

Lennie's saviour: Late goal brings Town back from dead

Emergency striker Davis gives Luton the Lazarus touch

Luton Town 2 Grimsby Town 2
By PETE KENYON
EMERGENCY centre-forward Steve Davis nodded a late equaliser to complete a back-from-the-dead recovery.

When Kevin Donovan scored a somewhat fortuitous second goal for the promotion-chasing visitors just after the hour, the Fat Lady looked like she was preparing to sing.

But goals by Sean Evers and Davis' header five minutes from time, forced her to shuffle hastily for the exit – and by the end it was shell-shocked Grimsby who were hanging on for dear life.

With Southend and Plymouth both winning, Hatters slip to second from bottom, but only a single point now separates them from the four teams above. But credit must go to under-fire manager Lennie Lawrence who took two crucial gambles and turned the match around.

Off went Andrew Fotiadis, and replacement



● Ouch! Grimsby get to grips with Luton's Stuart Douglas.

Stuart Douglas, only just back from injury, was into overdrive immediately.

Within four minutes of the switch, Evers smashed an imperious left-foot curler past Aidan Davison with the outside of his boot from 20 yards.

And as Hatters surged forward for the equaliser, Lawrence furiously waved Steve Davis up into a centre-forward position as defensive caution was thrown to the wind.

Within five minutes Davis had come up trumps – nodding home Graham Alexander's deep cross from the right into a half-empty net.

And in a vain bid to snatch a dramatic victory, Lawrence continued to gamble by keeping Davis up front for the remainder of the match.

Out-of-sorts David Oldfield spurned two decent chances to win the game late on, and right at the death Douglas might have snatched a dramatic injury-time winner but for a poor first touch.

Earlier Grimsby had looked in total control – and only two brilliant saves from Kelvin Davis kept the Mariners at bay in the first 45 minutes.

Graham Alexander looped a far post header against the bar two minutes after the break, but after that Grimsby turned on the style.

Kelvin Davis had to be off his line like lightning to deny substitute Steve Livingstone on 50 minutes, and two minutes later the young keeper did brilliantly to fist away Jack Lester's lob over him just in front of the line.

But referee Andrew Hall adjudged Steve Davis to have pulled Lester back right on the

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edge of the box, and with no advantage having been gained, he awarded a free-kick.

Davis went into the book for his furious protests and Tony Gallimore compounded the Luton skipper's misery by driving a fierce, low shot through Graham Alexander's legs and just into the corner of the net.

On 63 minutes, Luton were caught on the break with David Smith popping up on an overlap in the inside-left position.

From an acute angle, Smith drilled a low drive across the face of goal and Kevin Donovan was on hand to deflect the bullet-like effort into the empty net.

After the match, Lennie Lawrence paid tribute to the fighting spirit shown by his team.

"To come back from that situation, you have got to take your hat off to the lads. We have got to be quite happy with that, all things considered.

"But we didn't really start to play until we were two down. When you are in that situation the fear in the players goes, and they started to play because they were under no pressure.

"Not too many people wouldn't have settled for that scoreline at the start of the afternoon.

"Grimsby are possibly the best team in this division. They play a classic four-four-two pass and move game, and crucially they have kept their squad intact since they were relegated."

Team: K. Davis, James, Thomas, Evers, S. Davis, Patterson, Fotiadis (Douglas 61), McLaren, Oldfield, Marshall, Alexander. Subs not used: Davies, Waddock.

Attendance, 5,700. Man of the match: S. Davis.

Feuer kisses Luton goodbye

GOALKEEPER Ian Feuer waved goodbye to the fans minutes before yesterday's game – kissing the Luton crest on his tracksuit as a mark of respect.

The giant American keeper – who lost his place in the side following January's 4-1 hammering by Fulham – has been sold to a football club in New England, USA.

The keeper paid the price for a string of poor performances – and caused unrest in the dressing room by giving a frank and honest interview about his and the team's slump in form to this

newspaper. The fee is thought to be around £200,000, and it is understood Feuer will fly to America tomorrow.

Temporarily, at least, that leaves Luton without cover for the crucial goalkeeping position, and should Kelvin Davis get injured, novice keeper Nathan Abbey – with just one senior game to his credit – would have to deputise.

When Davis went down injured after smothering Livingstone's 50th-minute effort, the decision to let Feuer go without cover

looked suicidal. But the young keeper recovered and Lawrence is now hoping to bring in a keeper on loan for the rest of the season.

Lawrence is also trying to sign ex-QPR frontman Bradley Allen, now at Charlton, for the remainder of the season, in a late bid to find the goals to save Hatters from the drop into Division Three.

Lawrence said: "The deal with Feuer is tied up and he flies out on Monday or Tuesday."

He refused to confirm or deny that Allen is his target.



● Under pressure: Lawrence cops fans' half-time flak.



● Jump to it: Mitchell Thomas and Steve Davis attack.