Luton tied in Notts as County counter

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LUTON TOWN 2 NOTTS COUNTY 2

THE old cliche about a game of two halves was never more true than at Kenilworth Road.

Luton were two up at the break and looking set to close the gap on the teams above them chasing play-off places in the Second Division.

But County reorganised their side, doubling their strike force to two by sending on Kevin Ratley as a substitute and suddenly Luton were back-pedalling and eventually grateful to hang on for a point.

For 38 minutes Luton had struggled to find a way through a County defence which was quite often manned by nine players. But then Tony Thorpe collected a pass from Matthew Spring, went wide and beat goalkeeper Darren Ward before delivering a perfect chip for Gary Doherty to head in.

Two minutes later Doherty made the opening for Thorpe to double the lead.

But in the second half County came out fighting. They were much more adventurous and were back in the game after 54 minutes with a far post header by Ian Richardson from a short corner routine and a cross with Dennis Pearce. And from then on County took over, with a tremendous 20-yard strike by Gary Powers giving them a 73rd minute equaliser.

County manager Gary Brazil said: "We paid heavily for going to sleep for five minutes just before the interval.

"We were coping nicely until then but at half-time if I'd been given the chance of a draw from two down I would certainly have taken it.

"We told the players they could not afford to switch off like that and would have to concentrate more and they did and I thought it was Luton who were looking rocky for most of the second half. We kept the ball better, used it better and we were unfortunate not to win."

Luton: Abbey, Doherty, Watts, Johnson, Fraser, Locke, Spring, Taylor, Douglas, Thorpe, George. Subs: Sodje, Boyce, Kandol, Scarlett, Tate.

Notts County: Ward, Warren, Redmile, Richardson, Fenton, Holmes, Hughes, Owers, Ramage, Pearce, Stallard. Subs: Blackmore, Dyer, Tierney, Rapley, Gibson.

Referee: S Tomlin (Lewes).