

DAVE FLETT sees Luton's poor run of form continue with a Kenilworth Road mauling from the Lions



Kenilworth Road mauling from the Lions



● **HEAD FIRST:** Luton skipper Steve Davis wins a header in the Millwall penalty box.

● **FIRING BLANKS:** Hatters striker Stuart Douglas sends a late first-half cross, while top scorer Phil Gray receives no encouragement from a determined Millwall defence.

PUSSYCATS...1 LIONS...2

More feline pain for sorry Luton



● **ASSURED:** Teenager Stuart Fraser enjoyed a confident return to first team action and was one of the Hatters' better players.

JUST two weeks ago Hull City's Tigers humbled Lennie Lawrence's Pussycats out of the FA Cup. On Saturday, it was the turn of Millwall's Lions to deliver another Kenilworth Road mauling!

Luton Town have lost the winning habit and face a difficult struggle to recapture it.

With games against in-form Reading and Bournemouth over Christmas that will not be easy and Town need to improve fast if they are to avoid a very unhappy New Year in the bottom half of the Division Two table.

At least, neither of their next two opponents possess feline nicknames!

Saturday's unconvincing performance saw the Hatters drop further off the play-off pace after goals from Neil Harris and Lucas Neill helped bogey team Millwall to a third successive victory at Luton.

If ever there was a game to miss and catch up on a bit of last-minute Christmas shopping then this was the one for Hatters fans.

Santa Claus himself would have struggled to deliver a more generous gift than the three points a lacklustre Luton team handed over to Millwall.

Graham Alexander, Sean Evers, Mitchell Thomas and Ray McKinnon were all missing from the starting line-up but the two inexperienced replacements Andre Scarlett and Stuart Fraser were arguably the best Hatters players on the pitch.

Scarlett huffed the touchline to great effect in his first full start for the Hatters, his trickery on both flanks causing the only consternation in a well-drilled Millwall defence.

Barrier

Former youth team captain Fraser was assured at left back, having only played one reserve game after a cartilage operation. But aside from the teenage duo, most Luton players were below their best.

Confidence is currently at a low in the Kenilworth Road camp and the Hatters need to overcome the mental barrier of winning again - quickly!

"After every game we don't win, it becomes more important to win the next one," Lawrence reflected on his side's concerning decline in form after this latest disappointing offering.

The Hatters have now gone six games without a league victory. More significantly, they have trailed at some stage in each of those games and never really threatened a win.

Against Millwall, a string of missed chances early in the game saw the home team's confidence gradually subside after a dominant first half-hour.

Paul Showler, making his first start since May 1997, showed signs of rust in front of goal as he squandered three chances in the first ten minutes.

Just three minutes into the game, Showler drove a good opportunity straight at Millwall captain Scott Fitzgerald. Shortly afterwards, he completely fluffed his shot from

HATTERS MILLWALL

five yards out after Phil Gray's cross from the right.

Lucky to get a second chance, the 32-year-old midfielder then stabbed the ball wide.

In between, Steve Davis had a 20-yard drive deflected wide and headed over Showler's cross.

Carelessness

Top scorer Gray was also guilty of carelessness in that effort deflected wide from eight yards and then wasted a better opportunity when, after good work by Showler, he

keeper Nigel Spink to turn his close range shot behind. Douglas was his usual industrious self but failed to

Spink once the entire afternoon and Andrew Fotiadis 64th-minute introduction to form a three-pronged attack did little to pep up the Hatters' front-line.

After Luton's wastefulness in front of goal during the first-half, there was more than an air of inevitability about Millwall's first goal. What wasn't inevitable was its source - a rare mistake from skipper Steve Davis.

Davis misdirected his header into the path of Harris' long punt and the Millwall forward coolly punished the Hatters captain by shooting low past Kelvin Davis.

The visitors pushed for a second straight after the interval with Marvin Johnson lucky to avoid at least a caution for an early trip on Steven Reid. Impressive ex-Aston Villa striker Paul Shaw drilled the subsequent free-kick into Kelvin Davis' midriff.

Tim Cahill then saw his rising shot fizz just wide of the goal for the first time after the break, Scarlett going close to the top corner after a Matthew Spring error and Reid

with a strong run towards goal. The Hatters defender was cautioned and Shaw's free kick again forced a save out of Kelvin Davis.

Also involved in Neill's winning goal, receiving after Harris' clever touch before teasing Gavin Gray with a strong run towards goal.

Well in support alongside him, Shaw chose to feed the winger who burst into the Hatters penalty box and squeeze the ball past Spink at the far post.

Paul Showler replaced Gray with a late goal. On 78 minutes, Lawrence replaced Gray with a late goal. White in order to push Davis upfield in search of a winning goal.

Unfortunately for Luton the tactical switch back to a 4-4-2 was not as good as it seemed. It was as simple as that. The break was as good as I have seen in the

badly. Firstly, within moments of his introduction, he escaped a red card when he bundled over Shaw 25

minutes he was up there he had more shots and



● **STAIN MARVEL:** Steve Davis netted his tenth goal of the season to level the scores by the time Matthew Spring's inswinging corner past former Aston Villa keeper Nigel Spink.

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headers on goal than our midfield and front people had put together."

Nevertheless, Lawrence admitted that removing Davis from defence was instrumental in the defeat, adding: "If I could wind the clock back I'd have put five at the back but you can't always be right."

"Every game here we find ourselves using the subs and juggling it around to cover the deficiencies in the starting 11. A lot of times we've got it right but today the changes we made to try and win the game, lost us it."

HATTERS: Kelvin Davis, Gavin McGowan, Stuart Fraser, Matthew Spring, Steve Davis, Marvin Johnson, Andre Scarlett, Paul McLaren, Stuart Douglas, Phil Gray (Alan White, 78), Paul Showler (Andrew Fotiadis, 64). Sub not used: Michael McIndoe.

MILLWALL: Nigel Spink, Gerard Lavin, Robbie Ryan, Tim Cahill, Jamie Stuart, Scott Fitzgerald, Steven Reid (Danny Hockton, 72), Ricky Newman (Keith Stevens, 46), Neil Harris, Paul Shaw, Lucas Neill. Sub not used: Richard Sadlier.

PICTURES by Gareth Owen

LUTON TOWN FC 1998-99

August	Opponents	Score	Scorers	Att	Pos
Sat 8	Wycombe	1-0	Davis (S) 36	5,252	10
Tues 11	OXFORD UTD (WC1)	2-3	Alexander 59 (pen), 63 (pen)	3,165	-
Sat 15	PRESTON	1-1	Marshall 54	5,392	7
Tues 18	Oxford Utd (WC1)	3-1	Gray 37, Evers 48, McLaren 70	5,099	-
Sat 22	Reading	0-3		18,108	12
Sat 29	COLCHESTER	2-0	Douglas 62, Davis (S) 82	5,005	9
Mon 31	Wigan Athletic	3-1	Davis (S) 41, Evers 78, Gray 81	3,778	5
September					
Sat 5	BURNLEY	1-0	Douglas 47	5,554	2
Tues 8	Wrexham	1-1	McKinnon 36	2,951	3
Sat 12	BRISTOL ROVERS	2-0	Davis (S) 7, Alexander 9	5,558	3
Tues 15	Ipswich (WC 2)	1-2	Douglas, 60	9,032	-
Sat 19	Blackpool	0-1		5,695	5
Tues 22	IPSWICH (WC 2)	4-2	Fotiadis 52, Douglas 83, Davis (S) 99	5,655	-
			Johnson 120	5,530	7
Sat 26	WALSALL	0-1			
October					
Sat 3	Fulham	3-1	Gray 3, Douglas 48, Davis (S) 65	11,856	7
Sat 10	York City	3-3	Douglas 22, Evers 43, Gray 55	3,780	4
Sat 17	OLDHAM	2-0	Gray 82, Scarlett 90	5,447	4
Tues 20	NORTHAMPTON	1-0	Alexander 19	6,087	3
Sat 24	Gillingham	0-1		5,602	4
Tues 27	COVENTRY (WC 3)	2-0	Gray 50, Davis (S) 78	9,051	-
November					
Sat 7	Stoke City	1-3	Douglas 81	12,964	6
Tues 10	BARNESLEY (WC4)	1-0	Gray 82	8,435	-
Sun 15	Boreham Wood (FA1)	3-2	Gray 33, 53, Davis (S) 76	1,772	-
Sat 21	Lincoln City	2-2	Gray 43, Doherty 76	4,893	6
Sat 28	MANCHESTER CITY	1-1	Doherty 76	9,070	7
December					
Tue 1	Sunderland (WC5)	0-3		35,742	-
Sat 5	HULL CITY (FA2)	1-2	Davis (S) 36	5,021	-
Sat 12	Macclesfield	2-2	Douglas 3, Gray 90	2,905	8
Sat 19	MILLWALL	1-2	Davis (S) 69	5,939	11
Sat 26	READING	H	Noon		
Mon 28	Bournemouth	A	3		
January					
Sat 2	Colchester	A	3		
Tues 5	WALSALL (AWS 2)	H	7.45		
Sat 9	WYCOMBE	H	3		
Sat 16	Preston	A	3		
Sat 23	WIGAN ATHLETIC	H	3		
Sat 30	BOURNEMOUTH	H	3		
February					
Sat 6	Burnley	A	3		
Sat 13	WREXHAM	H	3		
Sat 20	Bristol Rovers	A	3		
Sat 27	BLACKPOOL	H	3		
March					
Sat 6	Walsall	A	3		
Tues 9	FULHAM	H	7.45		
Sat 13	STOKE CITY	H	3		
Sat 20	Chesterfield	A	3		
Sat 27	GILLINGHAM	H	3		
April					
Sat 3	Oldham Athletic	A	3		
Tues 6	YORK CITY	H	7.45		
Sat 10	Northampton	A	3		
Wed 14	Manchester City	A	3		
Sat 17	LINCOLN CITY	H	3		
Sat 24	Notts County	A	3		
May					
Sat 1	MACCLESFIELD	H	3		
SAT 8	Millwall	A	3		
TBA	NOTTS COUNTY H, CHESTERFIELD H				

DIVISION TWO

Up to December 19 1998	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fulham	21	14	3	4	33	16	45
Walsall	22	14	3	5	33	24	45
Stoke City	22	14	2	6	30	16	44
Preston	21	10	7	4	37	22	37
Gillingham	22	9	10	3	33	18	37
Bournemouth	20	9	6	5	32	21	33
Chesterfield	21	9	6	6	22	15	33
Millwall	22	8	6	22	23	32	31
Reading	21	8	7	6	25	27	31
Wigan Athletic	22	8	6	8	28	22	30
LUTON TOWN	20	8	6	6	27	23	30
Manchester C	22	7	9	6	25	21	30
Blackpool	22	7	8	7	27	27	29
York City	22	7	6	9	28	27	27
Colchester Utd	21	6	8	7	21	25	26
Bristol Rovers	22	5	10	7	24	25	25
Wrexham	22	6	7	9	21	29	25
Northampton	22	5	9	8	21	23	24
Burnley	22	6	5	11	22	36	23
Notts County	21	5	6	10	23	32	21
Macclesfield	22	4	9	9	19	28	21
Wycombe Wdrs	21	4	7	11	20	27	19
Oldham	22	4	6	12	20	35	18
Lincoln City	22	3	4	15	21	42	13

GAMES AND GOALS

Player	Apps	Goals
Graham Alexander	18(0)	9(0)
Hervé Bacqué	24(4)	1(2)
Jimmy Cox	2(2)	1(1)
Kevin Davis	20(0)	9(0)
Steve Davis	19(0)	9(0)
Simon Davies	2(0)	0(0)
Gary Doherty	0(4)	1(2)
Stuart Douglas	18(0)	7(1)
Sean Evers	19(0)	9(0)
Andrew Fotiadis	1(8)	1(2)
Stuart Fraser	1(0)	0(0)
Liam George	2(3)	0(2)
Phil Gray	19(1)	8(0)
Marvin Johnson	18(0)	8(0)
Dwight Marshall	3(1)	3(0)
Gavin McGowan	16(1)	9(0)
Michael McIndoe	8(2)	2(3)
Ray McKinnon	16(1)	6(1)
Paul McLaren	3(4)	3(3)
Kofi Nyamah	0(0)	1(1)
Andre Scarlett	1(1)	0(1)
Paul Showler	1(1)	0(0)
Matthew Spring	20(0)	8(1)
Mitchell Thomas	9(5)	3(0)
Alan White	3(9)	1(3)

BAD BOYS

PLAYER	Y	R
Gavin McGowan	11	1
Graham Alexander	6	1
Mitchell Thomas	4	1
Marvin Johnson	3	1
Steve Davis	5	0
Stuart Douglas	3	0
Liam George	2	0
Phil Gray	2	0
Michael McIndoe	2	0
Paul McLaren	2	0
Alan White	2	0
Jimmy Cox	1	0
Gary Doherty	1	0
Sean Evers	1	0
Ray McKinnon	1	0
Matthew Spring	1	0
Total	47	4

● **McGOWAN**

LUTON NEWS PLAYER OF THE YEAR STANDINGS

(No. of Top Hatter awards won)	Player	Points
5	Graham Alexander	5
5	Steve Davis	5
4	Matthew Spring	4
3	Phil Gray	3
3	Marvin Johnson	3
2	Sean Evers	2
2	Ray McKinnon	2
1	Kevin Davis	1
1	Stuart Douglas	1
1	Gavin McGowan	1
1	Andre Scarlett	1
1	Mitchell Thomas	1

● **SCARLETT:** Top Hatter against Millwall.