

■ So close: Abrahams sneaks in for Colchester to steal Luton's thunder



■ Sean Evers appeals and gets an early penalty



■ Paul McLaren sees his shot tipped over

Victory eludes woeful Hatters

Colchester 2 Luton Town 2
By BILL COLE

THE Hatters probably deserved better than their third 2-2 draw away from home against struggling clubs in recent weeks.

But United battled back to equalise twice, the second time in the 84th minute with the best goal of the game.

Luton twice took the lead, through Graham Alexander from the penalty spot and a sharp Alan White far post volley.

United's first leveller also came from a penalty awarded most dubiously by ref Barry Knight.

Luton certainly had the lion's share of the opportunities without missing any really clear-cut chances, due in the main to Colchester's uncompromising defending as two out of form sides each prevented a hat-trick of league defeats with this result.

The Hatters looked like overwhelming United in the early stages. In the very first minute, Sean Evers got clear down the right, Phil Gray's effort from his cross bringing a save from Tamer Fernandes making his debut in the home goal.

It was Stuart Douglas's turn to produce a right wing cross next which Matthew Spring shot on target, only for Richard Wilkins to hack off the line.

In the seventh minute Luton took the lead. Evers looked like getting clear down the middle when he was bundled over by Simon Betts. Graham Alexander, back after injury and suspension, sent Fernandes the wrong way and easily netted with a lovely low drive into the corner.

Mitchell Thomas might have doubled the lead with a back post header also cleared off the Colchester line, then Paul McLaren got in a great shot. This time Fernandes saved with a superb flying dive.

The home side had only Abrahams' wild and wide drive to their credit before they



■ Gerry Harrison was flattened in the second half

equalised, also from the spot after 20 minutes. New skipper Marvin Johnson was adjudged to have fouled big front man Mark Sale, who actually seemed suspiciously to dive over the Luton man's leg.

Kelvin Davis almost saved David Gregory's penalty kick but he was only able to get a hand to the ball at full stretch down to his right and the ball spun off his glove and into the net off his right hand post.

McLaren almost restored their lead with a far post header well blocked by Fernandes. Sale could have done the trick for the home

side but his unmarked power header was brilliantly saved as Davis knocked it up onto the bar and eventually gathered the rebound.

Referee Knight managed to book five men in a cleanly fought first half, but his fussy attempts at controlling an increasingly robust second period added to rising tension on the pitch.

After Alexander, McLaren, Gray and Gerry Harrison were all flattened in the second half, the only addition to Mr Knight's yellow card list was Alexander's. He retaliated as tempers flared following some mass pushing and shoving involving almost all of both teams.

Luton coach John Moore's comments to an assistant referee at Alexander's booking led to his dismissal from the dug-out.

Luton regained the lead when a 72nd minute Matthew Spring corner found its way to the back post, where Alan White was first to the ball under pressure to volley home.

A poor back pass straight to Abrahams brought the best out of Davis, who had to make a double save to retain Luton's advantage. But with six minutes to play and the Hatters looking in line for their first win since October 20th, Abrahams made amends for a series of awful efforts on goal.

He picked up the ball with back to goal on the edge of the penalty area. His lovely turn and sweet low right foot shot gave Davis little chance.

If you regard Luton as play-off contenders this was another two points lost to one of the division's strugglers. But with the lack of ambition resulting in the sale of their inspirational skipper Steve Davis, the Hatters may struggle themselves for the rest of this season. In that case this was a point gained against fellow relegation possibles.

Luton: Davis, Alexander, Thomas, Spring, White, Johnson, McLaren, Harrison, Douglas (Doherty 65), Gray, Evers.

Attendance: 4,694.

Man of the match: Paul McLaren.



■ Graham Alexander who scored from the penalty spot