



■ Andrew Fotiadis at full stretch for Luton in yesterday's game



■ Phil Gray rises to the challenge



■ Scorer Gray (centre) takes the congratulations

Gray slays the Welsh dragon

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PHIL Gray volleyed home ten minutes from time to move Hatters into second place in the league.

In a passionate game full of atmosphere Luton always had the attacking edge – but it could so easily have ended in despair rather than delight.

Just seconds before Hatters scored their winner, Cardiff substitute Craig Middleton had a goalbound effort from point blank range deflected over the bar by Stuart Fraser – although the young wing-back knew little about it.

Hatters then rubbed salt into the wounds by going straight up the other end and scoring. It was Northern Ireland international Phil Gray who slayed the Welsh dragon – tucking away Fraser's cross despite the despairing dive of Jon Hallworth.

Like Blackpool two weeks ago this was a tense, pulsating match, Hatters full of attacking ideas, Cardiff resolute in defence and quick on the break.

With Luton pressing from the front – Phil Gray, Andrew Fotiadis and Liam George worked their socks off – Cardiff rarely found time to build from the back.

And when the Welshmen did threaten Marvin Johnson marshalled his troops magnificently in defence.

No one worked harder at the back than Gary Doherty, and even when the visitors did threaten Johnson, Julian Watts, Fraser and Matthew Taylor worked hard to cover

Luton Town 1 Cardiff 0

Report by Pete Kenyon

Pictures by Andy Handley

for each other. Two weeks ago it was Taylor who stole the limelight with a marvellous display of crossing, but this time it was the turn of Stuart Fraser to supply most of the ammunition.

Gray might have scored after just seven minutes but just failed to get a boot on Watts' pull back, George blasted over the bar after Fotiadis chested into his path and on 15 minutes Fraser's dangerous cross into the six yard box went begging.

At the other end Jason Bowen made an awful mess of his shot after finding room inside the box, but the first half mostly belonged to Luton.

Former Oldham keeper Hallworth had to be off his line in a flash to deny the lively George after he was put clear by Fotiadis' super reverse pass, and three minutes later any sort of touch from George in Taylor's low inswinging centre would have found the net.

Just before the break Kevin Nugent wasted another golden opportunity for Cardiff and was nearly made to pay for his wastefulness when Fotiadis' injury time driving run saw him sweep past Winston Faerber and Jeff Eckhardt, only for the shot to fizz past the post with Hallworth, for once, beaten.

At half time riot police were dispatched into the Oak Road stand to lend support to

their uniformed colleagues following a 20th minute charge towards the home supporters in the main stand.

Despite having to wade in and restore order midway through the second half, the Cardiff supporters were mostly vocal rather than violent.

Just three minutes after the resumption, Faerber's through ball sent Nugent clear of Hatters' rearguard but Nathan Abbey was alert enough to smother the danger at the expense of a corner.

When that set piece broke down Luton were clear to break out and only Hallworth's bravery at the feet of Taylor prevented a Luton goal.

Fraser's long ball sent George on an overlap down the right but for once Gray was too quick in support and the cross fell agonisingly behind him with the goal at his mercy. Eight minutes later Hallworth had to be at his very best to deny Gray's well deflected diving header following good work from Fraser and Matthew Spring on the right flank.

A dreadful mix-up between Doherty and Watts almost let in Jason Bowen, but Doherty and Abbey sandwiched the striker in the box and appeals for a penalty were turned down.

Luton took the lead ten minutes from time and after that looked comfortable in defence.

Luton: Abbey, Fraser, Taylor, Spring, Doherty, Watts, Johnson, Gray, McLaren (McIndoe 81), Fotiadis (Douglas 65), George (McKinnon 83).

Attendance: 5,374.

Man Of The Match: Fraser.

Manager to stick with the Abbey habit

LENNIE LAWRENCE is sticking by goalkeeper Tanny Abbey despite his blunder against Bristol Rovers in the League Cup.

He came a long way to collect a cross and then dropped it to allow Jason Roberts to score.

Lawrence said: "I have been bombarded by agents with offers for goalkeepers and some of them would be names you know. But whoever came in now would come in cold and there is the

money for the fee to find and the wages situation. So I am sticking with what I have got."

Abbey has always had the confidence to come for crosses and this takes the pressure off his defence. He is also a great shot-stopper and has already pulled off several saves this season which would have been beyond many keepers.

Lawrence said: "It would have been nice to have had a run in the Worthington Cup for it gave us a

national profile last year and brought in some money. On the other hand, we didn't win one Saturday game after a midweek cup match last season, not one.

"We were a bit unlucky not to win against a team bang in form at Bristol. We rotated the squad and Adam Locke played well, especially in the first half, as did Emmerson Boyce. Tresor Kandol scored a good goal."