

■ **DAVE FLETT** SEES LUTON TOWN'S SEASON STUMBLE INTO FREEFALL IN FOURTH SUCCESSIONIVE HOME DEFEAT

HEADS YOU LOSE:
Andy Fotiadis
is outjumped
in this duel while
(right) Paul
McLaren
tries his luck
on the
ground

- **Hatters** 2 Burnley 3
- **Hatters** 1 Preston 3
- **Hatters** 0 Torquay 1
- **Hatters** 0 Walsall 1

Simon Davies gets a rare glimpse of the ball while (inset) Tony Thorpe tries his luck with a header. But for Ian Feuer (right) it's a sad trudge back to the dressing room as Hatters lose again.

MOST pantomimes in town still have several weeks of rehearsals before opening night but, if you can't wait that long, Kenilworth Road stages a passable imitation these days.

A *Theatre of Dreams* not so long ago that played host to the likes of Liverpool, Manchester United and Arsenal, the ground has become a *Theatre of the Absurd*, with manager Lennie Lawrence cast as the evil villain whose every action and appearance is greeted with boos from the desperate home fans. Unlike true pantos, however, there seems to be no hint of a happy ending here. Even the return of keeper Ian Hopper, everybody's hero and the nearest the club have to a knight in shining armor, failed to provide us with a fortunate

Feuer was left powerless by an excellent volley from Walsall winger John Hodge in the 59th minute, as Hatters fell to a fourth successive home defeat. Now only the plight of Carlisle United spares the pre-season title favourites the ignominy of propping up the table.

In an increasingly familiar scenario, the visitors made no effort to win, yet still managed to take maximum points. For the second consecutive game, Fever didn't have a serious save to make and the defence, marshalled once again by Alan White and Julian James, was watertight.

It is the Hatters' inability to carve out goalscoring opportunities that is frustrating the Kenilworth Road faithful.

Saddlers manager Jan Sorensen, on his first visit to Luton, hit the nail firmly on the head: "They had all the possession but didn't look capable of creating anything – it's not the away team's job to dictate the play."



Walsass's jibe piles on theory for Lennie

centre-forward with an imposing presence throughout and ignored on several occasions. Watford have illustrated the difficulties when in acres of space on the left. In the case of uncelebrated Premiership player John O'Grady, Graham Alexander chose to substitute him for Jamie Dwyer, at £250,000, rather than Andy Foster, who was infinitely better than O'Grady, whatever his wages and self-confidence. And the wisdom of providing Bryan Robson with a £1.5m transfer fee, when he was 35 and showing chance from a promise that there is no money available for him to leave, was highly questionable.

desperate measures are needed because some group of disgraced players can continue to be sent out week after week.

The Hatters don't look like winners again in 1997 and, whether Lavers stays or goes, Luton are becoming a club who cannot compete financially with even Wigan Athletic. Preston, Burnley, Fulham or, most depressingly, Watford.

Paul McLaren, with a little luck, could have scored the scoring in the ninth minute with his 25-yard lob save Saddlers' keeper Jimmy Nelson. Frankly back-tracking to tip him over but, thereafter, the home team's predictable approach was never looked like unlocking the visitors' defence.

Confidence deteriorated almost inevitably, and, with the clock winding

On the pitch, the players continue to make the wrong decisions. Simon Davies, harshly withdrawn after 65 minutes, was

LENNIE'S VERDICT



Hatters boss Lennie Lawrence said:

saloss's jibe piles
neppy for Lennie

minute, Fotiadis' control let him down when given a clear run on goal by David Oldfield's searching ball after Boli had seen his only serious chance, a skilful volley, flash just wide.

Nine minutes later, an even better effort secured Walsall's first away win of the season. Lawrence referred to it as "totally out of place in the league, never mind the game" - and his description was a fair one. Hodge met Gary Porter's cross with a full volley that simply flew into the bottom corner. It had more than a touch of the Van Bastens.

The manner of defeat was symptomatic of the Hatters' torrid season and, in moonson conditions, Hatters could muster only two serious efforts on goal before the end: Thorpe headed wide when well placed and Alexander saw a free kick shave an upright, before referee Mael Halsey blew the whistle on a game that left downcast Hatters fans wondering how a side could enjoy so much possession and create so little.

"The bad luck here is unprecedented in my 1 years as a manager," said a beleaguered and exasperated Lawrence.

"The injury situation is unprecedented – as four successive home defeats. Most worrying the difficulty of getting it going again.

HATTERS: Ian Feuer, Julian James, Bryan Smar, Gory Waddock (Matthew Spring, 74), Alan White, Simon Davies (Shaun Douglas, 65), Andrew Fotiad, Paul McLaren, David Oldfield, Tony Thorpe.

WALSALL: Jimmy Walker, Wayne Evans, Chris Marsh, Adrian Vivesash, Derek Mountfield, Jeff Peron, Roger Boli (Michael Ricketts, 83), Gary Porter, Dean Kenates, Andy Watson, John

**LUTON TOWN FC 1997-98
THE STORY SO FAR...**

League	Opponent	Score	Home	Avg.
Sept. 1	Blackpool	2-1	Blackpool	6.847
Sept. 12	Colchester (CC)	1-1	Stratford	6.847
Sept. 18	SOUTHEND	1-0	Douglas	5.143
Sept. 25	Blackpool	1-0	Blackpool	5.143
Oct. 2	COLCHESTER (CC)	1-1	Thames 24	2.816
Oct. 9	OLDSHAM	0-0	Thames 30	4.684
October				
Sept. 1	MILLWALL	0-2	Stratford	5.981
Sept. 8	Northampton	0-1	Stratford	2.249
Sept. 15	Southampton	0-1	Marlow 43	2.249
Sept. 16	WEST HAVEN (CC)	1-1	Douglas 29	2.249
Sept. 22	WRETHAM	0-0	Marlow 11, Gray 30	2.249
Sept. 23	West Brom	0-2	Dress 31, Gray 30	2.249
Oct. 1	Blackpool	0-2	Blackpool 30	2.249
October				
Sept. 1	WATFORD	0-1	Douglas 29	4.351
Sept. 8	P. MOUTH ARG	0-0	Thames 36, Stroud 32	4.351
Sept. 15	W. A. A.	1-1	Colt 29	4.351
Sept. 22	Carlisle United	1-0	White 87	4.351
Sept. 29	BURNLEY	0-0	Thames 36, Thospe 38	4.351
November				
Sept. 1	Worcester	2-2	Colt 40, Thames 34	6.218
Sept. 8	BURNLEY	0-2	Stratford 36, 35	5.218
Sept. 15	PRESTON	0-1	Stratford 36	5.218
Sept. 22	TORQUAY (FAC)	0-1	Stratford 36	5.218
Sept. 29	WALSLEY	0-1	Stratford 36	5.218

Sat 29	York City	A	3
December			
Tues 2	GILLINGHAM	H	7.45
Sat 12	Chatterfield	A	3
Sat 20	BRISTOL ROVERS	H	3
Ed 26	NORTHAMPTON	H	3

Sat 28	Milwall	A	3
January			
Sat 5	Southend (FAC 3)	A	3
Sat 10	BLACKPOOL	H	3
Sat 17	Oldham	A	3
Sat 24	FULHAM	H	3
Sat 31	ROBINSON	H	3

Sat 21	BRISTOL CITY	H	3
Tues 24	WYOMING	A	7-65

Sat 28	Plymouth Arg	A	3
March			
Sat 7	WYCOMBE	H	5
Sat 14	Burnley	A	3
Sat 21	GRIMSBY	H	3
Sat 28	Walsall	A	3

April			
Sat 4	YORK CITY	H	3
Sat 11	Gillingham	A	3
Tues 14	CHESTERFIELD	H	7.45
Sat 18	Bristol Rovers	A	3
Sat 25	Brentford	A	3
May			

St. 2	CARLISLE	M	2
TSA	Grimsby	A	

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NATIONWIDE LEAGUE DIVISION TWO **APPEARANCES & GOALS**

[illegible]

BAD BOYS  **STAR TUR**

Player	Yellow Cards	Red Cards
Steve Davis	4	0
Paul McLennan	4	0
John Wozniak	3	0

Phil Gully	3	0
Gavin McGowan	2	1
Matthew Spring	0	1
Quinton Alexander	2	0

Orlando Adams	2	0
Julian James	2	0
Gary Waddock	2	0
Errol Davies	1	0

Player	Mod	Stuart Douglas
Alan White	4	Stuart Douglas
Chris Jones	3	Richard Jones

Dwight Marshall	1	0	Steve Davis	3	Julian Jarman
David Oldfield	1	0	Paul McLaren	3	David Oldfield
Bryan Small	1	0	Gavin McGowan	2	Bryan Small
			Tommy Thomas	2	

Michael Thomas	1	0	Tony Thorpe	1	0
Tony Thorpe	1	0	Graham Alexander	1	0
Totals	26	2	Kevin Davis	1	0

Pictures: Gareth Owen