

Luton pay for not Bury-ing chances!

LUTON Town threw away their second chance of topping the Division Two table on Saturday by drawing 1-1 with Bury.

Having passed up their first opportunity by losing at Bournemouth in midweek, the Hatters slipped to fifth after settling for a point despite taking the lead through Andrew Fotiadis on 53 minutes.

This game was another test for the young Luton side's strength of character. Last Saturday, they ground out a 1-0 home win against strong opposition in a close match.

But against Bury, that vital habit of nicking a tight 1-0 victory deserted them, on-loan journeyman Lee Richardson earning the visitors a point on 69 minutes.

After Richardson's equaliser, the Hatters wilted in the September sun with weather conditions more Lanzarote than Luton.

Lennie Lawrence said he was grateful for a point afterwards but, if his side had been more clinical in front of goal, two more might have been secured before the break.

Stuart Fraser and Phil Gray were the chief culprits. Fraser shot tamely at Bury keeper Paddy Kenny when put clear by a Paul Reid error.

Then, on the stroke of half time, Paul McLaren's strong run and excellent reverse pass found an unmarked Gray in the box.

But the Northern Ireland international's poor shot was straight at Kenny, a summer signing from Bradford Park Avenue who has been nicknamed 'Tyrone' because of his likeness to the Coronation Street character.

The rotund young keeper fumbled Gray's effort but, when the Hatters striker aggressively bundled the rebound in, referee David Crick ruled he had kicked the ball out of Kenny's hands.

For long periods, both teams cancelled each other out with their identical 3-4-3 formations, Liam George, in particular, being well shackled.

But other chances in the first-half saw Taylor and Matthew Spring go close with free-kicks and George use trickery to leave man marker Chris Billy on his backside before shooting wide.

Earlier, Nathan Abbey had reacted brilliantly to take the ball off in-form Ian Lawson's boot, throwing out an out-stretched arm to prevent a certain goal as the Bury hitman looked to round him.

Fotiadis broke the deadlock when George took advantage of a slip by Billy to feed Spring.

Spring held off the challenge of several defenders as Fotiadis burst into the penalty box before

match facts

LUTON 1 BURY 1

● **HATTERS:** Nathan Abbey, Stuart Fraser, Julian Watts, Gary Doherty, Marvin Johnson, Liam George (Michael McIndoe, 75), Paul McLaren, Phil Gray, Matthew Spring, Andrew Fotiadis (Stuart Douglas, 75), Matthew Taylor. Subs not used: Ray McKinnon, Efetobore Sodje, Daniel Tate.

● **BURY:** Paddy Kenny, Sam Collins, Chris Swales, Chris Billy, Nick Daws, Lee Richardson (Darren Bullock, 87), Paul Reid, Steve Redmond, Adrian Littlejohn, Ian Lawson, Lutel James (Andy Preece, 90).

● **Shots on target:** Luton 5 Bury 2.

● **Off target:** Luton 8 Bury 4.

● **Corners:** Luton 5 Bury 2.

● **Top Hatter:** McLaren - back to his best.

slamming the ball emphatically into the roof of Kenny's net.

The Hatters lead was only to last 16 minutes with an unchallenged Richardson sidefooting into Abbey's bottom corner.

In an effort to find attacking inspiration, Fotiadis and George were withdrawn and Stuart Douglas and Michael McIndoe thrown on.

But it was to little effect and after being replaced for the fifth successive league game, Fotiadis could be forgiven for thinking the new 'high-tec' electronic sub-board at Kenilworth Road is stuck on 14. That is if the fourth official could ever get it to work!

Certainly Luton's chances of victory seemed to depart with Fotiadis, the most natural finisher on the club's books.

Lennie's verdict

In the last 20 minutes we looked jaded and tired. It was the only game we haven't finished stronger than the opposition this season. On 80 minutes, I'd have been quite happy for the ref to blow his whistle at 1-1. Everything needed improvement especially the front play. In retrospect I should have rotated the side at Bournemouth.

