

Crass errors put paid to Cup hopes

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BY BILL COLE (FAC)

Luton Town 0 Fulham 3

A SIX minute purple patch, during which Fulham scored three goals and might have had two more, saw the Londoners eliminate Luton from the FA Cup on Tuesday evening.

The expensive Fulham strikers took full advantage of slack defensive play as the young Luton side were again betrayed by their experience.

"We made two crass schoolboy errors and two £10 million strikers made us pay," said Luton manager Lennie Lawrence.

"When will they learn? We did the same thing against them here last year and the same at Colchester last week.

"It's not so much losing 3-0 that hurts, but it's the ridiculous errors and the manner of defeat. Until we stop doing things like we have done in the last two games, we will not improve."

Before and after the rocky spell around the hour mark, even Fulham supporters would have admitted that the Town had given as least as good as they had received.

The back three of Doherty, Watts and Johnson and forwards Taylor, George and Douglas, along with Matthew Spring, were all praised by Lawrence.

"The result was cruel on several players because we matched them for a game and a half," he said.

"We restricted them, but one thing you must not to with Fulham is over commit yourself and then give the ball away."

Stuart Fraser, who bounced back from an awful display at Colchester to put in an otherwise solid performance, telegraphed a 58th minute pass to start the rot.

Steve Hayward intercepted and passed for Lee Clark to break away down the left and cross. Nathan Abbey and the retreating Luton defenders rushed to block Geoff Horsfield's run, but the ball fell beautifully into Hayles' path and he was left with a simple chance.

Fraser was immediately substituted. They didn't bench Paul McLaren two minutes later, although consistency demanded that they should have done because his glaring mistake led to Hayles skinning Marvin Johnson.

He then calmly tucked away the second goal and put Tuesday's replay out of sight of Luton.

Poor defending at a free kick a yard outside the penalty area brought the third goal. It gave Hayward the chance to curl a



● Above: The Luton wall is hopelessly positioned as Steve Hayward slots home number three from a free kick.

● Right: Liam George skips past Andy Melville.

right-footer around the defensive wall and with Abbey nowhere, the ball found the corner of the net.

Earlier on, Matthew Taylor and Liam George went close several times without hitting the target and Taylor also brought a good save out of the Fulham keeper with a swerving left-footer.

Julian Watts also produced a dangerous moment for Fulham when he headed a corner back across the face of the goal without anyone getting a touch.

Luton: Abbey, Doherty, Watts, Johnson, Fraser (Boyce 59), Taylor, Locke, Spring, McLaren, Douglas, George.

Attendance: 8,170 (best of season).

