

Nightmare first half at Luton

Luton 5
Charlton Ath. 2

CHARLTON are staring relegation in the face after a nightmare first 45 minutes at Kenilworth Road on Tuesday.

After trailing 0-4 at half-time against their rivals in distress, Charlton fared somewhat better in the second period as Welsh international Andy Jones, back after three months on loan to Port Vale, made a "Roy of the Rovers" return with two headed second-half goals.

Charlton's dismal defending in the first half cost them dearly, and the trapdoor to the Second Division is perilously ajar.

Manager Lennie Lawrence surprisingly played with three centre halves, Peter Shirliff operating as a

sweeper in front of the back four.

It was aimed at stopping the aerial power of Luton's Mick Harford, but failed abysmally, and the scheme was scrapped when Charlton were two down.

Afterwards Lawrence said: "It wouldn't matter what system you played the way we defended. Our marking was non-existent. We let in four goals in the first half, three of them from headers, although I admit perhaps that the system we played didn't help us get out of our half enough."

Charlton's nightmare started after 11 minutes when Harford headed down a Preece cross for Wilson to head in.

Then Colin Walsh, playing his first full match since the opening day of the season, headed into his own net.

Wilson got his second, and Luton's third, from what looked like an off-

side position, and the match was effectively ended for Charlton right on half-time when Harford, unmarked, headed in the fourth.

Sixteen-goal Paul Williams, relegated to the subs' bench, came on at half-time for Tommy Caton, and after an hour Andy Jones replaced Garth Crooks, and immediately brought Charlton back into the game with a close-range headed goal from Humphrey's cross.

Roy Wegerle made it 5-1, but Jones then scored the best goal of the game with another powerful header from Lee's cross.

This was the first time Charlton had conceded five goals since their return to the First Division.

Charlton — Bolder, Humphrey, Reid, Caton (Williams), Pates, Shirliff, Lee, Walsh, MacKenzie, Mortimer, Crooks (Jones).

Att: 10,024.