

INSIDE SPORT



Lesley Hopkins

LESLEY Hopkins has made a remarkable comeback to athletics after ME threatened to end her running career. Now she's celebrating success after a trip to Malmo in Sweden.

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Alexander

LUTON Town defender Graham Alexander looks likely to leave Kenilworth Road today after Preston moved in to sign him - along with several other lower-division clubs.

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Sheila Davies

SHEILA Davies has helped to shape netball in Luton over the past 40 years. Now she has decided to call it a day and her Wyvern players have marked the occasion.

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Billy Schwer

BILLY Schwer has got a new date for his European lightweight title defence against Italian Sandro Cassamonica at York Hall, Bethnal Green. It's now scheduled for May 8.

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It's heartbreak!

Brave Luton foiled after Spring goal

LUTON 1 READING 1

LUTON Town produced a rousing response to last night's news that the club had gone into receivership but were denied a deserved victory by a late Reading goal.

Tony Barras equalised on 83 minutes for Reading after Luton had gone ahead through Matthew Spring's 13th minute strike and dominated for long periods.

In an eventful encounter, Graham Alexander also missed an early penalty and Paul McLaren was sent off in the last minute for his second bookable offence - kicking the ball away.

Lennie Lawrence dropped player-coach Mitchell Thomas to the bench and gambled on a three-man attack, Gary Doherty joining Phil Gray and Stuart Douglas.

Doherty, in his last game before joining the Republic of Ireland squad for the World Under 20 Championships, made an immediate impression, being pulled down by Reading defender Andy Bernal in the box after a Spring cross on six minutes. But Graham Alexander failed to convert the penalty, dragging his effort badly wide.

Spring raised spirits just seven minutes later by stabbing Luton in front.

Gerry Harrison was the creator with a determined run into the visitors' box, Douglas mis-hit the loose ball but Spring was on hand to force it over the line from close range.

In an embarrassingly one-sided first-half the Hatters created chance after chance.

Gray was in the thick of the early action, his deflected free-kick eluding

DAVE FLETT reports from Kenilworth Road

Doherty by inches and his excellent defence-splitting pass releasing Douglas, who shot wide.

Further chances fell to Spring and Douglas before Doherty forced busy Scott Howie into a spectacular dive just before half-time.

Gavin McGowan had set

up the teenage front man with a direct run and extravagant back-heel.

Luton carried on from where they had left off after the interval, Douglas being denied a goal by Howie's dive at his feet and Gray volleying just over.

After 58 minutes, Gray beat Howie with a powerful header from Alexander's corner, only for Reading's

Darren Caskey to produce an unlikely headed clearance off the line.

At the other end, the visitors rarely threatened Kelvin Davis's goal with Chris Willmott solid alongside inspirational skipper Marvin Johnson.

Willmott produced two timely interceptions late on, blocking Phil Parkinson's goal-bound drive and

cutting out a dangerous Stuart Gray cross.

But Hatters' hearts were broken in the 83rd minute when Reading grabbed an undeserved equaliser.

Harrison lost possession in his own area and former Liverpool midfielder Ray Houghton crossed for defender Tony Barras to head home.

Top Hatter: Phil Gray.



PENALTY: Gary Doherty is floored by Andy Bernal but Graham Alexander shot wide from the spot.

Picture: JANE SHERLOCK

Big match line-up

HATTERS: Kelvin Davis, Graham Alexander, Gavin McGowan, Matthew Spring, Chris Willmott, Marvin Johnson, Gerry Harrison, Paul McLaren, Stuart Douglas, Phil Gray, Gary Doherty. Subs: Michael McIndoe, Landry Zahana-Oni, Mitchell Thomas. **READING:** Scott Howie, Andy Bernal, Stuart Gray, Phil Parkinson, Tony Barras, Chris Casper, Graham Murty, Darren Caskey, Jim McIntyre, Ray Houghton, Mark McKeever. Subs: Paul Brayson, Bryon Glasgow, Grant Brebner.

Referee: Lee Cable (Woking). Attendance: 5,527

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