



■ No way through again: Stuart Douglas loses out

# Unlucky Hatters fail to Oldham

99/00

**ANOTHER damp Saturday in Lancashire and another Hatters hard luck story.**

But this week it really was three points lost to a club that started the game rock bottom of the league and didn't even play up to that billing in the first half.

Oldham were truly appalling before the break, but made a fight of it in the second and as they began to battle, Luton fell to pieces.

The Hatters were second best in all departments after the interval, but it still took a highly fortunate goal to set Oldham on their way.

The Hatters were undone by a linesman for the second week running.

David McNiven took full advantage of a terrible offside decision to give the Latics a rare goal.

When Neil Midgley was gifted an equaliser with four minutes to play for his first goal in league football, at least a point

**Oldham Athletic 2  
Luton Town 1**

**Report by Bill Cole**

**Pictures by Andy Handley**

looked secure. Gary Kelly made a poor clearance and multiplied his error with a rush of blood when he ran out of his goal to try to clear Matthew Spring's return ball.

But he missed it and laid out his own central defender Stuart Thom instead, allowing the ball to go onto sub Midgley, who only had to put it into an empty net.

The Hatters poured forward in search of the points and looked the more likely to add to their tally.

But when Stuart Fraser seemed intent on bringing his man down a minute into injury time, he was booked for his trouble and the resulting free kick proved decisive.

John Sheridan curled in an inswinging free kick from the Oldham left and Mark Allott dived in at the far post to head the winner.

The two Matthews, Taylor and Spring, ran the first half completely as Luton dominated a home side that could hardly string two passes together.

Taylor twice hit Kelly's right-hand post, the first time with a fifth-minute free kick awarded when Spring was brought down as he ran clean through the middle of the home defence.

The second time was on the half hour and this time the woodwork was hit via Kelly's gloves as the keeper did well to get down and parry Taylor's fierce low drive.

In between times, Gray had an excellent chance to get on the scoresheet. He had a good game returning after injury, but he missed with a poor chip when he only had Kelly to beat after 11 minutes.

The Northern Ireland international then directed a beautifully controlled header into Stuart Douglas's path. He was right to hit it first time but wrong to hit the ball high and wide of the goal.

Then a lovely Paul McLaren cross took Kelly completely out of the game, but as Gray stooped to knock in a simple header, Richard Graham flicked the ball over his head.

Gray was withdrawn after 51 minutes for Tresor Kandol to see if he could get a goal, and moments afterwards Oldham put together their first real period of pressure in the whole game.

Allott first tested Abbey then rapped the same post as Taylor did previously, with the Town keeper stranded.

Allott then caused Abbey to spill a powerful shot and McNiven, first to the rebound, missed badly before Fraser had to make a brilliant tackle to deny Paul Rickson.

Then came the linesman's mistake and McNiven looked yards offside, but allowed to run on, he rounded the advancing Abbey and rolled the ball home.

When Midgley rolled in the equaliser justice appeared to have been done but it all went sour for the Hatters in injury time.

**Luton: Abbey, Fraser, Taylor, Spring, Sodje, Watts, Johnson, Gray (Kandol 51), McLaren (McIndoe 67), Douglas (Midgley 67), Locke.**

**Attendance: 4,532.**



■ Under pressure: Adam Locke makes a run for goal for Hatters



■ Heads I win: Matthew Taylor in full flight against Oldham