

Gray day for Cardiff as Hatters keep winning

Veteran striker keeps his cool to steal the show for Lawrence

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CARDIFF boss Frank Burrows could seek little solace from the knowledge his side had played their part in a superb advert for Second Division Football at Kenilworth Road.

One expert strike from former Northern Ireland international Phil Gray ended the Welshmen's unbeaten record, even though in terms of attacking they had shared the honours with the home side.

Burrows admitted: "It was hugely disappointing."

But for Luton manager Lennie Lawrence it was a different story as his team rose to second place in the division with their third consecutive victory.

Lawrence said: "That was a very good Second Division game. Overall I think we deserved to win, although I can understand Cardiff being disappointed."

"But it says something that their goalkeeper had to be man of the match. I thought the major difference was that although both teams did a lot of good attacking, we got more shots on target."

"And Cardiff could not have complained if we had been in the lead at half-time."

Cardiff goalkeeper John Hallworth made first-half saves from Julian Watts and Liam George while Cardiff's best chances – though in truth they mustered few of any quality – fell to Kevin Nugent and Jason Bowen who both put their shots wide of the target.

Winston Faerber made the same mistake for the visitors early in the second half when he should have at least found the target. And as play flowed from one end to the other Hallworth made an acrobatic flying save to deny Gray his first goal of the season.

Fifteen minutes from time Luton had their hearts in their mouths when Bowen tumbled over in the box after a tackle by Gary Doherty. However, the referee waved play on.

Cardiff substitute Craig Middleton was unlucky with a close-range shot which hit Luton defender Stuart Fraser on the back and the deflection was just enough to send the ball soaring over the bar with Nathan Abbey in the home goal watching in relief.



HIGH FLYERS: Luton's Marvin Johnson gets above Cardiff City's Kevin Nugent

And within a minute the excellent Hallworth was left fuming as for once his defence failed in its covering job and allowed George to pick out Gray for what turned out to be the winner.

The veteran striker was on the edge of the box and it was by no means certain that he would score. But he kept his cool and carefully placed his left-foot volley wide of Hallworth's despairing dive to win the game for the Hatters in some style.

It was harsh on Hallworth, who earned the Man of the Match award with his saves from Gray, George, and twice from Matt Taylor and Andy Fotiadis.

Luton are now on 10 points with three wins and a draw – the same as table-toppers Wigan and third-placed side Burnley.

More of the same and Lawrence will surely be leading his team back to the First Division.

Luton: Abbey, Doherty, Watts, Johnson, Fraser, Spring, McLaren, Taylor, George, Gray, Fotiadis. Subs: McKinnon, Sodge, Douglas, McIndoe, Tate.

Cardiff: Hallworth, Young, Ford, Eckhardt, Faerber, Legg, Fowler, Cornforth, Brazier, Bowen, Nugent. Subs: Hughes, Middleton, Carpenter, Phillips, Kelly.

Referee: R Fumandiz (Doncaster).