

Stuart's leap for joy!

Douglas saves the day for Hatters

LUTON 1 WYCOMBE 1
By DAVE FLETT

LUTON Town were made to settle for a point in a frustrating 1-1 draw with Wycombe last night.

Stuart Douglas' excellent second-half header earned the Hatters a point after they were forced to come back from behind for a second successive home game. But on another day, they could have taken all three.

Pacy Jermaine McSparran gave the Hatters a first minute warning, racing clear and only thwarted by an alert Nathan Abbey block.

Stuart Fraser then saved the Hatters on 10 minutes, hacking off the line with Abbey tipping over a Simpson piledriver from the young wing-back's clearance.

Luton controlled most of the play in a physical first-half, but Wycombe continued to look dangerous on the break against a nervy home defence.

On-loan striker Neil Midgley enjoyed a lively opening but it was the visitors who went ahead before

Lennie Lawrence's side had mustered a meaningful effort on Martin Taylor's goal.

With Abbey rooted to his line, Jason Cousins outjumped Fraser inside the home penalty box and headed in Steve Brown's 24th minute free-kick at the far post.

Three minutes later, Stuart Douglas and Midgley combined to release Liam George, but Saturday's two-goal hero was denied by a Taylor

block. At the other end, Wycombe midfielder Paul Emblen was inches away from doubling his side's interval lead but his long-range effort whistled past Abbey's right-hand post.

On the stroke of half-time, Paul McLaren blazed over for the Hatters after Douglas' clever dummy and Midgley's pass had created the chance. The visitors also survived a loud penalty appeal after Julian Watts' header appeared to be handled in the box.

Luton got back on level terms three minutes into the second-half after more excellent work from Midgley.

The 21-year-old striker held the ball up well before feeding Fraser, whose right-wing cross was met by an extraordinary Douglas leap as the Hatters' forward headed into Taylor's top corner for his second goal in as many games.

Devine thought he had fired Wycombe back in front on 55 minutes but the home team survived the scare with his effort being disallowed for a marginal offside decision.

And it was the Hatters who bossed long periods of the second-half with Matthew Spring at his inspirational best, probing at one end and mopping up at the other.

Midgley came agonisingly close to converting George's 65th minute cross as Luton pressed for a winning goal.

But on 75 minutes Midgley was replaced by Michael McIndoe and the Hatters suffered a loss of momentum, Devine forcing a late save from Abbey.

big match line-up

● **HATTERS:** Nathan Abbey, Gary Doherty, Julian Watts, Marvin Johnson, Stuart Fraser, Matthew Spring, Paul McLaren, Matthew Taylor, Liam George, Stuart Douglas, Neil Midgley (McIndoe, 75 mins). Subs: Efetobore Sodje, Tresor Kandol, Scott Ward, Adam Locke.

● **WYCOMBE:** Martin Taylor, Matt Lawrence, Chris Vinnicombe, Jason Cousins, Jamie Bates, Steve Brown, Keith Ryan, Sean Devine, Paul Emblen (Beeton, 78 mins), Jermaine McSparran (Senda, 90 mins), Michael Simpson. Subs: Maurice Harkin, Mark Rogers, Mark Osborn.

● **Referee:** Scott Mathieson (Stockport).

● **Attendance:** 5,820

● **Luton top player:** Spring