

# Moment of madness hands it to Hatters

By Paul Marston  
Luton 3 Walsall 1

WALSALL'S hopes of extending their two-match unbeaten run were shattered by razor-sharp Luton at Kenilworth Road.

After winning their previous two matches, the Saddlers were aiming to carry on their good work but they were unsettled by a first-half injury to new winger John Hodge.

When the former Swansea man left the field, Walsall never looked as effective but still played good football and were cheered off at the end by several hundred of their supporters.

Walsall finished well on top, looking for goals and could have had a couple with Luton hanging on.

Substitute Andy Watson struck a volley just wide and then Kyle Lightbourne failed to connect with a simple header from Darren Bradley's free-kick.

Lightbourne must carry the can for handing the Hatters the lead in first-half stoppage. With plenty of time to clear the ball a few yards outside his own area, Lightbourne dwelt on it and was challenged by Ceri Hughes with the ball rebounding for Tony Thorpe to gobble up the gift.

Earlier, Walsall had played some lovely football with Mark Blake outstanding in midfield and they should have scored from one superb move in the 16th minute. Several players were involved in the build-up and, when Hodge crossed into the goalmouth, Kevin Wilson's instant shot was pushed away by goalkeeper Ian Feuer and Martin Butler could only lift the ball over the bar.

There were signs of uncertainty in Walsall's defence, though, and Trevor Wood had already made one fine save to deny Andrew Fotiadis.

With Ray Daniel struggling after being out of action because of injury, the Saddlers began to make errors at the back in the second half but in the 51st minute Lightbourne tested Feuer with a low shot from Wilson's pass.

Then Wilson shot weakly wide from a good position and the failure to cash in was punished in the 61st minute.

Luton increased their lead when a free-kick by Hughes was firmly headed across goal by Steve Davis for substitute Paul Showler to dive and head past Wood.

Walsall's hopes died eight minutes later when Fotiadis strolled on to a long pass from Davis and lifted the ball over Wood for number three.

That sparked Walsall's strikers into action and Lightbourne rattled in his fourth goal of the season with a tremendous left-foot drive from 30 yards in the 71st minute.

But the Saddlers were too far behind to rescue the match and remain among the Second Division strugglers.

LUTON: Feuer; James; Thomas, Waddock, Davis, Johnson, Hughes (McLaren 83), Alexander, Thorpe, Fotiadis (Douglas 87), Guenchev (Showler 53).

WALSALL: Wood; Ntamark, Marsh, Viveash, Butler (Watson 69), Mountfield, Blake, Kelster, Lightbourne, Wilson, Hodge (Daniel 34) (Bradley 69).

Referee: B Knight (Orpington).