

Sad Seasiders sunk by late Taylor strike

LUTON TOWN returned from Blackpool with an unlikely point from a 3-3 draw after Matthew Taylor's 30-yard injury-time equaliser.

Taylor's speculative volley from a half-cleared corner deceived home keeper Tony Caig after Marvin Johnson ducked out of the way.

The Seasiders fans were stunned into silence but, for Luton's loyal supporters, Taylor's strike was the cue for frenzied celebrations after watching their side fight back from 3-1 down with eight minutes to go.

Saturday's game was a rollercoaster ride to rival anything on offer at the nearby Pleasure Beach, with both sides experiencing exhilarating highs before crashing back down to earth.

Blackpool, like Luton, played with three attackers and it made for an entertaining spectacle.

Lennie Lawrence's men made their best start to a match this season but still trailed after nine minutes.

Liam George, restored to the starting line-up, jinked his way through the home defence after two minutes but saw his deflected shot hit the side netting.

Seconds later, Phil Gray rattled the crossbar and Stuart Douglas fired the rebound over as Luton tore into their lowly hosts.

But it was Blackpool who went ahead when recent signings Kevin Richardson and Gary Ablett, old friends of new boss Steve McMahon, combined to break the deadlock.

Richardson crossed into the box after a poorly-cleared corner and Ablett's powerful header beat Nathan Abbey despite the Luton keeper getting a hand to the ball.

The Hatters continued to create chances despite that setback with Gray immediately guilty of dragging his shot wide after finding more space in the penalty box.

On 27 minutes, Luton equalised with an excellent solo effort from the impressive Adam Locke.

Locke played a one-two with Gray and, after a poor first touch,

RYAN MORAN and Ezro Mentore were on target as Hatters juniors won 2-0 at Northampton on Saturday in a Football League Youth Alliance clash.

Luton's Reserves went down 3-1 at Cambridge United last Wednesday, striker Andrew Fotiadis netting the consolation.

displayed excellent control to tip-toe through a crowded box and drill a shot into Caig's bottom corner.

Taylor then forced Caig into a scrambled save as Luton finished the first-half strongest but, two minutes after the break, Blackpool were back in front.

Phil Clarkson was denied by a great point blank save from Abbey but, from the resulting corner, the generous Luton defence offered Blackpool's captain a second chance from three yards out which

match facts

BLACKPOOL 3 LUTON TOWN 3

● **BLACKPOOL:** Tony Caig, David Bardsley, Paul Beesley, Clarke Carlisle, Gary Ablett, Steve Bushell, Phil Clarkson, Kevin Richardson, Junior Bent, Rob Matthews, John Murphy (Daniel Cold, 52).

● **HATTERS:** Nathan Abbey, Emmerson Boyce, Matthew Taylor, Julian Watts, Marvin Johnson, Gary Doherty, Matthew Spring, Adam Locke, Stuart Douglas, Phil Gray, Liam George (Andrew Fotiadis, 74). Subs not used: Stuart Fraser, Andre Scarlett, James Ayres, Daniel Tate.

● **Shots on target:** Blackpool 6, Luton 5.

● **Off target:** Blackpool 4, Luton 11.

● **Corners:** Blackpool 8, Luton 12.

● **Attendance:** 5,262.

● **Referee:** Trevor Parkes (Birmingham).

● **Top Hatter:** Adam Locke – busy performance.

he gratefully accepted with his head.

Like the first goal and so many others on their travels this season, Clarkson's effort illustrated the Hatters struggle to attack the ball when defending corners.

Blackpool were in a "McMahon Wonderland" eight minutes later when Steve Bushell thumped a tremendous 25-yard drive past Abbey after Julian Watts had only half-cleared Rob Matthews' cross.

But the home side displayed little attacking inclination after their third goal, allowing the Hatters to go for broke with Locke probing and Emmerson Boyce producing some whole-hearted and athletic wing play.

On 82 minutes, Gray rose well to power in a header from Spring's corner to pull one goal back.

Spring then brushed the top of the netting with a curling free-kick before Taylor's late, late point saver.

Lennie Lawrence's verdict

When you're 3-1 down with eight minutes to go you've got to be happy with a point but that doesn't take into account that we could have been three up in the first 10 minutes. It was a very weird game with so many different standards and wildly contrasting periods of play. We're nearly a good team but the lapses of concentration that led to the goals are disturbing. The spirit and skill they showed to come back was commendable.

