

Hatters crash out!

LUTON 0 FULHAM 3

By DAVE FLETT

Luton Town's dreams of an FA Cup fourth round clash with Premiership Wimbledon died last night when they crashed at home to Fulham.

The Division One visitors scored three goals in six minutes which were all gift-wrapped by a home side who displayed far too much festive spirit.

A previously even third round replay was turned on its head by two fatal errors from Stuart Fraser and Paul McLaren.

Barry Hayles, so often the scourge of Kenilworth Road, capitalised fully by netting twice and Steve Hayward went on to add a third for the visitors.

The result was cause for a double celebration for Fulham owner Mohamed Al Fayed, who only hours earlier had learned that he had won his high-profile libel case.

Without the ineligible Tony Thorpe and with Efetobore Sodje away on international duty, Lennie Lawrence recalled Stuart Douglas after a bout of glandular fever and Paul McLaren.

Gary Doherty also dropped to the back as Lawrence reverted to a 3-5-2 formation.

Fulham started the strongest with Barry Hayles springing the Hatters' offside trap after only seven minutes but shooting lamely at Nathan Abbey.



Lawrence's blunderers just gift it to Fulham

The Craven Cottage side had clearly sent a representative to the Hatters' dismal 3-0 away defeat at Colchester on Friday and sent a series of early crosses and set pieces into the home penalty box.

Simon Morgan, in for injured Welsh international Chris Coleman, should have done better on 17 minutes when he rose unchallenged to meet Steve Hayward's dangerous free-kick but headed straight at Abbey.

Geoff Horsfield then dragged a 20-yard effort wide before Luton imposed themselves on the tie.

The marauding Matthew Taylor curled a right-footed effort wide on 24 minutes and then warmed Maik Taylor's hands with a swirling left-

footed strike. Lively Liam George also curled a 35th minute chance wide of Taylor's upright as the home team searched for a breakthrough.

The home side continued in a positive vein after the break with the hard-working Douglas chasing down a loose back pass to Taylor on 52 minutes, but George could not lift his shot over the relieved keeper.

At the other end, Horsfield ghosted past Matthew Spring, only to fire over from close range before the Hatters handed their Division One rivals a route into round four.

Fraser's short pass saw the home side lose possession in midfield and it was a mistake that caught the whole team out of position.

Ex-Newcastle midfielder Lee Clark broke down the left and his cross was converted at the far post by an isolated Hayles on 58 minutes.

Fraser paid the ultimate price for his error, being substituted two minutes later, but the Hatters continued to show generous festive spirit towards their rich West London visitors.

This time it was McLaren's turn to surrender possession with Hayles again the beneficiary, bursting past Marvin Johnson to shoot low into Abbey's bottom corner on 61 minutes and all but settle the tie.

Three minutes later it was game, set and match when Doherty tripped Hayward on the edge of the area and the visitors set-piece specialist dusted himself down to curl a right-footed effort around an ineffective wall and into a badly positioned Abbey's bottom corner.

Horsfield could have made it four on 69 minutes after another McLaren mistake but drove wide.

More car parking for the fans

EXTRA car parking spaces are being made available for Hatters fans, starting with the game against Reading on January 22.

The spaces are situated in Dallow Road Junior School near the ground and are available on match day Saturdays from 1.30pm to 5.30pm and from

6.30pm to 10pm for midweek games.

The cost of a space is £35 for the rest of the season and interested fans should write to the club, enclosing a cheque for £35, made payable to Luton Town FC.

The spaces are available on a first come, first served basis.

big match line-up

● **HATTERS:** Nathan Abbey, Stuart Fraser (Emmerson Boyce, 60 mins), Julian Watts, Gary Doherty, Marvin Johnson, Liam George, Adam Locke, Stuart Douglas, Matthew Spring, Paul McLaren, Matthew Taylor. Other subs: Andre Scarlett, Tresor Kandol, James Ayres, Daniel Tate.

● **FULHAM:** Maik Taylor, Steve Finnan, Rufus Brevett, Andy Melville (Paul Trollope, 79 mins), Simon Morgan, Kit Symons, Wayne Collins, Lee Clark, Geoff Horsfield, Barry Hayles, Steve Hayward. Other subs: Gus Uhlenbeek, Paul Peschisolido, Ian Selly, Marcus Hahnemann. ● **Referee:** Graham Frankland (Middlesbrough).

● **Attendance:** 8,170.

● **Luton top player:** Taylor.