

Luton acclaimed

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By Peter Keeling

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LUTON were beaten by the know-how of former Everton striker Stuart Barlow when a win would have taken them into second place; but Lennie Lawrence's team still left the JJB Stadium with praise ringing in their ears.

Wigan manager John Benson said: "Luton were the better side in the first 45 minutes. The tactics employed against us were spot-on. Luton were well organised and there are some good young players at the club who are a credit to the work Lennie Lawrence is doing."

Luton's 19-year-old Gary Doherty was superb at the centre of defence and he is just one of the precocious players who point to an improving future for the cash-starved club. He thought he had put Luton ahead in the 39th minute with a delicate flicked

header from a Matt Taylor right-wing free-kick. Doherty rushed back into his own half in celebration with half of his team-mates, only to realise the goal had been disallowed when he saw Wigan taking a free-kick in their own penalty area.

Lawrence said: "The referee told us that it was offside, and apparently his assistant had his flag up early."

Luton looked capable of holding out for a draw until Barlow scored from close range after a headed pass by Ian Kilford.

Barlow conceded: "We were not at our best today; but that was probably due to a good performance by Luton. In any case these were three valuable points in a battle between two of the top four teams."

Wigan Athletic: Carroll; Bradshaw, De Zeeuw, Balmer, Sharp (Martinez 45); Sheridan, O'Neill, Kilford; Barlow, Liddell, Haworth. **Subs:** Griffiths, Lee, Jones, Stillie (g). **Goal:** Barlow (76).

Luton Town: Abbey; Fraser, Doherty, Watts, Johnson; Locke (Midgley 78), Spring, McLaren (McIndoe 74), Taylor; Douglas, George. **Subs:** Sodjer, White, Ward (g). **Booked:** Douglas. **Referee:** M Pike (Barrow).