

Luton end freefall as receivers arrive

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By Peter Lansley

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IMPOVERISHED Luton Town responded to the imminent arrival of the receivers in spirited fashion by ending their run of defeats as Reading's late surge towards the play-off zone was put on hold.

Luton have been in freefall as the club's financial plight has deepened but were ahead against one of the Second Division's form sides within 12 minutes by which stage Reading could have been even worse off.

Full-back Graham Alexander, likely to join Preston this morning for £100,000, might have wished he had made his move a day earlier after he side-footed his fifth-minute penalty kick wide, following Andy Bernal's foul on Republic of Ireland under-20 call-up Gary Doherty.

Luton were in play-off contention themselves until a sequence of seven defeats from eight games but they were back in sprightly form last night. Matthew Spring got the final touch to put Lennie Lawrence's team ahead after Stuart Douglas had capitalised on indecision between Bernal and goalkeeper Scott Howie.

Reading, after four successive victories within sight of Manchester City in sixth spot, kept their composure and received their reward seven minutes from time. Ray Houghton crossed from the left and Tony Barras

headed in. Luton's Paul McLaren was dismissed in injury time after a second booking

Luton had long-running plans for a multi-purpose 'Kohlerdome' stadium finally rejected by the Department of the Environment last month.

This has left the club boxed in at Kenilworth Road, with a capacity of 9,975. Chairman and managing director David Kohler has not attended a home match for a month and has been seeking to sell up. But having failed to agree a price with fellow directors, including Cliff Bassett, for his share of the club, Kohler and the board decided yesterday there was no option but to call in the receivers.

The company who have been acting for Crystal Palace, Buchler Phillips, will make an official announcement this morning. With the transfer deadline coming tomorrow, Luton will consider bids for all players. Graham Alexander may be the first to move.

With unprecedented levels of money flowing through the Premiership, Luton are the latest Nationwide League club to wave the financial white flag. Portsmouth and Palace are in administration and Oxford are changing ownership.

Luton Town: Davis; Alexander, Willmott, Johnson, McGowan; Spring, McLaren, Harrison (McIndoe 85); Douglas (Zahani-Oni 90), Gray, Doherty (Thomas 90). **Booked:** McGowan. **Sent off:** McLaren.

Reading: Howie; Bernal, Barras, Casper, Gray; Murty (Brebner 11), Houghton, Parkinson, Caskey; McIntyre, McKeever. **Subs:** Brayson, Glasgow. **Booked:** Bernal.