



GRANT DENIED: Fans are on their feet as Kim Grant gets round Kevin Miller and looks like scoring... but he was driven wide and shot into the side netting

LAST RITES PREPARED BY THE MAN IN BLACK

LUTON TOWN 0 WATFORD 0

IT WAS NOT quite the official death knell for Luton Town's First Division life, but the man in black helped to prepare the last rites at Kenilworth Road in one of the most boring local derbies for years.

Being a wholesale meat salesman in Liverpool can't be a lot of fun at the best of times, but George Cain's yellow card antics helped wreck a match that neither side deserved to win.

Graham Alexander's second caution saw him sent off in the last minute.

It just about ensured that the sides would meet for two more local derbies next season - in the Second Division, where, on Saturday's evidence, they truly belong.

In more than 40 years of watching the traditional grudge matches, I don't think I can remember one played with less passion - nor one with more anxiety, nerves and tension.

And Mr Cain was down to much of it: he dished out four bookings in the first nine minutes, to increase the fear factor in every player, which was inevitably well stoked up before the start by the league table positions.

But as manager Lennie Lawrence said: "That game was a little cameo of Luton Town this season: we had a good first half, dominated it, but didn't create many chances. Things peered out on the edge of the box.

"In our best spell ten minutes after half time we made two good

chances, but didn't take them. And then we lost our shape and discipline, and we never looked like scoring. Thirty-six goals in 42 league games is the statistic that relegates you.

"And now you have to ask is this team good enough to score goals in any division? In the Second we will need 60 or 70..."

Lawrence agreed that the draw was no good to either side - "We have cut each other's throats" - but did not join in Luther Blissett's condemnation of the referee.

Lawrence said he would rather have a strict referee than a lax one, and would look at the video before deciding if Alexander should be disciplined by the club for his 89th-minute dismissal.

Referee Cain took the sting out of the game in the first five minutes, when he booked Craig Ramage for delaying a Town free kick and David Oldfield for a not very vicious foul on Tommy Mooney.

In the next four minutes Devon White went into the book for dissent and Alexander was cautioned for a foul on Gary Porter.

Grant and Tony Thorpe missed chances early in the second half - Grant shot into the side netting after collecting a through ball by Scott Oakes, beating Darren Ward, and then being driven wide to get away from Miller. Thorpe drove wide after making a chance for himself by charging down a clearance and exchanging passes with Grant. In the last minute Alexander, who had run his heart out on overlapping forays down the right, did it again and skipped past