

'Goal-den oldie' Phil on target

LUTON TOWN'S young guns shot to second in the Division Two table with a professional 1-0 home victory over Cardiff. The Hatters might still be a few bob short off the pitch but, on it, they have an embarrassment of riches.

Lennie Lawrence is currently reaping the rewards of Kenilworth Road's successful youth policy, which has seen several players graduate into very good second division players this month.

Matthew Taylor continues to impress at left-wing back and, on Saturday, his right-flank counterpart Stuart Fraser produced his most exciting display of the season.

In midfield, Matthew Spring remains one of the first names on Lawrence's team sheet and the emergence of Andrew Fotiadis and Liam George, simultaneously, has led to some imaginative attacking options.

The versatile Gary Doherty is also maturing into a defensive regular after a spell as a useful fourth-choice striker and the touchline talents of Michael McIndoe have been put to use in the last two league games.

Encouragingly, old campaigners Phil Gray and Marvin Johnson are delivering the goods too.

Gray grabbed his first goal of the season on 81 minutes to secure victory and skipper Johnson was faultless on the left side of a three-man defence.

Unlike last season, Lawrence also has experience waiting in the wings should any of his young guns run out of firepower.

Efetobore Sodje, Ray McKinnon and Stuart Douglas all had to settle for places on the bench during Saturday's game, with Alan White and Adam Locke not even making the squad and Gavin McGowan still to come back from injury.

Lawrence believes that if he can keep that group of players together the Hatters can sustain their good start to the season.

In a division lacking a Fulham or Manchester City this time around and with a smattering of ordinary

match facts

LUTON 1 CARDIFF 0

● **HATTERS:** Nathan Abbey, Stuart Fraser, Matthew Taylor, Matthew Spring, Gary Doherty, Julian Watts, Marvin Johnson, Phil Gray, Paul McLaren (Michael McIndoe, 82), Andrew Fotiadis (Stuart Douglas, 67), Liam George (Ray McKinnon, 84). Not used: Efetobore Sodje, Daniel Tate.

● **CARDIFF:** Jon Hallworth, Winston Faerber (Lee Phillips, 74), Andy Legg, Scott Young, Mike Ford, Jason Bowen, Kevin Nugent, Matthew Brazier, Jason Fowler (Craig Middleton, 27), Jeff Eckhardt, John Cornforth (Richard Carpenter, 72).

● **Shots on target:** Luton 5, Cardiff 3.

● **Off target:** Luton 7, Cardiff 6.

● **Corners:** Luton 10, Cardiff 6.

● **Top Hatter:** Johnson - solid.

teams, he could be right. Saturday's opponents were not one of those ordinary sides and Luton had to work hard for their three points.

The home team's best chance before the interval saw George thwarted by Cardiff keeper Jon Hallworth after a strong run and intelligent pass by Fotiadis.

Fotiadis also went close, firing wide after a jinking run into the visitors' penalty box.

Cardiff had their chances in an end-to-end second half with Nathan Abbey denying a clear through Kevin Nugent and Doherty surviving a penalty scare after Julian Watts had surrendered possession to Cardiff's Jason Bowen.

The Hatters then enjoyed an outrageous piece of fortune seconds before Gray's match-winning strike.

Craig Middleton seemed certain to break the deadlock but his firmly struck close-range shot hit Fraser and somehow looped over the bar.

Moments later, Fraser was bombing down the right wing and setting up a crossing chance for George which Gray converted with venom from 12 yards, firing into Hallworth's bottom corner.

The Cardiff keeper had previously kept the Northern Ireland international off the scoresheet on the hour with a flying save from his well-placed header.

Lennie's verdict

It was a very good game for the second division.

There were thrills and spills and lots of goalmouth incident. I think Cardiff are a good scalp for us.

They were very disciplined in the first half and started the second half well. At half time we said 'this is a classic second division game where you've got to not give the first goal away and stay disciplined and grind away.' They did and got a goal late on.

Their goalkeeper played very well and we had a bit of luck with the penalty incident and the one that scooped over the bar when Fraser just got a foot in. We needed every ounce of energy to win. It was a 14-man game.

