

BRIAN SWAIN brings you all the Christmas holiday action



● **SPRING HAS SPRUNG:** Matthew Spring in battling midfield action at Dean Court during Monday's 1-0 defeat against Bournemouth.



● **FESTIVE BREAK:** Andrew Fotiadis tries to impose himself in Bournemouth's penalty area in one of Luton's few attacks during their latest defeat.



● **SPRING ROLL:** Midfielder Matthew Spring gets in a second-half shot for Hatters, but it proved to be one of only a few chances the visitors had all game.



● **SHOWLER:** The returning Paul Showler gets into the thick of things during his man-of-the-match performance as one of Hatters' few plus points on Bank Holiday Monday.

SCRAPPY NEW YEAR?

LUTON Town, genuine prospects for promotion via the play-offs a month ago, go into 1999 fearfully looking over their shoulders – at the relegation scrapheap.

They have gathered just three of the last 21 points available and their run of seven games without a win rarely looked like being broken at Dean Court.

The mystery is how a team that did so well in the Worthington Cup can now be floundering so badly in the run-of-the-mill league games?

With the loss of form has come a sharp drop in confidence, although there was a spell at Bournemouth when Luton looked as though they might hold on for a point.

Although Steve Davis was not at his commanding best in dealing with the lively and lanky Steve Fletcher, a reshaped defence looked capable of keeping a rare clean sheet.

The problem was at the other end of the team.

With Stuart Douglas out through injury, Andrew Fotiadis came back to partner Phil Gray, but neither managed a single attempt on goal.

BOURNEMOUTH 1 HATTON 1

Luton threatened only twice – a sixth-minute header by emergency right-back Alan White, which was scrambled away with some difficulty by the Bournemouth defence and a late 20-yard drive by sub Herve Bacque, which might have gone anywhere in a crowded penalty area but flew inches wide.

In the 80 minutes between those two attempts, Luton played some reasonable football but Bournemouth were always the more positive side and Kelvin Davis was much the busier goalkeeper.

He made an excellent stop to tip a scorching drive by Steve Robinson over the bar and was then much relieved when the same player beat the offside trap but shot straight at the goalkeeper.

Referee David Crick, from Surrey, was of little help to the Town, always very finicky and awarding a total of 27 free kicks in a game that was never dirty and eventually booking skipper Davis for holding back Fletcher.

MANAGER Lennie Lawrence admitted that Luton are going through a crisis of confidence as they fail to reproduce their cup form in the second division. And at Bournemouth he admitted: "Quite obviously we had insufficient shots on their goal."

"We played some good stuff at times, but there was no end product."

"We are passing and linking up all right. But if that does not lead to anything, it doesn't add up to anything."

"We have been going up and down like a yo-yo."

"Three months ago we absolutely destroyed Fulham, but now we can't get a win anywhere."

and for the most part distribute it with some degree of accuracy. But the whole team had one of those days when they pushed the ball reasonably around in mid-field, but did nothing to damage the opposition in the penalty area.

At least they kept 17-goal Mark Stein quiet, although Davis had to make another top quality save to keep out a late header by the former Luton player.

Frenchman Herve Bacque was given his first run out in the league since the second game of the season, as a sub for Harrison as Luton adopted a more attack-minded approach for the last 15 minutes.

But even with Davis adding his power and height it was still an overmanned strikeforce which was shot shy and very unconvincing.

BOURNEMOUTH: Ovendale, Young, Howe, Cox, Vincent – Bailey, Robinson, Hughes, Warren – Stein, Fletcher.

Suns not used: Rawlinson, O'Neill, Boli.

LUTON: K. Davis, White, S. Davis, Johnson and Thomas – Evers, Spring, Harrison (Bacque 74), Showler (Scarlett 60) – Fotiadis, Gray.

Sub not used: McIndoe.

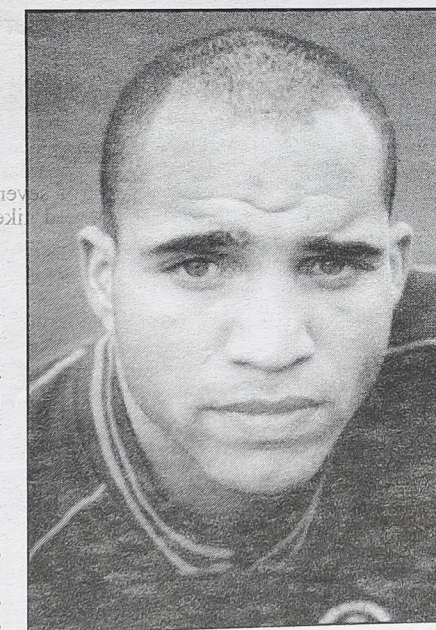
ed Graham Alexander and injured Ray McKinnon and they have only a slight chance of being fit to kick off the New Year at Colchester on Saturday.

Lawrence said: "If we had scored from the early chance we made it might have been a different result at Bournemouth, and on another day we might have got away with a draw."

"We played reasonably well in the first half and Bournemouth didn't really hurt us until they started to take over later."

"But I know it's going to be hard to put things right."

"Bournemouth didn't play particularly well in the first half. We were as good as them, if not better in the first half."



● **DEBUT BOY:** Gerry Harrison made a combative start in Luton colours.

Although the loss of the income on traditionally the most popular footballing day of the year hit Luton on Boxing Day, they had no arguments with ref Lee Cable when he called off the match with Reading.

The pitch was waterlogged and Mr Cable, a bricklayer from Woking, had little choice but to call it off after an 8.30am pitch inspection.

And he more than most would be wary of starting a game that could not finish.

He did exactly that at Colchester with the hosts leading 3-1, then called off the match, and was almost run out of town by angry home fans.

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	-
Sat 26	WALSALL	0-1	Johnson 120	5,530	7
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	Postponed			
Mon 28	Bournemouth	0-1		8,863	14
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 and including December 28 1998

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fulham	23	15	4	4	36	17	49
Walsall	24	14	4	6	35	28	46
Stoke City	24	14	2	8	31	19	44
Preston	23	12	7	4	41	23	43
Bournemouth	22	11	6	5	35	22	39
Gillingham	22	9	10	3	33	18	37
Man City	24	9	9	6	28	22	36
Wigan	24	9	7	8	31	23	34
Reading	22	9	7	6	26	27	34
Blackpool	24	8	9	7	29	28	33
Chesterfield	23	9	6	8	23	19	33
Millwall	23	8	8	7	23	25	32
York City	24	8	7	9	33	40	31
LUTON TOWN	21	8	6	7	27	24	30
Bristol Rovers	23	6	10	7	27	25	28
Colchester	23	6	8	9	21	30	26
Burnley	24	6	7	11	26	40	25
Northampton	24	5	10	9	23	27	25
Wrexham	24	6	7	11	22	33	25
Notts County	23	6	6	11	26	34	24
Wycombe Wdrs	24	5	8	11	23	29	23
Oldham	24	5	6	13	23	38	21
Macclesfield	24	4	9	11	19	30	21
Lincoln City	24	4	5	15	23	43	17

GAMES AND GOALS

Player	Apps	Lge	Cup	Goals	Lge	Cup
Graham Alexander	18(0)	9(0)	2	2	0	0
Herve Bacque	2(5)	1(2)	0	0	0	0
Jimmy Cox	2(2)	1(1)	0	0	0	0
Kevin Davis	21(0)	9(0)	0	0	0	0
Steve Davis	20(0)	9(0)	0	4	0	0
Simon Davies	2(0)	0(0)	0	0	0	0
Gary Doherty	0(4)	1(2)	0	0	0	0
Stuart Douglas	18(0)	7(1)	6	2	0	0
Sean Evers	20(0)	9(0)	2	1	0	0
Andrew Fotiadis	2(8)	1(2)	0	1	0	0
Stuart Fraser	1(0)	0(0)	0	0	0	0
Liam George	2(3)	0(2)	0	0	0	0
Phil Gray	20(1)	8(0)	6	5	0	0
Gerry Harrison	1(0)	0(0)	0	0	0	0
Marvin Johnson	19(0)	8(0)	0	1	0	0
Dwight Marshall	3(1)	3(0)	1	0	0	0
Gavin McGowan	16(1)	9(0)	0	0	0	0
Michael McIndoe	8(2)	2(3)	0	0	0	0
Ray McKinnon	16(1)	6(1)	1	0	0	0
Paul McLaren	3(4)	3(3)	0	1	0	0
Kofi Nyamah	0(0)	1(1)	0	0	0	0
Andre Scarlett	1(2)	0(1)	1	0	0	0
Paul Showler	2(1)	0(0)	0	0	0	0
Matthew Spring	21(0)	8(1)	0	0	0	0
Mitchell Thomas	10(5)	3(0)	0	0	0	0
Alan White	4(9)	1(3)	0	0	0	0

BAD BOYS

PLAYER	Y	R
Gavin McGowan	11	1
Graham Alexander	6	1
Mitchell Thomas	4	1
Marvin Johnson	3	1
Steve Davis	6	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)	
5	Graham Alexander
5	Steve Davis
4	Matthew Spring
3	Phil Gray
3	Marvin Johnson
2	Sean Evers
2	Ray McKinnon
1	Kevin Davis
1	Stuart Douglas
1	Gavin McGowan
1	Andre Scarlett
1	Paul Showler
1	Mitchell Thomas

● **SHOWLER:** Top Hatter against Bournemouth