



JUMP START: Hatters midfielder Matthew Spring wins this aerial battle during Saturday's disappointing 1-0 home defeat against Lincoln City. Pictures by JANE SHERLOCK.

'Only Rory was better'

SEAN DYCHE has returned to Bristol City with Lennie Lawrence keen to agree a permanent deal this summer. Lawrence has called Dyche the best loan signing of his career except for Spurs striker Rory Allen.

Allen scored six goals to help the Hatters avoid relegation last season and Dyche's professionalism saw him almost match Allen for impact during his loan stay. About Dyche, Lawrence said: "He had a terrific attitude for a loan player who got sent back. He returned as keen as ever, knowing that it would end before the season ends,

knowing we are in receivership and knowing we want to sign him but might not be able to do so. "His attitude's been exemplary and his consistency excellent. "It's hard to imagine a player more suited to us in terms of character, attitude, performance and influence on other players. He leaves a gap that needs to be filled."

Alan White will be handed that responsibility at Notts County on Saturday. Gary Doherty, who played 45 minutes against Lincoln, and Liam George could also both figure after returning

from the World Under-20 Youth Championships in Nigeria last Friday.

George played in Eire's first group game in Africa - a 1-0 defeat against Mexico before losing his place to Millwall's Richard Sadlier.

Doherty, a columnist for the Irish version of the Sunday Times during the competition, played in defence for that game and the 2-0 defeat of Saudia Arabia but was dropped for the 4-0 victory against Australia.

The Irish were knocked out on penalties by Nigeria 5-3 after a 1-1 draw, with Doherty coming on as a striker in the second-half.



ON HIS WAY: Paul Showler.

Shape up or go!

LENNIE LAWRENCE has sent out a warning to Kenilworth Road's walking wounded just weeks ahead of the club's end-of-season retained list. Lawrence has said the club's financial position means they cannot tolerate injury-prone players next season.

He added that any senior players who have played less than 40 games this season will not play a part next campaign which could mean the Kenilworth Road door closing on Paul Showler, Ray McKinnon, Andrew Fotiadis

and even player-coach Mitchell Thomas, all out of contract this summer.

Lawrence said: "There's too many players unavailable, too often which leaves me too little choice. Too many are sitting in the treatment room. "That will cease next season because anyone who can't do games and is over 21 is complete, utter waste of time with the financial restrictions that will be on this club."

"If you're not a 40-game a year man then you won't be here."

Lennie's verdict

"We gave away a bad goal but, worse, we didn't look like scoring. Thorpey had a great chance and we can't spurn those sort of opportunities because we don't make enough. I've got too many youngsters and they couldn't do it for the third time of asking. I don't think there's a club in the country with less senior pros to pick from."



ON HIS WAY: Paul Showler.

Lowly Lincoln leave Lennie looking down

LENNIE LAWRENCE admitted that he is looking over his shoulder again after Saturday's dismal 1-0 home defeat against Lincoln.

The Hatters manager believes his side are still not safe from the drop to football's basement division with the result leaving Luton just five points above the relegation zone.

But there are still six sides between the Hatters and fourth-from-bottom Northampton and that could prove vital as an injury-ravaged Luton limp to the end of a difficult season.

On Saturday, Emmerson Boyce became the latest debutant to be thrown into first team action but after a pacy and positive start at right wing back he drifted out of the game.

After watching his side go down to Lee Thorpe's 61st-minute goal, Lawrence said: "I must confess I'm now nervously looking over my shoulder again."

"We need to scratch a couple of results from the remaining games as quickly as we can."

Lincoln's visit to Kenilworth Road just three days after the midweek trip to Manchester City illustrated the gulf in this division's top and bottom but the outcome was the same for the Hatters - no points and no goals.

In three games the Hatters have failed to threaten the opponents' net and have now scored more than one goal only once in their last 15 games.

Forwards Stuart Douglas and Landry Zahana-Oni made only sporadic contributions and a quiet Tony Thorpe missed the best chance of the afternoon on 49 minutes.

Thorpe was starved of service for long periods but headed woefully wide from close range after Douglas' swinging cross.

Referee's assistant Mr Peeke did not help the home side's

matchfacts

LUTON 0 LINCOLN CITY 1

● **HATTERS:** Kelvin Davis, Chris Willmott, Mitchell Thomas, Matthew Spring, Sean Dyche, Marvin Johnson, Tony Thorpe, Landry Zahana-Oni (Gary Doherty, 46), Stuart Douglas, Michael McIndoe, Emmerson Boyce (Stuart Fraser, 67). Sub not used: Alan White.

● **LINCOLN CITY:** John Vaughan, Jason Barnett, David Phillips, Terry Fleming, Steve Holmes, Kevin Austin, Lee Thorpe, John Finnigan (Lee Philpott, 88), Tony Battersby (Grant Brown, 90), Gavin Gordon, Paul Miller. Sub not used: Paul Smith.

● **Shots on target:** Luton 5, Lincoln 4.

● **Shots off target:** Luton 4, Lincoln 1.

● **Corners:** Luton 7, Lincoln 4.

● **Attendance:** 5,122.

● **Referee:** Philip Dowd (Stoke-on-Trent).

● **Top Hatter:** Willmott - the find of the season.

cause, failing to raise his flag on four occasions when a visiting forward strayed offside.

Inevitably, one of those oversights led to Lincoln's goal. David Phillips' long pass released Tony Battersby down the left and he looked at least a yard offside.

Battersby bamboozled Sean Dyche, who otherwise had an immaculate game, and crossed for Thorpe to fire in off a post.

Paul Miller went close twice to extending the Imps' lead, while at the other end Mitchell Thomas, a very poor man's

Steve Davis, was pushed up front in search of an equaliser.

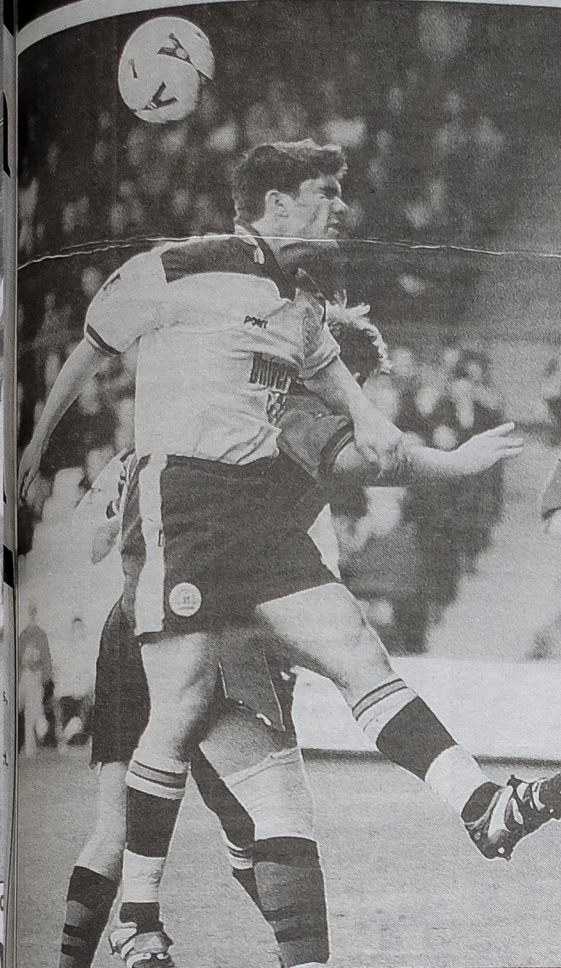
Gary Doherty's introduction at half-time, after returning

from the World Under-20 Championships in Nigeria, had done little to spice up the Hatters front-line and Lawrence later described player-coach Thomas as his side's best striker during his 12-minute forward foray.

The 33-year-old defender won several flick-ons in the visitors' penalty box but a Lincoln boot was always first to the loose ball.

● **The Hatters juniors** won the South East Counties League, a championship in style by winning 7-1 at Gillingham.

Tresor Kandol and Clifford Akurang each scored twice with James Ayres, Ryan Moran and Sean Carr getting the others.



OLD BOY, NEW BOY: Former Hatters hero Tony Thorpe (left) made his third start on loan from Bristol City against Lincoln while Emmerson Boyce (right) had his league debut.

Dickov's delight!

FORMER Hatters loan man Paul Dickov helped fire Manchester City to a comfortable 2-0 victory over Luton Town last Wednesday.

Tony Vaughan headed in a second and City went on to successfully defend a tenth-minute two-goal cushion.

Lennie Lawrence praised the spirit and commitment of his players afterwards, especially Matthew Spring, who received glowing praise from City boss Joe Royle.

MANCHESTER CITY: Weaver, Crooks, Edgill (Mason, 50), Vaughan, Morrison, Horlock, Brown, Bishop, Dickov, Goater (Taylor, 67), Cooke. Sub not used: Robins.

HATTERS: Davis, Willmott, Thomas, Spring, Dyche, Johnson, Kandol (Thorpe, 67), Zahana-Oni (Fraser, 73), Douglas, McIndoe, McGowan. Sub not used: White.

MATCH FACTS: Shots on target - Manchester City 6 Luton 5. Off target - Manchester City 6 Luton 5. Corners: Manchester City 4 Luton 5. Attendance: 8,130. Top Hatter: Spring - driving force.

Division 2 table

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Walsall	41	29	6	6	69	27	93
Walsall	41	24	8	9	57	41	80
Preston	42	21	15	7	62	29	78
Wrexham	42	21	11	10	74	44	74
Wrexham	42	19	14	9	65	41	71
Bournemouth	42	20	11	11	61	39	71
Blackpool	41	19	6	16	54	53	63
Walsall	39	18	8	13	59	40	62
Reading	41	17	10	14	49	47	61
Reading	41	17	10	14	45	40	61
Blackpool	42	13	13	16	51	57	58
Notts County	41	13	13	16	39	48	52
Luton	42	13	10	19	46	56	49
Wrexham	42	11	15	16	45	61	48
Wrexham	41	12	12	17	40	57	48
Wrexham	41	11	14	17	47	70	47
Wrexham	41	10	15	16	54	50	45
Wrexham	42	12	9	21	43	59	45
Wrexham	42	11	11	20	53	74	44
Wrexham	42	10	14	18	35	49	44
Wrexham	41	10	11	20	45	53	41
Wrexham	41	11	7	23	37	68	40
Wrexham	41	10	9	22	35	53	39

98-99...the 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)	3,185	-
Sat 15	PRESTON	1-1	Marshall 54	5,392	7
Sat 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	-
			Johnson 120	5,530	7
Sat 26	WALSALL	0-1			
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 82, Scarlett 90	5,447	4
Tues 20	NORTHAMPTON	1-0	Alexander 19	6,087	3
Sat 24	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
Sat 10	BARNESLEY (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	9,070	7
Sat 28	MANCHESTER CITY	1-1	Doherty 76		
December					
Tue 1	Sunderland (WC5)	0-3		35,742	-
Sat 5	HULL CITY (FA2)	1-2	Davis (S) 36	5,021	-
Sat 12	Millwall	2-2	Douglas 3, Gray 90	2,905	8
Sat 19	MILLWALL	1-2	Davis (S) 69	5,939	11
Sat 26	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		1,870	-
Sat 9	WYCOMBE	3-1	Spring 16, Evers 69, Douglas 75	5,063	13
Sat 16	Preston	1-2	Fotiadis 15	11,034	12
Sat 23	WIGAN ATHLETIC	0-4		4,934	13
Sat 30	BOURNEMOUTH	2-2	McKinnon 6, Doherty 53	5,426	14
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 27	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
Tues 9	FULHAM	0-4		7,424	13
Sat 13	STOKE CITY	1-2	Alexander (pen) 47	5,221	14
Sat 20	Chesterfield	1-3	Gray 82	3,921	14
Tues 23	READING	1-1	Spring 12	5,527	14
Sat 27	GILLINGHAM	1-0	Dyche 42	6,705	13
April					
Fri 2	Oldham	1-1	Gray 4	4,948	12
Tues 6	YORK CITY	2-1	Spring 51, Douglas 90	4,667	12
Sat 10	Northampton	0-2		6,856	12
Wed 14	Manchester City	0-1		26,130	13
Sat 17	LINCOLN CITY	(A)		5,122	14
Sat 24	Notts County	(H)			
Tues 27	CHESTERFIELD	(H)			
May					
Sat 1	MACCLESFIELD	(H)			
Sat 8	Millwall	(A)			

Games and goals

	APPEARANCES		GOALS	
	Lge	Cup	Lge	Cup
Nathan Abbey	1(0)	1(0)	0	0
Graham Alexander	28(0)	9(0)	4	2
Herve Bacque	2(5)	2(2)	0	0
Emmerson Boyce	1(0)	1(0)	0	0
Jimmy Cox	3(5)	1(1)	0	0
Kelvin Davis	41(0)	9(0)	0	0
Steve Davis	20(0)	9(0)	6	4
Simon Davies	2(0)	0(0)	0	0
Gary Doherty	5(12)	2(2)	5	0
Stuart Douglas	38(0)	7(1)	9	2
Sean Evers	27(0)	10(0)	3	1
Andrew Fotiadis	8(9)	2(2)	2	1
Stuart Fraser	1(3)	1(0)	0	0
Liam George	6(4)	0(2)	0	0
Phil Gray	31(3)	9(0)	8	5
Gerry Harrison	14(0)	1(0)	0	0
Marvin Johnson	38(0)	8(0)	0	1
Tresor Kandol	2(2)	1(0)	0	0
Dwight Marshall	3(1)	3(0)	1	0
Gavin McGowan	27(4)	9(0)	0	0
Michael McIndoe	13(5)	3(3)	0	0
Ray McKinnon	26(1)	6(1)	2	0
Paul McLaren	14(9)	4(3)	0	1
Kofi Nyamah	0(0)	1(1)	0	0
Andre Scarlett	2(4)	0(2)	1	0
Paul Showler	2(1)	0(0)	0	0
Matthew Spring	41(0)	8(1)	3	0
Mitchell Thomas	22(6)	3(0)	0	0
Tony Thorpe	3(1)	0(0)	0	0
Chris Willmott	9(1)	0(0)	0	0
Alan White	14(15)	2(3)	1	0
L'Andry Zahana-Oni	4(4)	0(0)	0	0

Bad boys

WHERE the red and yellow cards have gone...

	Y	R	Davis (K)	Doherty
McGowan	14	2	1	0
Alexander	8	1	2	0
McLaren	8	1	2	0
Thomas	6	1	2	0
Johnson	5	1	1	0
White	4	1	1	0
Davis (S)	6	0	1	0
Gray	3	1	1	0
Douglas	5	0	1	0
McIndoe	4	0	1	0
McKinnon	4	0	1	0
			TOTAL	81

Good boys

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

Spring	7	Evers	2
Alexander	5	McGowan	2
Davis (S)	5	McKinnon	2
Gray	5	McLaren	2
Johnson	5	Thomas	2
Davis (K)	3	Willmott	2
Harrison	3	Abbey	2
Douglas	2	Scarlett	1
Dyche	2	Showler	1