

HATTERS' hopes of taking three points from a professional Springfield Park performance were sunk when home midfielder Roberto Martinek took a 72nd-minute dive.

The Latics' Spanish import fell dramatically to the ground after a Steve Davis lunge in the penalty box had failed to make contact with either player or ball. Unfortunately for Latics and their fans, Martinek's sponsorship handouted referee David Measias into awarding a penalty which last season's top scorer Graeme Jones duly despatched.

It was roughly justice on Lennie Lawrence's team who, just four minutes earlier, had deservingly taken the lead courtesy of David Offfield's first goal of the campaign.

Tove's Australian midfielder threw the ball to Tony Thorpe and then reacted on the centre-forward's return pass to sidestep coolly and deliberately past Wigan keeper Lee Butler.

But Offfield turned from hero to villain moments later when, losing possession on the halfway line, he set in motion a chain of events that eventually led to the home team's equaliser.

Jones scored clear for the Latics after Offfield's mistake and after turning inside Davis, went down in the penalty area and appeals from players and spectators alike.

Agonist contact looked debatable but the incident seemed to sway Mr Measias' decision when Martinek took his tumbler moments later.

The home team had started well with Jones squaring during an excellent opportunity in just the second minute when, having cut inside both Davis and Alan White, he scuffed his shot at the ball rolled to Kevin Davies for a major let-off.

From then on though, the visitors scored the initiative, playing neat possession football with Paul McLaren, ably supported in the centre by Graham Alexander, bowing the midfield.



Art. 4.466

Alexander wanted Butler's hand in the 25th minute for a stinging long-range effort and soon after the same player shot over from Bryan Small's cross and Matthew Spring's lay back.

The visitors were carrying on manager Lennie Lawrence's instructions to a tee, taking the game to Wigan, not allowing them to come forward and frustrating their strikers with a well-drilled offside trap.

Skipper Gary Waddock missed the game with a calf injury but Davis returned to wear the captain's armband with aplomb and was his usual solid self at the back.

Spring, a revelation the previous week, enjoyed most accomplished moments and despite Offfield's booking right on the stroke of half-time for a trip on Latics' right-back Cliff Broadshaw, the Hatters were well in the ascendancy going into the interval with the home team looking devoid of imagination.

Sporadic

Within a minute of the restart though, the visitors' defence was shaken not of any complacency they might have harboured when David Loner need clear to beat the offside after Kevin Sharp's through ball.

A home goal seemed a formality for the Latics' front man dragged his shot wide and the Hatters travelling away breathed an audible sigh of relief.

The let-off again triggered Lawrence's troops into action and within five minutes Thorpe, whose first-half form had been sporadic, slipped through the defence only to shoot wide.

On the home-ramp Thorpe went even closer with a drop-shot that Butler in the home goal paid to save.

The goals then followed before the last 10 minutes saw both teams go close to securing all three points.

First Wigan skipper Colin Cresswell just missed the

top corner with a rasping drive that had Kevin Davies well beaten and then, at the other end, Davis set his yard free-kick come back off the foot of an upright.

Small, who had a largely indifferent game at his disposal, made amends by producing two very impressive goals in the game that ensured the Hatters took one point for a performance that could well have given them three.

After the game Lawrence was reluctant to release his reference, the Hatters' boss admitting that the defeat was first had been a penalty and that his players had done the one man you don't want to see opposing you down in the penalty area.

Of his team's confident and much-improved performance he said: "This was a big step for us. Wigan are age about three years at home but we couldn't get a game throughout and that was our most professional away performance for a long time."

"We would have regarded it as a satisfactory result before the game started and the performance was certainly acceptable."

WIGAN: Butler, Broadshaw, Sharp, Grendel, Roberts, Martin, Lee (sub G. Johnson), O'Sullivan, Law, Davies, HATTERS: R. Davies, James, Small, Spring, (sub Davison), Davis, White, Gray (sub Martin), McLaren, Offfield, Thorpe, Alexander.

LENNIE'S VERDICT

HATTERS BOSS LENNIE LAWRENCE SAYS:

On general play and possession we deserved to win but maybe not on penalty book actions.

We restricted them to a handful of chances but with the marksmen Wigan have got we were quite grateful that they didn't put any of them away.

On the home-ramp Thorpe went even closer with a drop-shot that Butler in the home goal paid to save.

The goals then followed before the last 10 minutes saw both teams go close to securing all three points.

First Wigan skipper Colin Cresswell just missed the



Aug. 2	Opp.	Score	Aug. 2	Opp.	Score
Aug. 12	Blackpool	1-1	Thorp 27	1-1	2,341
Aug. 11	SOUTHEND	1-1	Douglas 75	1-1	5,142
Aug. 10	WALSLEY	1-1	1-1	1-1	1,421
Aug. 9	COLCHESTER	1-1	Thorp 34	1-1	2,818
Aug. 8	OLYMPIA	1-1	Thorp 30	1-1	4,454

Aug. 7	Opp.	Score	Aug. 6	Opp.	Score
Aug. 6	MILLWALL	0-2	1-1	1-1	5,791
Aug. 5	Northampton	0-1	1-1	1-1	2,246
Aug. 4	W. BROM. LYONS	1-1	Douglas 25	1-1	4,541
Aug. 3	WIDEBAY	2-2	Davis 21, Gray 56	1-1	2,433
Aug. 2	West Brom (JCC)	4-4	Davis 21, Gray 56	1-1	2,222
Aug. 1	Walsley	0-2	Davis 21, Gray 56	1-1	4,554

Aug. 1	Opp.	Score	Aug. 1	Opp.	Score
Aug. 1	WATFORD	0-2	1-1	1-1	3,541
Aug. 1	P. MOUTH A.D.	1-2	Thorp 36, 38, Davies 85	1-1	4,231
Aug. 1	Wigan Athletic	1-1	Offield 66	1-1	4,466
Aug. 1	Collierley	1-1	1-1	1-1	1-1
Aug. 1	BEHNTON	1-1	1-1	1-1	1-1

Aug. 1	Opp.	Score	Aug. 1	Opp.	Score
Aug. 1	Walsley	1-1	1-1	1-1	1-1
Aug. 1	Walsley	1-1	1-1	1-1	1-1
Aug. 1	Walsley	1-1	1-1	1-1	1-1
Aug. 1	Walsley	1-1	1-1	1-1	1-1
Aug. 1	Walsley	1-1	1-1	1-1	1-1

Aug. 1	Opp.	Score	Aug. 1	Opp.	Score
Aug. 1	Walsley	1-1	1-1	1-1	1-1
Aug. 1	Walsley	1-1	1-1	1-1	1-1
Aug. 1	Walsley	1-1	1-1	1-1	1-1
Aug. 1	Walsley	1-1	1-1	1-1	1-1
Aug. 1	Walsley	1-1	1-1	1-1	1-1

Aug. 1	Opp.	Score	Aug. 1	Opp.	Score
Aug. 1	Walsley	1-1	1-1	1-1	1-1
Aug. 1	Walsley	1-1	1-1	1-1	1-1
Aug. 1	Walsley	1-1	1-1	1-1	1-1
Aug. 1	Walsley	1-1	1-1	1-1	1-1
Aug. 1	Walsley	1-1	1-1	1-1	1-1

Aug. 1	Opp.	Score	Aug. 1	Opp.	Score
Aug. 1	Walsley	1-1	1-1	1-1	1-1
Aug. 1	Walsley	1-1	1-1	1-1	1-1
Aug. 1	Walsley	1-1	1-1	1-1	1-1
Aug. 1	Walsley	1-1	1-1	1-1	1-1
Aug. 1	Walsley	1-1	1-1	1-1	1-1

Aug. 1	Opp.	Score	Aug. 1	Opp.	Score
Aug. 1	Walsley	1-1	1-1	1-1	1-1
Aug. 1	Walsley	1-1	1-1	1-1	1-1
Aug. 1	Walsley	1-1	1-1	1-1	1-1
Aug. 1	Walsley	1-1	1-1	1-1	1-1
Aug. 1	Walsley	1-1	1-1	1-1	1-1

DAVID OFFFIELD: The Aussie picked up his first goal and his first booking of the season