



ONE DOWN ... the Hyde United players celebrate with the UniBond League Challenge Shield. Picture: Jon Snape

# Lethal Lutel sets up champions' defeat

**THE Tigers are back, and their claws are sharper than ever.**

Although Hyde allowed UniBond champions Bamber Bridge to come back at them on Saturday, they showed enough in a blistering start and finish to suggest that they are about to pick up where they left off before last season's fixture glut destroyed their title challenge.

It is, perhaps, a brave man who reads too much into a game such as this, and Bridge are a much-changed outfit from the one that lifted last season's championship.

Yet, when the Tigers moved forward, they did so like a well-oiled machine. In a scintillating start, they ripped into their opponents, who were constantly back-peddalling, trying to survive in the face of such a barrage.

Until he was taken off after 35 minutes, Ged Kimmins got behind the defence time and again. Tony Carroll looked dangerous, and Val Owen was back to his old self in the middle.

However, the star of the show was undoubtedly the

**Bamber Bge.....2  
Hyde Utd.....4**

by **MIKE PAVASOVIC**

**UniBond Challenge Shield** quicksilver Lutel James, who was here, there and everywhere. It was as though the ball was glued to his foot. Yet manager Mike McKenzie described the game as James' quietest so far.

The Tigers went ahead on 15 minutes, after Stuart Barton could only parry a rasping drive from Tony Carroll. James gathered the loose ball, shielded it, and then put it across the goal for Jason Gallagher to slide home at the far post.

Owen added goal number-two on 35 minutes, shrugging off challenges as he tore through the middle.

Unfortunately, Hyde then took their foot off the gas, and Darren Royle, son of Eve-Joe, reduced the arrears bang on half time, heading home unchallenged.

Things got worse after the break, when the match seemed to centre more on high tackles than good play.

At that point, the game needed a firm hand, but Referee Mr Copeland was in lenient mood.

Then, things bounced back to life. Keeper Martin Jones brought down Royle on 59 minutes, and Mick Doherty stroked home the penalty.

Having squandered their lead, the Tigers suddenly woke up, and Paul Varden - who had started as a substitute - took centre stage, scoring two excellent goals.

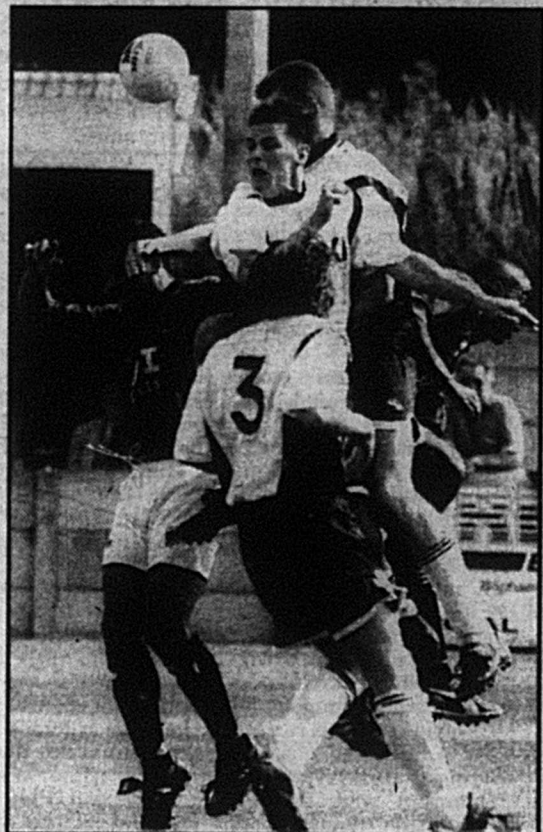
His first came on 70 minutes, when he supplied a clinical finish after a precision ball from James.

However, his second - on 89 minutes - was even better. Off-balance with his first shot, he retrieved the ball and held it for what seemed to be an age, before stunning both Barton and the crowd by bending a shot inside the post.

Hyde: Jones 7, Cox 7, Switzer 7, Wilson 7, Gallagher 8, Brockie 7, Kimmins 7, Owen 8, James 9, Carroll 8, Hall 7. Subs: Varden 8 for Kimmins (35), Darren Esdaille 7 for Cox (65), Nolan 8 for Hall (27).

Bamber Bridge: Barton, Brown, Ward, Milligan, Taylor, Royle, Todhunter, Cochran, O'Neill, Doherty, Hill. Subs: Denny, Dewhurst, Dugdale.

Referee: Joseph Copeland (Wirral).



CAROUSEL ... Jason Gallagher in the thick of the action. Picture: Jon Snape.