

Boycey is off the mark but Luton 'not at the races'

EMMERSON BOYCE'S first senior goal could not save the Hatters from a 2-1 home defeat against Bournemouth on Saturday.

The 20-year-old right-wing-back opened his Kenilworth Road account on 59 minutes, but his side-footed effort only served as a consolation in a sorry Luton Town performance.

Scott Mean had given the visitors a first-half lead and Hatters defender Julian Watts put through his own goal a minute after the break to double Bournemouth's advantage.

Luton have now failed to beat the south coast club in the last seven games between the two sides.

With just two league victories on their travels all season before Saturday's match, Mel Machin's Cherries appeared ripe for the picking. But once Watts turned Mean's cross past Nathan Abbey, Luton always looked destined for a fruitless afternoon.

In a lacklustre first-half, Mean gave Bournemouth a deserved lead on 34 minutes when he capitalised on the space afforded to him in the home penalty box to direct his header from James Hayter's cross into Abbey's top left-hand corner.

At the other end, the Hatters rarely put the visitors' defence under pressure before the break.

Leading scorer Liam George, who ran down blind alleys for large parts of a frustrating afternoon, fired wildly off target with the best chance after 13 minutes.

Watts completed a goalscoring hat-trick when the home defence were not alert to Mean's overlapping run down the left flank.

The Bournemouth midfielder's centre was diverted past Abbey by Watts, who had scored at the right end in his previous two matches.

Watts almost made amends five minutes later but his header from Matthew Spring's free-kick was tipped over by Marc Ovendale.

The Hatters consolation arrived when Marvin Johnson's miscued long-range shot inadvertently found Boyce charging in at the far

match facts

LUTON 1 BOURNEMOUTH 2

● **HATTERS:** Nathan Abbey, Gary Doherty, Julian Watts, Marvin Johnson, Emmerson Boyce, Matthew Spring, Adam Locke, Gavin McGowan (Andre Scarlett, 72), Liam George, Phil Gray, Stuart Douglas (Andrew Fotiadis, 78). Subs not used: James Ayres, Tresor Kandol, Daniel Tate.

● **BOURNEMOUTH:** Marc Ovendale, Neil Young, John O'Shea, Eddie Howe, Christer Warren, Scott Mean, Steve Robinson, Richard Hughes, James Hayter, John O'Neill (Claus Jorgensen, 90), Mark Stein.

● **Shots on target:** Luton 7, Bournemouth 3.

● **Off target:** Luton 3, Bournemouth 6.

● **Corners:** Luton 6, Bournemouth 3.

● **Attendance:** 5,961.

● **Referee:** Michael Jones (Chester).

● **Top Hatter:** Johnson – determined display.

❑ **EX-HATTERS** striker Don Givens is the new Republic Of Ireland under-21 coach. Givens, 49, has given up his job as boss of Arsenal's under-19 youth squad to take up the post. As part of his new position, Givens will work with Hatters' Irish pair Gary Doherty and Liam George.

❑ **THE Hatters juniors** slipped to a 1-0 defeat at West Brom on Saturday. Luton's reserves fared little better last Wednesday when they lost 2-0 at home to QPR. Trialist defender Aaron Barnett, from Erith and Belvedere, and midfielder Andy Smith, from Barnsley, both played.

post, from where he calmly side-footed past Ovendale.

Phil Gray squandered the best chance to snatch an unlikely point when his point-blank header was instinctively tipped over by Ovendale.

It was a fine save by the Bournemouth keeper but one he perhaps should not have been allowed to make.

Lennie Lawrence sent on Andrew Fotiadis for the popular but goal-shy Stuart Douglas soon afterwards to a cacophony of boos.

And on a miserable afternoon for the home side, injury-prone Fotiadis finished the game limping after a clash with Ovendale.

Afterwards, Lawrence said the game had provided a "savage reminder" as to why the Hatters are a Second Division team.

The fact that after Saturday his side had only beaten two teams outside the division's bottom eight this season – Gillingham and Burnley – is certainly a sobering thought as regards the club's fading play-off hopes.

Lennie Lawrence's verdict

“You must pay credit to Bournemouth. They were by far the best team in the first-half and quicker to every ball. The second goal killed us. It was a spirited comeback and there were chances to snatch a point but that would have been unfair on them. They deserved it. To use an age old football expression, we were never at the races. Too many people were off colour at the same time and we've got to start games better.”

