoc in the box for the ball to run loose to Cort, who blazed over.

Luton were inches from equalising when Carlos Edwards drove an angled effort wide and Cort narrowly failed to make contact with Ross' centre moments later.

But a rash decision from Stefan Postma soon had the visitors level, when Kevin Nicholls' free kick rebounded back to the Hatters skipper off the wall and Howard beat the flapping keeper to the resulting cross.

However, there was a further twist in the tale as, in the closing minutes, Ince rifled an unstoppable low shot past Beresford from 25-yards.

05/06

Newell fed up with same old story

MIKE Newell hit out at those who have criticised him for blowing the whistle on the illegal payments he claims to have turned down when buying players who use agents.

The Luton manager has no regrets about making the revelations and asked whether he expected more managers to come forward, he replied: "I'm not on a crusade, but I'm not holding my breath."

On the game itself, Newell said: "It's been the story of our season away from home. It's getting a little bit frustrating

because I'm having to say the same things week in, week out.

"I think we had plenty of the game, particularly the second half, and they've scored against the run of play and they've scored at the death.

"Unless I'm watching a different game, we were the better side."

Wolves boss Glenn Hoddle was delighted with the win that keeps up his side's chase for a play-off place.

"We've played enough good football this year and not had our

just rewards," he said.

"If we're going to go on a run, we have to win matches like that sometimes."

He had praise for the tireless Paul Ince, who he admitted considering taking off after asking him to come out for the second half all guns blazing.

Hoddle said: "I said we want to see the Ince of West Ham years and Manchester United years and if we have to carry him off at the end so be it. He was puffing a bit but was still surging and I thought we can't take him off."