

# Hatters make a good point

97/98

Chesterfield 0 Luton 0

**JULIAN James faces a Christmas lay-off after jarring his knee just six minutes into yesterday's 0-0 draw.**

The Luton right-back will be out for at least three weeks, to give boss Lennie Lawrence more defensive headaches.

Lawrence says he may bring Darren Patterson back into the action but conceded he may have to consider yet another loan deal.

Once again Hatters' playmaker Graham Alexander had to drop back to cover for James, but he played a faultless game and Hatters were worthy of their hard-fought point.

Steve Davis excelled at the back in a match in which high-flying Chesterfield – who went into yesterday's game in fourth place – managed just a single shot on target.

Just after the half-hour, Chesterfield's emergency centre-forward Mark Jules – normally a left-back –

BY PETE KENYON

was clean through with only Feuer to beat, but Davis somehow scrambled back and wrapped his boot around the ball from behind as Jules prepared to stab the ball home.

The Chesterfield crowd howled for a penalty but the referee correctly waved play on. Had Jules scored it would have been a travesty – he was at least two yards offside when the through ball was played.

Tigerish Tony Thorpe then came a hair's breadth from an early bath – but escaped with a stern lecture following the second of two very late flying tackles, which came just minutes after he had been booked for an off-the-ball fracas with Mark Williams.

In a keenly contested match, Luton's Graham Alexander and Alan White were also booked, along with Chesterfield's Paul Holland and Mark Williams.

But for all the flying tackles and passion, this match was about as entertaining as an afternoon Christmas shopping.

Shot-shy Hatters managed just a single effort on target – but it proved to be the game's best chance.

Early substitute Stuart Douglas – on in place of the injured James – got goal-side of his marker, flicked a goalbound effort under the advancing Billy Mercer, but the shot lacked the necessary power to cross the line and Chris Perkins darted back to hack to safety.

Chesterfield came into this game unbeaten in their last eight league outings – but troubled Luton keeper Feuer just once, on a day on which goalkeepers looked more likely to pick up a cold than a ball out of the net.

After the match, a satisfied Lennie Lawrence said: "We were the better team. It was a solid performance. We controlled the first half and long periods of the second. Stuart Douglas made two good chances and on another day we would have won 1-0.

"It was like the York game without the goals. There was good commitment from everyone. It was a blow to have to reorganise so early, but Alexander did very well.

"He seems to be able to play in that position away from home but not at Kenilworth Road.

"Stuart Douglas's running got him into good positions, but he couldn't quite knock them in."

Of James' injury, he said, "Julian has picked up ligament damage and realistically will be out for at least two or three weeks.

"We have one last hurdle to climb – two home games against Bristol Rovers and Northampton. At the very least we need one win and a draw, and then we are on the move.

"In the last three games we have started to look like a team. I think now we have turned the corner, but the only problem is we are always only a few injuries away from having to field kids in the starting line-up."

**Team: Feuer, James (Douglas 7), Thomas, Waddock, Davis, White, Allen, McLaren, Oldfield, Thorpe, Alexander. Subs not used: Davies, Fotiadis.**

**Attendance: 4,358. Man of the match: Davis.**



● Stuart Douglas made two good chances for the Hatters against Chesterfield



● Steve Davis had a good game at the back to take the man of the match award