



■ Come on: Julian Watts gets forward during the first half against Oxford



■ Well beaten: Neil Midgley beats a defender to cross for George to score

By George, it's that man again

THE pleasure was evident on the faces of the Town players as they joyously celebrated after a battling but well-deserved win.

They were superior in all departments at the Manor Ground, but there will have been some well-chewed fingernails on the Town bench as they held on grimly to their narrow lead for the last 20 minutes.

Liam George's third-minute strike brought them their first double of the season and their first clean sheet in ten attempts.

Oxford came into the game under pressure after five defeats in six matches, including the 4-2 reverse at Kenilworth Road last month saw them only a point above the drop zone before the game.

Not that the Town's away form has been much better, with four consecutive defeats on their travels.

But they had a dream start to inspire confidence.

A lovely one-two between Stuart Douglas and Neil Midgley carved open the home defence and led to Midgley, who has agreed to another month on loan from Ipswich, squaring a simple ball across the home goalmouth to lay on a chance your granny would have scored.

George, however, was the beneficiary of his colleague's good work,

Oxford Untd 0 Luton Town 1

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anticipating the cross to net his ninth of the season from a yard out.

The goal did nothing for the home team's composure, though, and the Town's forwards should have had a field day.

Matthew Spring burst through, only to pull his shot wide with only Andre Arendse to beat. Then Mark Watson made a splendid block as George threatened to turn the defender inside out and break clear.

And the United keeper twice had to hack away under great pressure when poor back passes put his goal in danger.

On 14 minutes, he and defender Steve Davis got themselves in a terrible mess and were only rescued by a desperate clearance as Douglas raced in.

From the resulting corner, Spring had a goalbound shot that hit a defender and the ball was eventually scrambled clear.

By then, Joey Beauchamp had Oxford's best effort of the first half when a corner came back out to him just outside the box.

His right-foot drive rattled the post before rebounding off for a corner from a Town boot.

That was a rare moment of quality from the home side and the Town dominated without finding that killer touch.

Douglas had a super run down the right wing and crossed dangerously, but Arendse made an excellent diving interception before the keeper had to hack clear right under George's nose as he threatened to get a foot to the ball.

Luton came out of the dressing room after the interval determined to hold onto their lead and they quietened the game down to a stalemate as Oxford were unable to raise their game.

They, indeed, came close to adding to their lead when Spring and George combined to give Douglas a shot on goal but Arendse saved his skimming shot at full stretch.

On the hour, a double substitution brought new life to the men in yellow.

Subs Jamie Lambert and Steve Antrobus immediately combined to come within an inch of an equaliser.

Lambert skinned Fraser down the left wing and sent over a wonderful cross, smack on Antrobus's head, but the big striker could not keep it down and the best chance of the game flashed over the bar.

Luton: Abbey, Fraser, Watts, Johnson, Doherty, Taylor, Spring, McLaren, Douglas (Locke 77), Midgley (McIndoe 72), George.
Attendance: 5,866.



■ Well done: Stuart Douglas hugs goal scorer Liam George