

By George, it's joy for Hatters

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THE biggest crowd of the season at Kenilworth Road saw a great game full of excellent football.

Racing away at the half with two Liam George goals and one from Stuart Fraser, the Hatters were given a real fright after the interval before clinching the points with a cool Adam Locke finish from fully 40 yards.

After a slow start, Luton began to look dangerous but could not find each other up front with that vital final pass.

With the on-loan Neil Midgley coming into the club and Locke signing for a second month only on Friday, this was hardly unexpected.

So, on 13 minutes, Liam George decided to do it on his own. Fed by a short Fraser pass from the right wing, he was given time to turn on the edge of the box and a lovely curling shot just inside the far post was much too good for South African keeper Andre Arenese.

Eight minutes later Fraser scored his first for the club when he jumped high to head in to the net over two desperately back-tracking defenders after Stuart Douglas had jumped with Arenese and the ball had

**Luton Town 4
Oxford United 2
Report by BILL COLE
Pictures by ANDY HANDLEY**

bounced loose. They could have had three more in injury time at the end of the first half, but surely would have settled for the one they got.

The Oxford offside trap was sprung by Spring who kept his head, drew the keeper, and rolled a simple ball across for George to walk in.

Oxford didn't defend so deep in the second half and it helped their cause no end. But it was a freak goal that brought them back into the game.

On the hour Paul Powell fired in a cross from wide out on the wing to no-one in particular it seemed, but it went over Nathan Abbey like a tracer bullet, hit the far post and bounced into the net.

Pressure increased six minutes later when, with the Luton defence totally absent without leave, a ball into acres of space on the left to Jamie Cook was crossed for fellow unmarked substitute Derek Lilley to head down under Abbey from right in front.

The home defence, so efficient until that moment, managed to reassert itself as Oxford poured forward for the equaliser, and one of many excellent Julian Watts headers set up Stuart Douglas to run in from halfway.

He managed to hurdle Mark Watson at pace before Arenese blocked him at the expense of leaving himself stranded miles out of his area.

Locke kept a cool head to crown an influential performance with his first goal for the club, a controlled shot into the empty net from way out with two minutes to play.

Luton's three first-half goals came as a result of a superb all round team performance. Spring and Locke, who looked like fish out of water last week, formed a really effective midfield unit going forward, tidying up loose ends when needed and firing accurate 60-yard passes into channels when they could to a mobile front three that ran United ragged.

The Oxford defence simply could not cope with George and Spring throughout when they got the ball down and ran at them.

Luton were unlucky to be denied yet another late first-half goal when Midgley and Taylor combined for Douglas to cause panick that saw the ball cross the United goal in only for the effort to be ruled out.

But the defence always had to be on their toes as United showed plenty of attacking flair.

Gary Doherty, Marvin Johnson and Watts looked the real thing at the back apart from the one occasion when called upon, Abbey made some outstanding saves, one from a Joey Beauchamp free kick and another from Rob Folland at the start of the second were just as instrumental in keeping all three points as George's goals were.

Luton: Abbey, Fraser, Watts, Doherty, Johnson, George, Locke, Douglas, Spring, Midgley (McIndoe 66) Taylor. **Subs unused:** Kandol, Sodje, Scarlett, Tait (GK).

Attendance: 6,102.



■ It's there! Liam George celebrates his first goal



■ Neil Midgley gets the ball in the back of the net for Hatters, but this time it was disallowed



■ Well done! Stuart Fraser (centre) is congratulated on his goal for Hatters