

Second half recovery sees Hatters home

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LUTON hit back to salvage their fine unbeaten home record after Gillingham went in at the half-time break threatening to grab all three points.

The visiting Gills had withstood early home pressure with Vince Bartram making a spectacular save to deny a goal from Liam George.

And Gillingham put away their first decent chance with Junior Lewis giving them the lead on 16 minutes after an inviting gap opened up for him.

Gillingham settled to hold what they had and eventually paid the price in the second half as Luton's strike force kicked into gear.

"It seemed that everybody decided to fall back when we should have gone forward looking for another goal," complained manager Peter Taylor.

Luton boss Lenny Lawrence complained that his defence had been "mugged" when they conceded their goal and his half-time pep talk was to demand "an improvement in one or two areas".

Lawrence got what he wanted, with Irish under-21 striker George leading a three-man attack which suddenly found an extra gear.

But there was controversy over the penalty which led to Luton's 51st minute equaliser. George netted it after being sent tumbling by Andy Hessenthaler but Taylor complained: "Our lads are sure there was no foul and also that the incident was not inside the penalty area."

Lawrence, not surprisingly, had a different view. "We thought it was a penalty but whether or not it had been given we would have won anyway," he said.

Taylor admitted his team had faded badly and missed leading scorer Robert Taylor who was a late withdrawal from the team because of a back injury.

Luton controlled the second half and Stuart Douglas put them ahead on 64 minutes with his first goal of the season before the quick-silver George danced through a ponderous defence on a fine solo run and hit the clincher.

Gillingham were denied a late consolation when Emmanuel Omoyimni unleashed a powerful drive which brought a top class save out of Nathan Abbey.

Luton: Abbey, Doherty, Watts, Johnson, Fraser, Spring, McLaren, Taylor, George, Douglas, Midgley. Subs: Kandol, Sodje, Locke, McIndoe, Tate.

Gillingham: Bartram, Ashby, Butters, Pennock, Saunders, Smith, Hessenthaler, Lewis, McGlinchey, Omoyimni, Thomson. Subs: Edge, Noseworthy, Hodge, Pinnock, Mitten

Referee: E Wolstenholme (Blackburn).