



SHORT SHRIFT: Stoke defender Chris Short easily outjumps Hatters winger Liam George during Saturday's Kenilworth Road clash.

I need players, says boss



LOAN RANGER: Midfield ace Gerry Harrison.

Lennie Lawrence is worried that he could be left ill-equipped for a relegation dogfight should Luton get dragged into one. The underfire boss is concerned that continued boardroom uncertainty will prevent him from adding to his squad before the transfer deadline a week tomorrow.

Lawrence is also facing up to the possibility of losing Gerry Harrison, whose third loan month finishes at the end of March.

With Gary Doherty and Liam George in the Eire squad for April's World Under 20 Championships, Alan White suspended for the next two games and Marvin Johnson and Ray McKinnon just one caution from suspension, players could be in short supply should Lawrence be refused permission to bring anybody in before next Thursday.

Andrew Fotiadis was training again this week and Sean Evers could be back within two weeks but Lawrence is not convinced his squad will be strong enough for what could be a crucial run-in.

"If we don't win against Chesterfield, we'll be looking over our shoulder," the Hatters boss admitted. "We have problems. Managers trade in yesses and nos and I can't get any about anything."

"We have too many inexperienced players at first team level should we get into a struggle. We are dangerously short of players and once the deadline goes, we can't get anybody."

Top of Lawrence's list of deadline loan targets would be Bristol City pair Sean Dyche and Tony Thorpe, who is back there after a spell at Reading.

The Hatters boss would also like to secure Harrison on a short-term contract from Sunderland until the summer when he hopes to be in a position to discuss a longer deal.

Graham Alexander, free to leave Kenilworth Road under the Bosman ruling at the end of the season, has attracted no interest and is now unlikely to leave before the deadline.

Goalkeeper Kelvin Davis is the only player likely to command a good fee if Lawrence is told he needs to sell.

Hatters left shipwreckd by goal-den Graham!

LUTON TOWN threw away another three points after gifting Stoke striker Graham Kavanagh two early goals. David Kohler recently called the club a ship without a rudder and with six defeats in their last seven games the Hatters are in danger of sinking faster than the Titanic!

Saturday's 2-1 defeat means Lennie Lawrence's side have now:

- Lost seven of their last 10 games at Kenilworth Road.
- Scored just one goal from open play in 583 minutes of football.
- Kept only one clean sheet in 22 matches.

But despite those alarming statistics Stoke, having been thumped 4-0 at home by Reading in midweek, were even lower than Luton in the division's form table going into Saturday's game.

Like the angry home crowd, Brian Little's side could not believe the hosts' generosity in handing them a 17th-minute two-goal cushion.

Mitchell Thomas tripped Chris Short to give Kavanagh his first opportunity from the spot after just 10 minutes.

And seven minutes later, the hapless Thomas was at fault again when his poorly headed clearance was met by Kavanagh 15 yards out with a volley that squeezed under red-faced Kelvin Davis' body.

Ex-Hatter David Oldfield should have set the seal on a miserable first-half for the home side but allowed Davis to save his shot on the stroke of half-time, having been given a free run on goal.

Lawrence and his players went into the changing rooms with torrents of abuse ringing in their ears.

Things could only get better in the second-half and they did, but only briefly.

A minute into the interval, Stoke defender Stephen Woods handled Matthew Spring's header across goal after Gerry Harrison's cross and Graham Alexander confidently dispatched the penalty.

Moments later, Alan White, who endured another torrid match alongside defensive lynchpin Marvin Johnson, thought he had equalised but his effort was ruled out for a push on Stoke keeper Gavin Ward by Thomas.

That was the closest the home team came to snatching a point, Stoke looking more dangerous in front of goal than the shot-shy Hatters.

Leading scorer Phil Gray has now gone three months - and eight games - since his last goal and sub Gary Doherty posed more attacking threat in 33 robust, second-half minutes than Douglas and Gray have mustered in the last three games.

Phil Robinson (twice) and Jason Kavanagh had chances to make the visitors' margin of victory more comfortable whereas Luton gave Stoke stopper Ward an easy ride to the final whistle.

Chris Willmott is likely to return to the Hatters starting line-up in place of the suspended Alan White for Saturday's trip to Chesterfield.

White is out for two games and Willmott is to be handed his second league start.

The juniors were 3-0 winners at home to Swindon on Saturday, Clifford Akurang (2) and Joe Harrington getting the goals.

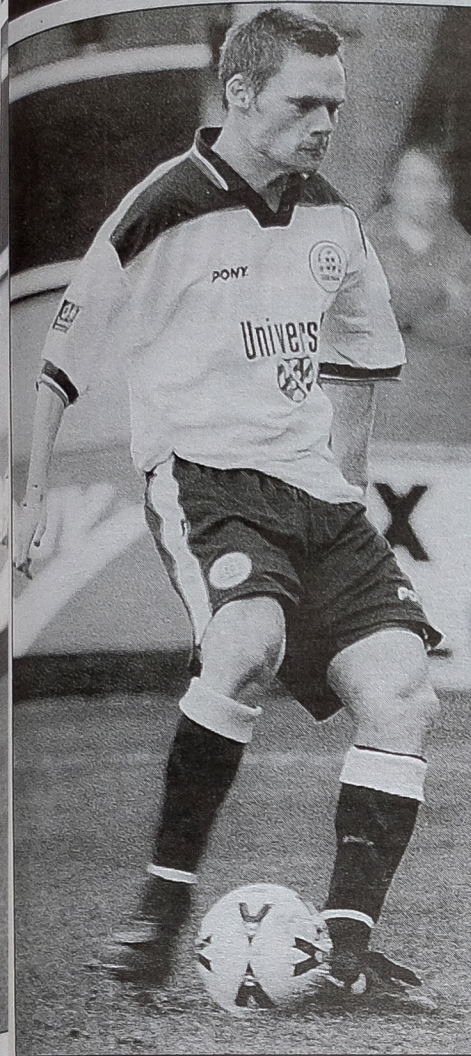
Lennie Lawrence's verdict

It was a bad start, conceding a poor penalty and a rare error from Kelvin. There were strong words at half-time and they responded better but couldn't scramble a second goal. We needed somebody to give up their body in the penalty box and to get on the end of something. Unfortunately, that didn't happen.

matchfacts

LUTON TOWN 1 STOKE CITY 2

- **HATTERS:** Kelvin Davis, Graham Alexander Mitchell Thomas, Matthew Spring, Alan White (Chris Willmott, 79), Marvin Johnson, Gerry Harrison (Paul McLaren, 84), Ray McKinnon, Stuart Douglas, Phil Gray, Liam George (Gary Doherty, 57).
- **STOKE:** Gavin Ward, Jason Kavanagh, Stephen Woods, Lars Sigurdsson, Nicky Mohan, Chris Short, Phil Robinson, Graham Kavanagh, Richard Forsyth (Ray Wallace, 55), Dean Crowe (Kevin Keen, 43), David Oldfield. Sub not used: Bryan Small.
- **Shots on target:** Luton 4, Stoke 8.
- **Shots off target:** Luton 1, Stoke 5.
- **Comers:** Luton 3, Stoke 2.
- **Attendance:** 5,221.
- **Referee:** Andy D'Urso (Billerica).
- **Top Hatter:** Harrison - showed craft and industry.



UPS AND DOWNS: Graham Alexander (left) scores from the penalty spot against Stoke on Saturday but his goal was not enough in a 2-1 defeat after Mitchell Thomas (pictured, right) had made two mistakes that helped the visitors take a two-goal first-half lead.

PICTURES: Jane Sherlock.



Win! Hatters v Gills tickets

GILLINGHAM visit Kenilworth Road on March 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 between Luton and Gillingham when the two sides met in Kent at the end of October?

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

Mr LJ Aradi, of Walcot Avenue, Luton, was the winner of four tickets for the Match of the Day show in April.

Chris coming back

CHRIS WILLMOTT is likely to return to the Hatters starting line-up in place of the suspended Alan White for Saturday's trip to Chesterfield.

White is out for two games and Willmott is to be handed his second league start.

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Division 2 table

Up to March 15 1999

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fulham	35	24	6	5	58	26	78
Preston	35	20	9	6	65	34	69
Walsall	35	20	7	8	48	37	67
Bournemouth	34	17	9	8	55	33	60
Gillingham	35	15	14	6	55	33	59
Man City	35	14	14	7	46	26	56
Stoke	35	13	13	9	41	38	54
Reading	33	17	3	13	44	44	53
Sheff Wed	34	11	10	11	40	31	52
Sheff Utd	34	14	9	11	37	31	51
Walsley	36	13	10	13	41	45	49
Blackpool	34	11	10	13	36	47	43
Luton	34	10	12	12	33	37	42
Bristol Rovers	34	11	8	15	40	47	41
Colchester	35	9	12	14	44	38	39
Sheff Albion	35	8	15	12	39	52	39
Notts County	33	10	7	16	38	48	37
Cheltenham	35	10	7	18	37	49	37
Lincoln	35	9	9	17	42	61	36
Exeter	34	8	10	16	33	53	36
Northampton	35	8	10	17	36	64	34
Wrexham	35	7	12	16	28	40	33
Widow	34	7	9	18	24	41	30
Wycombe	34	6	10	18	32	46	28

98-99 Story so far...

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 33, Scarlett 90	5,447	4
Sat 24	NORTHAMPTON	1-0	Alexander 19	6,087	3
Tues 20	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	BARNLEY (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
Mon 28	Bournemouth	0-1		8,863	14
January					
Sat 2	Colchester	2-2	Alexander (pen) 7, White 72	4,694	14
Tues 5	WALSALL (AWS 2)	0-3	Spring 16, Evers 69, Douglas 75	5,063	13
Sat 9	WYCOMBE	3-1	Fotiadis 15	11,034	12
Sat 16	Preston	0-1		4,934	13
Sat 23	WIGAN ATHLETIC	0-4	McKinnon 6, Doherty 53	5,426	14
Sat 30	BOURNEMOUTH	2-2			
February					
Sat 6	Burnley	2-1	Fotiadis 34, Doherty 87	10,285	12
Feb 13	WREXHAM	1-2	Doherty 47	4,759	13
Feb 20	Bristol Rovers	0-1		6,361	13
Feb 23	NOTTS COUNTY	0-1		4,021	13
Feb 27	BLACKPOOL	1-0	Douglas 54	4,646	12
March					
Sat 6	Walsall	0-1		4,508	13
Sat 13	FULHAM	0-4		7,424	13
Tues 9	STOKE CITY	1-2	Alexander (pen) 47	5,221	14

...and matches still to come

Sat 20	Chesterfield	A	3pm	Wed 14	Man City	H	7.45
Tues 23	READING	H	3pm	Sat 17	LINCOLN	H	3pm
Sat 27	G'INGHAM	H	11.30	Sat 24	Notts Co	A	3pm
APRIL				Tues 27	CHE'S FIELD	H	7.45
Fri 2	Oldham Ath	A	3.30	MAY			
Tues 6	YORK CITY	H	7.45	Sat 1	MAC'FIELD	H	3pm
Sat 10	N'hampton	A	4pm	Tues 8	Millwall	A	3pm

Games and goals

APPEARANCES (SUBS)		GOALS	
Lge	Cup	Lge	Cup
Nathan Abbey	1(0)	0	0
Graham Alexander	26(0)	4	2
Hervé Bacqué	2(5)	0	0
Emmerson Boyce	0(0)	0	0
Jimmy Cox	3(5)	1(1)	0
Kevin Davis	33(0)	9(0)	0
Steve Davis	20(0)	9(0)	4
Simon Davies	2(0)	0(0)	0
Gary Doherty	4(10)	2(2)	5
Stuart Douglas	30(0)	7(1)	8
Sean Dyche	8(0)	1(0)	0
Sean Evers	27(0)	10(0)	3
Andrew Fotiadis	6(8)	2(2)	2
Stuart Fraser	1(1)	1(0)	0
Liam George	6(3)	0(2)	0
Phil Gray	26(3)	9(0)	6
Gerry Harrison	12(0)	1(0)	0
Marvin Johnson	31(0)	8(0)	0
Tresor Kandol	0(1)	1(0)	0
Dwight Marshall	3(1)	3(0)	1
Gavin McGowan	20(4)	9(0)	0
Michael McIndoe	9(3)	3(3)	0
Ray McKinnon	25(1)	6(1)	0
Paul McLaren	11(8)	4(3)	1
Kofi Nyamah	0(0)	1(1)	0
Andre Scarlett	2(4)	0(2)	1
Paul Showler	2(1)	0(0)	0
Matthew Spring	33(0)	8(1)	1
Mitchell Thomas	15(5)	3(0)	0
Chris Willmott	1(1)	0(0)	0
Alan White	13(13)	2(3)	1
L'Andry Zahana-Oni	2(2)	0(0)	0

Bad boys

WHERE the red and yellow cards have gone...

	Y	R		Y	R
McGowan	12	1	McKinnon	4	0
Alexander	8	1	Davis (K)	1	0
Thomas	5	1	Doherty	2	0
Johnson	4	1	George	2	0
White	4	1	Cox	1	0
Davis (S)	4	1	Dyche	1	0
McLaren	6	0	Evers	1	0
Gray	3	1	Harrison	1	0
Douglas	5	0	Scarlett	1	0
McIndoe	4	0	Spring	1	0
			TOTAL	72	7

Good boys

LUTON News Player of the Year standings (the Top Hatter awards given by Town reporter Dave Flett)...

Alexander	5	McGowan	2
Davis (S)	5	McKinnon	2
Johnson	5	McLaren	2
Spring	5	Thomas	2
Gray	3	Abbey	2
Harrison	3	Douglas	1
Davis (K)	3	Scarlett	1
Dyche	2	Showler	1
Evers	2	TOTAL	44

