

'Worst side in history' take a point off Luton

LUTON TOWN'S depressing December continued against a Chesterfield side that will go down in the record books as the worst in the club's history.

Sunday's 1-1 draw was the Spireites' 17th league game without a victory, setting a new club record but Division Two's bottom side were unlucky not to bring an end to that sorry run at Kenilworth Road.

Adam Locke had given Lennie Lawrence's men a deserved lead on 38 minutes of this Boxing Day fixture but it was Chesterfield who showed the greater fight after the break.

Stuart Fraser and Paul McLaren were both dropped from the starting line up after mistakes against Fulham in midweek but the Hatters were still prone to errors and a more confident side than Chesterfield would have punished Nathan Abbey and Julian Watts for early blunders.

But the home side were the more adventurous in the first half. Matthew Taylor drove wide after an excellent volleyed pass from Matthew Spring and Spring then forced Chesterfield keeper Carl Muggleton into a low save from his 25-yard free kick before Locke celebrated signing a new two-month contract with his second Hatters goal.

The 29-year-old midfielder controlled Spring's half-cleared corner on the edge of the area and curled an exquisite right-footed effort into Muggleton's top corner.

At the other end, Chesterfield failed to test Nathan Abbey before the interval but adopted a far more positive approach in the second half.

An equaliser looked inevitable when Jonathan Howard, Ryan Williams and Steve Wilkinson all went close but the game's turning point came on 69 minutes.

In a rare counter attack, Liam George got on the end of Taylor's deep cross but somehow Muggleton's outstretched arm pushed his downward header behind for a corner.

match facts

LUTON TN 1 CHESTERFIELD 1

● **HATTERS:** Nathan Abbey, Emmerson Boyce, Julian Watts, Gary Doherty, Marvin Johnson, Liam George, Adam Locke, Stuart Douglas, Matthew Spring (Paul McLaren, 73), Tony Thorpe (Phil Gray, 76), Matthew Taylor. Subs not used: Stuart Fraser, Andrew Fotiadis, Daniel Tate.

● **CHESTERFIELD:** Carl Muggleton, Jamie Hewitt, Ian Breckin, Steve Blatherwick, Chris Beaumont, Mick Galloway, Tom Curtis, Ryan Williams, Jonathan Howard (Roger Willis, 77), David Reeves, David D'Auria (Steve Wilkinson, 41).

● **Shots on target:** Luton 5, Chesterfield 4.

● **Off target:** Luton 4, Chesterfield 7.

● **Corners:** Luton 10, Chesterfield 7.

● **Referee:** Phillip Joslin (Newark).

● **Top Hatter:** Locke - vital contributions at both ends.

❑ **THE HATTERS juniors will face Southampton in the fourth round of the Times FA Youth Cup on Tuesday, January 11 at the Dell. Paul Lowe's men will warm up for the tie with a Football League Youth Alliance home clash with Shrewsbury Town on Saturday, January 8. Kick off will be 11am at Luton RFC.**

❑ **PAUL McLAREN dislocated his right toe against Chesterfield on Boxing Day but should be back in contention for the January 3 home clash with Scunthorpe United. Matthew Spring was substituted in Sunday's game because he was suffering from flu which almost caused him to miss the game.**

Five minutes later, the Spireites equalised when centre-forward David Reeves scored his first goal since September.

Reeves collected Chris Beaumont's chipped pass into the home penalty box before firing low into Abbey's bottom corner.

On 85 minutes, impressive defender Steve Blatherwick almost gave Chesterfield their first victory since September 4 but his towering header was headed off the line and against the underside of

his own crossbar by the covering Locke.

The former Bristol City midfielder enjoyed his best game in a Hatters shirt with consistent youngsters Gary Doherty and Spring the only other players to do themselves justice in a disappointing game.

Fit-again front man Phil Gray made his first appearance for two months as a second-half substitute but twice blazed over with late efforts.

Lennie Lawrence's verdict

“We are going through a tricky time. It's difficult but we'll be all right. We'll come out of the other side but it's not great to watch at the moment apart from in fits and starts. We tried our best. It's a disappointing result but after the recent bashings we've taken it's a very tiny step forward. We got a point and got the club moving again.”

