

Hats off to Davis as Luton keep Gillingham at bay

98/99

Hatters' keeper dents Gills play-off chances

LUTON put their off-field troubles behind them – at least for 90 minutes – with a gutsy win over promotion-chasing Gillingham.

The Hatters, owing £3million and with the receivers in charge at Kenilworth Road since Tuesday, picked up three valuable points to prevent themselves sliding any further into the relegation dogfight.

Architects for a victory that owed more to sweat than style were outstanding goalkeeper Kelvin Davis and former Chesterfield centre-half Sean Dyche, back on loan from Bristol City, along with former Luton striking star Tony Thorpe.

Dyche marshalled a Luton defence superbly to keep Gillingham's forwards at a distance throughout the afternoon and had the bonus of grabbing Luton's winner three minutes before half-time.

But it was England Under-21 goalkeeper Davis who shaded the man-of-the-match honours.

He pulled off three outstanding saves in the first half as Gillingham threatened to blow Luton away, and he produced another stunner to protect the lead late in the second half.

Davis parried a fierce strike from Gillingham's Robert Taylor in the 14th minute and followed up by diving full length to deflect a well-placed shot from Nicky Southall when the wing-back




Luton 1
Gillingham 0

might have gained greater reward by blasting the chance.

Visiting striker Carl Asaba also suffered when his 28th-minute close-range header was acrobatically flipped over by the ever-alert Davis.

The pick of the saves however, came four minutes from time when he flew across goal to tip a dipping volley from a disbelieving Paul Smith over the bar.

Dyche had popped up to bundle the winner over the line from Matthew Spring's near-post corner after 42 minutes.

Neither side created many clear cut chances in the second half but Luton would have won more comfortably had it not been for Vince Bartram's save at the feet of Paul McLaren.

Later, Phil Gray's long range chip left Bartram stranded but just cleared the crossbar.

Luton: Davis, Willmott, Thomas, Spring, Dyche, Johnson, Gray, McLaren, Douglas, Thorpe, McGowan. Subs: Boyce, White, Kandol.

Gillingham: Bartram, Southall, Carr, Smith, Butters, Pennock, Patterson, Hensenthaler, Asaba, Saunders, Taylor. Subs: Browning, Hodge, Galloway.

Referee: S Baines (Chesterfield).



PICTURE: Action Images

JUMP TO IT: Gillingham's Butters and Carr jumps against Mitchell Thomas of Luton