

WATKINS MAKES COBBLERS PAY

By Matt Badcock 11/12 (FAC)

GARY JOHNSON lamented wayward finishing as Northampton crashed out of the FA Cup in the first round thanks to a sublime winner from local Luton boy Adam Watkins.

The Cobblers had their fair share of chances to take the lead before the 80th minute hammer blow and make the short trip back up the M1 still in the hat.

But after seeing opportunities pass by they were punished by 20-year-old Watkins, who hopped off the bench and smashed the Blue Square Bet Premier boys into the second round.

Johnson's men are now without a win in seven games, including six defeats, leaving the frustrated former Bristol City boss pondering how to turn his side's season around.

Johnson said: "They are not any non-league side, they are doing well. They took their chance, we had several opportunities but we just didn't have that quality or guile to stick them in the back of the net.

"A lot of them went over the bar or just missed and their keeper didn't have as many saves to make as perhaps he should have done when we were in shooting range.

"The balls are going in the back of the net on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday but you've got to have that big-game mentality. We need to go and win our next game. If the losing run gets a bit longer then it gets even harder."

Kenilworth Road has never been a happy hunting ground for the League Two side with just one win at the Hatters in the last 26 matches.

But they had the best chance of a dire first half when Adebayo Akinfenwa peeled off his man at the far post only for Kevin Pilkington to save well from the big man's downward header.

Luton had a penalty shout turned down when Amari Morgan-Smith went down in the box, but there only opening fell to captain George Pilkington, who, eight yards out, headed wide.

Arron Davies, a first-half substitute for Lewis Young, curled



ON THE MARCH: Luton's Amari Morgan-Smith attacks

wide, Kevin Pilkington tipped an audacious chip from Saido Berahino, whose gorgeous finish in the first half had been ruled out for offside, over the bar and John Johnson missed a golden chance as the League Two outfit turned up the pressure.

But Luton made them pay when substitute Watkins slammed the ball beyond the reach of Sam Walker with ten minutes left.

Michael Jacobs twice went within inches of an equaliser. First his fierce drive whistled past the post before another long-ranger dipped over.

Luton boss Gary Brabin said: "I thought we thoroughly deserved the win. Adam has been fantastic, everyone knows what I think about him.

"He's got a fantastic chance but I've got to ask the fans to be patient with him because I don't want him to lower his standards. We've got a hell of a player on our hands in the future."



LUTON: (4-3-3): Pilkington 7, Osano 6, Kovacs 6, Pilkington 6, Howells 7, Keane 6 (Willmott 43 7), Hand 6, Lawless 6, Morgan-Smith 7 (Crow 43 6), O'Connor 7, Kissock 6 (Watkins 75 7) Subs not used: Tyler, Gleeson, Beckwith, Blackett
NORTHAMPTON: (4-4-2): Walker 6, Johnson 6 (Holt 84, 6), Westwood 6, Langmead 6, Crowe 6, Young 5 (Davies 32, 7), Tozer 7, Jacobs 7, Arthur 5 (Tumbull 46, 6), Berahino 7, Akinfenwa 6 Subs not used: Corker, McKay, Hall, Savage

Att: 4,799 Rating: ★★★★★
Ref: Andy D'Urso 6/10



LOCAL BOY: Adam Watkins after his goal for Luton Town

PICTURES: Gareth Owen