



LEAPS AND BOUNDS: Reserve centre-half Gary Doherty still claims he is unsure of his best position despite scoring his fifth league goal of the season as a striker against Wrexham. It was only his second league start of the season but Lennie Lawrence will now find it difficult to leave him out at Bristol Rovers.

WIN free Town tickets

BLACKPOOL visit Kenilworth Road on February 27 – and you could be there to see the game FREE!

The Nationwide Building Society has supplied the News-Gazette with two tickets for the game.

Answer this question and they could be yours:

What was the score when the Hatters travelled to Blackpool this season?

All entries must be sent to: Tickets Competition, Sports Desk, News-Gazette, 60 Church Street, Luton, LU1 3JQ.

Keith Gray, of Mile House Lane, St Albans, was the winner of two tickets for next Tuesday's game against Notts County, identifying Kim Grant as the ex-Luton striker now on loan with County.

● Hatters fans travelling to Bristol Rovers on Saturday must buy their tickets before 4pm on Friday.

Tickets already purchased for next Tuesday's re-arranged home game with Notts County will be valid, but there are some still available at normal league prices.

If you are not lucky enough to win our competition, Blackpool tickets are also available now.

● The Hatters home league meeting with Chesterfield, postponed in October, has been re-arranged for Tuesday April 27.

● Clifford Akurang was on target again for the juniors in Saturday's 1-1 draw at Portsmouth.

Fot a shame for new Rory

ANDREW FOTIADIS was in hospital this week just days after Hatters' boss Lennie Lawrence set him the challenge of becoming the club's new Rory Allen.

Allen made a huge goal-scoring impact during five weeks on loan from Tottenham at the end of last season and Lawrence was hoping for an equally explosive contribution from Fotiadis between now and May.

But the injury-ravaged forward is sidelined again with ankle ligament damage sustained in Saturday's 2-1 defeat against Wrexham.

Fotiadis had X-rays at the Luton and Dunstable Hospital on Saturday and is having further scans this week to reveal the full extent of his injuries.

He could be out for four weeks. The Hitchin-born front man had been showing encouraging signs in recent weeks and, before his injury setback, Lawrence gave Fotiadis his full support, saying: "I expect him to do what Rory Allen did for us last year. He has the ability, is the same age, scores goals and is strong."

"He's not as technically accomplished as Rory but he's faster. It should be who plays with him for the rest of the season."

But with Fotiadis out for Saturday's trip to Bristol Rovers, Lawrence must now decide whether to reunite Stuart Douglas, back after suspension, with Phil Gray or stick with form man Gary Doherty, who has plundered three goals in successive games.



OUT: Fotiadis

Lennie struggles to find answers as Hatters flop!

LENNIE LAWRENCE was left scratching his head after watching his side throw away victory at home to Wrexham.

Like Howard Wilkinson after his ill-fated first game as England manager, Lawrence struggled to find explanations for a second-half surrender every bit as depressing as the national side's.

At least Wilkinson could cite the quality of opposition as a reason for capitulation. For Lawrence, there were no excuses against a Welsh side struggling at the wrong end of the Division Two table.

After the previous weekend's rousing 2-1 victory at Burnley, the Hatters turned in a lacklustre and uninspiring performance in front of their lowest league crowd of the season, making a mockery of any lingering play-off hopes.

The home team took a 57th-minute lead when Gary Doherty livened up the dull encounter with a spectacular angled volley that rocketed into the roof of Mark Cartwright's net.

Doherty jostled Dean Spink off the ball to latch on to a Sean Evers' long ball before unleashing his unstoppable effort from an acute angle.

The 19-year-old striker crashed a second effort against the underside of the bar four minutes later after boo boys' target Graham Alexander saw his long range effort parried by Cartwright.

But that was as good as it got for the home team. Goals from league debutant Jake Edwards and Leyton Orient loan striker Carl Griffiths settled the outcome in the visitors' favour.

It is 16 games and three months since Luton's last clean sheet.

At half-time on Saturday, it looked like that dismal sequence could be broken.

Brian Flynn's men did not have one noteworthy attempt on Kelvin Davis' goal before the interval.

Cartwright was marginally busier in a poor first-half, saving Andrew Fotiadis' close range effort and Phil Gray's stinging volley.

GAVIN MCGOWAN will miss Saturday's trip to Bristol Rovers. McGowan received a two-match ban and a fine after a disciplinary hearing at FA headquarters in Lancaster Gate. The ban included Saturday's defeat against Wrexham. If he receives three more bookings, McGowan will face the FA again with a stiffer punishment likely.

LIAM GEORGE played his first football in nearly six months during the reserves' 0 Monday night defeat at Chelsea. George broke his leg at Wigan last August, but completed the first-half in West London with no complications and could be in first team contention next month. French trialist keeper Maxime Agueh also played.

match facts

LUTON 1 WREXHAM 2

● **HATTERS:** Kelvin Davis, Gerry Harrison (Alan White, 74), Graham Alexander, Matthew Spring, Sean Dyche, Marvin Johnson, Sean Evers, Paul McLaren, Gary Doherty, Andrew Fotiadis (Phil Gray, 26), Ray McKinnon (Jimmy Cox, 67).

● **WREXHAM:** Mark Cartwright, Mark McGregor, Philip Hardy, David Brammer, Dean Spink, Brian Carey, Martyn Chalk, Kevin Russell, Jake Edwards, Carl Griffiths (Neil Roberts, 76), Jeff Whitley. Subs not used: David Ridler, Robin Gibson.

● **Shots on target:** Luton 12, Wrexham 4.

● **Corners:** Luton 8, Wrexham 6.

● **Free-kicks:** Luton 13, Wrexham 15.

● **Attendance:** 4,759

● **Referee:** Alan Wiley (Staffordshire).

● **Top Hatter:** McLaren – kept battling, unlike most.

But when Wrexham equalised, Luton, with shoulders slumped, waved the white flag.

Edwards picked up a loose ball 20 yards inside the Hatters' half and punished a backtracking home defence by shooting in off a post.

The US college graduate then headed Martyn Chalk's deep cross back across the home goal for Griffiths to tap in at the far post.

The Hatters managed little in the way of a riposte, with late Alan

White and Paul McLaren's long range strikes being comfortably gathered by Cartwright.

"Lawrence out" chants returned at the final whistle and the Hatters boss struggled to muster up a defence, saying: "I'm scratching my head."

"I have to take the responsibility and blame as manager but I have no explanation for the dramatic decline in performance in the second-half."

Lennie Lawrence's verdict

The first-half was a poor spectacle. Gary Doherty got a great goal out of nothing but after that we fell to pieces. We were a poor second best in the second-half. It was staggering, diabolical and a poor, poor performance. I think the fans have been harsh before but, with what was served up, they are going to give you stick.

