

Cally's goal kills off the Hatters

ON BUDGET Day when everything else seemed to go up Luton's fortunes took a dive.

Despite enjoying the lion's share of possession Hatters produced little to worry keeper Coton, while Watford seized on the chances that came their way.

A suspect penalty decision allowed Watford to get in front and then a brilliant individual goal from Nigel Callaghan sealed Luton's fate before a late Blissett goal flattered the home side.

"It was disappointing," said David Pleat. "They looked ragged and we looked confident. We had more possession than in any of the cup games with Watford. We kept playing our football after the penalty but the second goal was crucial. However, there's no excuses."

Graham Taylor admitted his side looked apprehensive after Saturday's 3-1 home defeat by Chelsea. "We were nervous but the second goal settled us down and we were glad to put the Chelsea game behind us."

The two sides, so recently battling for glory in the cup, were on Tuesday fighting to

avoid becoming trapped in the relegation zone.

Luton made one change from the side that drew at Hillsborough on Saturday, naming Meka Nwajiobi as substitute and bringing in Garry Parker. That gave Hatters four across the midfield, with Preece playing wide and supporting the only two recognised strikers, Stein and Harford.

Taylor, keen to get

back to form after Saturday's debacle, left out Sinnott and Lohman and rejigged the side to accommodate the big striker Gilligan and full-back Bardsley.

Luton's formation gave them clear supremacy against the two-man midfield of Watford but they paid the price for dominating this department with shortcomings in the front-line.

Mick Harford had

Luton's best chance, screwing his shot wide after a one-two with Stein. Foster sent a header over the bar and Coton fielded a long-range shot from Parker.

Covering

Hatters seemed on course for a victory built on patience but it all went wrong after 26 minutes. Mal Donaghy was quick to head out of defence but the clearance was indecisive.

The centre-back was now out of position as the ball was played forward to Blissett and the covering player, Mitchell Thomas, was judged to have pulled down the England international.

Thomas protested

that he never touched the Watford man but referee Trevor Spencer had no hesitation.

Luton kept their shape and composure and continued as if nothing had happened, again making Watford do the chasing with some confident passing in midfield.

But after 74 minutes, with Luton waiting to bring on third striker Nwajiobi, a scramble in the Watford goalmouth was cleared up to Callaghan and the winger delivered the sweetest of shots from 25 yards to leave Sealey groping.

The game now slipped away from Luton and as they pushed forward Blissett stole away a minute from time to score Watford's third to

BOTTOM SEVEN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
WATFORD.....	29	5	4	5	30	25	3	6	6	22	29	34
Sunderland.....	30	7	4	3	19	14	2	3	11	16	27	34
West Ham.....	27	5	5	5	19	17	3	4	5	16	24	33
Coventry.....	29	7	3	5	19	16	2	1	11	12	32	31
Ipswich.....	27	5	4	4	17	15	1	4	9	8	24	26
LUTON.....	28	5	5	3	20	16	1	3	11	12	35	26
Stoke.....	29	2	3	8	13	25	0	5	11	4	31	14

bring the 14,111 crowd to their feet.

Despite the defeat, Pleat saw optimistic signs in the performance and predicted no major surgery for Saturday's home match with QPR. WATFORD: Coton, Bardsley, Terry, McCle-

land, Rostron, Taylor, Jackett, Callaghan, Blissett, Gilligan, Barnes. Sub: Porter.

LUTON: Sealey, Breacker, Foster, Donaghy, Thomas, Parker, Hill, Nicholas, Preece, Stein, Harford. Sub: Nwajiobi.

● Mitchell Thomas ... protest



● A rare Luton attempt at goal . . . Coton dives but Harford's shot goes the wrong side of the post.

COSTLY BUDGET DAY FOR LUTON

WATFORD 3 LUTON 0 By GRAHAM PUNTER

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