

■ Latics sing their new song and celebrate with a hearty meal of three lucky points

Midas touch goes missing as Oldham take Hatters' record

Oldham 2 Luton 1 97/98

BY PETE KENYON

TONY Thorpe's Midas touch finally deserted him as Hatters surrendered their proud away record.

The in-form striker wasted two golden opportunities as Latics keeper Gary Kelly underlined just why he was named Oldham's player of the month before yesterday's match.

Twice Thorpe was put in the clear – first by David Oldfield, then by Gary Waddock – but twice Kelly got his angles right to deny last week's hat-trick hero.

At the other end, two moments of indecision from Hatters' keeper Ian Feuer cost Luton two identical goals – both point-blank headers from corners by central defender Richard Graham.

That both Oldham's goals came from corners was somewhat ironic in a week that two madcap 'Latics' supporters released a bizarrely-entitled single 'Meat Pies, Sausage Rolls, Come On Oldham, Give Us The Goal' – the chorus of which goes: 'Oooh, we've got a corner'.

After seeing Neil Thompson's bullet-like corners it is easy to see why Oldham's fans get their kicks from corners, but Luton boss Lennie Lawrence was in no mood to see the funny side.

Oldham manager Neil Warnock said after the game: "Lennie was doing his nut on the touchline when the second one went in."

Lawrence himself said afterwards: "To lose 2-1 to the same corner is not good enough."

"The manner of defeat was galling. They weren't any better than us but they beat us because they scored two identical goals from corners, both from headers inside the six-yard box."

For that the blame must lie firmly with Ian Feuer – last year's Player Of The Year – who is looking a pale shadow of his former self: indecisive, punching instead of catching, and generally lacking in confidence.

After a dour first half in which Feuer did well to save Lee Duxbury's close-range shot with his outstretched legs, Oldham caught Hatters with a pair of carbon-copy goals.

On 54 minutes, the Boundary Park outfit – the division's only undefeated side at home – won a corner on the right.

Ferocious

From the moment Neil Thompson struck a ferocious left-foot inswinger to the near post, the writing was on the wall.

Feuer and his defence stood static and Richard Graham rose unchallenged to nod home.

Thorpe missed a golden opportunity to pull Luton level barely a minute later – but after finding himself all alone on the penalty spot, he shot straight at Kelly.

Oldham then treated any fans who had taken a toilet break when the first was scored to an action replay – Feuer again left in no-man's land as Thompson's inswinging corner was nodded home by Graham.

But after that it was all Luton. Lawrence pulled off the ineffectual Matthew Spring, playing in place of the suspended Paul McLaren, and substitute Simon Davies rewarded his boss's faith by setting up Luton's goal.

With 13 minutes left, Davies held the ball outside Oldham's box before rolling square for Thorpe, who played a beautiful angled ball inside left-back Thompson which left Graham



● **Reflective mood: Hatter' manager, Lennie Lawrence has much to think about at the moment**

Alexander clear on the overlap.

From an angle ten yards out, Alexander needed no second invitation – and smashed an unstoppable drive in off Kelly's near post for his seventh goal of the season.

David Oldfield came within an inch of grabbing a dramatic last-minute equaliser, but his near-post glancing header from Alexander's inswinging corner flashed all the way across the goal-line with neither Marshall nor Thorpe able to apply the finishing touch.

Oldham might have made it 3-1 in comically controversial circumstances deep into injury time, but Feuer just managed to reach Oldham new-boy Ronny Jepson's 50-yard lob.

After referee Terry Heilbron had stopped play with Luton in possession, one assumes Jepson intended to pass the resultant drop-ball back to Luton's keeper.

But with Feuer hovering on the edge of his box, Jepson got out a nine instead of a five iron, and half of Oldham's players had their heads in their hands in embarrassment as the ball looked to be sailing over a stunned Feuer from all of 50 yards.

After the match a disappointed Lawrence said: "Thorpe can't score every week."

"We created five chances and scored one. That game was a 1-1, really."

"They didn't do enough to win it."

Team: Feuer, Patterson, Thomas, Waddock (Marshall 83), Davis, White, Allen, Spring (Davies 71), Oldfield, Thorpe, Alexander. Subs not used: Evers. Man-of-the-match: Oldfield.



● **Graham Alexander: Grabbed the Hatters' only goal with an unstoppable drive**