

Teenage Wolves do by

Bristol City



● NAUGHTY BOY: Simon Davies gets a stern warning from referee Eddie Lomas before the Hatters' midfielder received a yellow card for dissent (above left) David Oldfield (middle) and (right) Richard Harvey sets City's Colin Crabb a dummy

A DAMAGE limitation exercise from the start, Lennie Lawrence was happy that his decimated team returned to Luton with some pride intact after Saturday's trip to Bristol City.

In a real men against boys clash, the Hatters managed to field the only 14 professionals available to him giving four players their League debuts. In the process, Tommasi Liam George, Matthew Spring and Robert Kean all played their part in, without doubt, the most unimpressive team in Luton Town's recent history.

Also made it his first Nationwide League start and Celtic Omgren, the veteran substitute, while White also made five League debuts should be have come in at such circumstances and in front of an Ashgrove Gate crowd hungry for a convincing victory, the Huddersfield looked set to open and in the first half, here they did.

A clumsy challenge by White on City centre-forward Colin Omgren saw referee Eddie Lomas award the home side a penalty after only four minutes. Michael Budd stepping up to convert well, despite a tight kick that gave the resolute Kevin Davis no chance in sight. On 13 minutes, the Hatters might have had a penalty of their own when Tony Thorpe, desperately kicking match finesse himself, seemed to be faulted in the ground only for referee Lomas to give the decision the other way.

The Hatters' lack of net improve and the home team's second goal was a perfect example of when you're down on your luck nothing goes your way. A clean Tommasi cross from the left was met firmly by the head of City striker Steve Torpey with White's instinctive and goal-saving block only succeeded in setting up the tall form for an unmissable second chance that he bundled over the line.

Four minutes later, Torpey increased his side's lead, brushing aside another right back Sean Evans before hitting a firm shot into David 'bottom left' behind the goal. In the first half, both all shape and confidence, the Bristol team went for the regular, yet hitting the woodwork within the space of a minute. In the 70th minute Bernadus Gregory Goodledge found that he bundled over the line.

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The little group of thirteen players could well have done better than they did. Lawrence reasoned after the game, "The fans responded to that and the players responded to them."

"We had some bad luck in the first half, the penalty was taken and the second that struggled over the line was a bit unfortunate. Against that, we had a couple of strikes of our own when they hit the bar."

In the second half, we passed the ball well throughout with all sorts of young players coming on and doing their bit. Matthew Spring was excellent and Robert Kean did his own things.

It is a target for them at half-time to have a clean sheet, they achieved that and we could have even got a goal in the second half. Compared to last year when we had all the new players playing and low visibility, it's a much much more infinitely more satisfying."

What is most worrying for Town fans is that, within twelve months ago, Saturday's performance is not one the club can hope to radically improve on in time for Watford's visit to Kenilworth Road this weekend.

BRISTOL CITY: Keith Welch, Adam Locke, Michael Bull, Sean Dwyer, Shaun Taylor, Rob Edwards, Gregory Goodledge (Tom Doherty, 90), Gary Owens, Steve Torpey, Colin Crabb (Demetrius Harcourt, 78), Brian Thomas.

BRISTOL CITY 3
 (all 14 goals)
 Torpey 27, 31
 HATTERS 0
 Att: 8,509

find a shot into the ground which was destined to be by corner before Davis spectacularly tipped the ball on to the over the bar. From the resultant corner, centre-half Taylor's header powered back off a post and a limited defence consisting of two players-out-of-position, one missing his longer effort and another with only a handful of appearances in his name over the last year, were refused to hear the half-time whistle with no further damage done.

Matthew Spring replaced Liam George for the second half and the Hatters' cause was not helped in the slightest when skipper Gary Waddock limped off with a pulled shin in the 64th minute, giving Robert Kean his first taste of professional football.

Many expected the second half to degenerate into a one-sided farce as an inconspicuous too-event, but with the visitors refusing to drop their heads neither supporters neither Bryan Small began to find by example in defence and home Davies put in an indubitable marvellous performance.

Thomas provided his most effective defence since his summer move from Manchester United and nearly put his name on the scoreboard in the 64th minute when his powerful shot of the area was well saved by home keeper Keith Welch.

In the 73rd minute, a clever shrewdly created a better chance for Davies but his goal bound effort was brilliantly blocked by City's uncompromising skipper Sean Dwyer.

At the other end, Goodledge nearly opened the home side's account, having on inside Richard Harvey, his credible 60th minute shot struck the cross bar and in the 81st minute, Rob Edwards saw another headed effort come back off a post.

At the end of 90 minutes however, the scoreline remained the same and Lennie Lawrence's men had as good a reason as any to feel disappointed.

They could have realistically hoped for.

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HATTERS: Kevin Davis, Sean Evans, Richard Harvey, Gary Waddock (Robert Kean 64), Bryan Small, David Oldfield, Tony Thorpe, Liam George, Matthew Spring, Adam Bull, Sam not used; Celtic Omgren.

WIE'S VERDICT

TOO GOOD LENNIE
 TOO BAD
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Just how the hell did we win, grade three, but we did win, and it was a good thing. I don't know what he had in mind, but he did it. I don't know what he had in mind, but he did it. I don't know what he had in mind, but he did it.

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● TUG OF WAR: Striker Tony Thorpe grapples with home defender Rob Edwards in the penalty box, a free kick to City was the verdict



● WADDOWED: Thorpe looks for a way to get past home defender Taylor and Edwards

● WADDOWED WOE: Skipper Gary Waddock receives treatment for a gashed shin

Pictures: Gareth Owen

Aug	Opp	Score	Scorers	Att	Pts
Sat 9	Sheff Wed	0-0	Thorne 87	2,840	2
Sat 16	Sheff Wed	0-0	Thorne 87	2,100	2
Sat 23	Sheff Wed	0-0	Thorne 87	2,100	2
Sat 30	Sheff Wed	0-0	Thorne 87	2,100	2
Sat 6	Sheff Wed	0-0	Thorne 87	2,100	2

Sept 30	OULHAM	0-1	Thorne 87		
September					5,781
Times 2	MILLWALL	0-2			7,248
Times 9	Northampton	0-1			4,561
Oct 13	Southampton	1-1	Marshall 43		3,437
Times 16	WEST BROM (CG)	1-1	Douglas 28		5,241
Oct 20	WOLVHAM	2-5	Dennis 15, 41, Gray 50		7,227
Times 23	West Brom (CG)	2-4	Dennis 15, 38, Thorne 73		8,550