

Ref was 'disgraceful' blasts boss

LENNIE LAWRENCE lambasted referee Steve Robinson after the Hatters were denied a late penalty at Bury.

Adrian Littlejohn's 61st-minute strike secured a 1-0 win for the home side on Saturday, but Lawrence was left to reflect on what might have been after a decision he later described as "disgraceful".

The controversial incident came on 77 minutes when Adam Locke turned inside Bury defender Paul Williams in the home penalty box. Williams lost his footing and clearly handled on the ground as Locke shaped to shoot.

Locke eventually hit the outside of the post from an acute angle, but penalty appeals were waved aside by Mr Robinson.

Lawrence slammed the Hull official afterwards, saying: "It was a disgraceful bit of refereeing. I'm not one to whinge about referees and it's fair enough if the ball hits somebody's arm but he scooped it with his hand."

"I hope he never referees us when there's anything serious at stake. Anybody can make a mistake but he saw that and ignored it."

Lawrence's frustration was unders-

match facts

BURY 1 LUTON TOWN 0

● **BURY:** Paddy Kenny, Paul Williams, Nick Daws, Darren Bullock, Lutel James (Kemall Avdiu, 75), Steve Redmond, Andy Preece, Ian Lawson (Chris Billy, 79), Adrian Littlejohn, Danny Swalles, Matthew Barrass.

● **HATTERS:** Nathan Abbey, Gary Doherty, Julian Watts, Marvin Johnson, Gavin McGowan (Emmerson Boyce, 73), Adam

Locke, Alan White (Liam George, 68), Matthew Spring, Matthew Taylor, Phil Gray, Stuart Douglas (Andrew Fotiadis, 63). Not used: Stuart Fraser, Daniel Tate.

● **Shots on target:** Bury 7, Luton 5.

● **Off target:** Bury 7, Luton 8.

● **Corners:** Bury 4, Luton 7.

● **Top Hatter:** Doherty – reliable as ever.

tandable. His side deserved at least a point from a scrappy encounter, but Stuart Douglas and Locke squandered the best chances of the game and Littlejohn's goal was entirely preventable.

Douglas should have given the visitors a ninth-minute lead when his pace left Danny Swalles trailing in his wake after Phil Gray's excellent pass on the turn.

But the Hatters forward, with just four goals from 36 games this season, shot straight at home keeper Paddy Kenny.

The only other real threats to Kenny's goal before the break were speculative, long-range efforts from Gray and the

recalled Alan White. At the other end, Andy Preece sent a looping header inches over and Gary Doherty executed an excellent last-ditch tackle as Ian Lawson bore down on Nathan Abbey's goal.

The Hatters dominated the early stages of the second-half but passed up another opportunity to break the deadlock on 51 minutes.

A quick free-kick from Matthew Taylor released Marvin Johnson in the home penalty box and the Hatters skipper slipped the ball inside for Locke.

Sadly, for the visitors, Locke again found the considerable frame of Kenny

who beat out his close-range shot. The Bury keeper was named man-of-the-match by home supporters but Lawrence later argued that his side had made Kenny look like a "cross between Nigel Martyn and David Seaman".

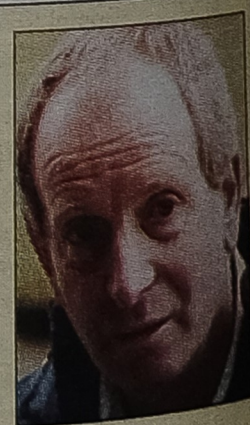
Midfield anchor man White, who enjoyed a fine return to the starting line-up, then went close with a curling 20-yard effort before Bury went ahead.

Douglas' disastrous lay-off just inside his own half found Preece on the edge of the penalty box who fed Littlejohn.

The ex-Sheffield United striker still had a lot to do but, with Gavin McGowan applying little pressure, hit a low diagonal shot which nestled in a despairing Abbey's bottom corner.

Douglas paid the ultimate price for his part in the goal and was immediately hauled off. McGowan followed shortly afterwards and was replaced by the impressive Emmerson Boyce.

But despite his efforts and those of fellow subs Andrew Fotiadis and Liam George, the Hatters could not force a point. Doherty was also sent forward in the closing stages, but Locke's penalty appeal was the nearest Luton came to a deserved draw.



Lennie's verdict

It wasn't our day up front. Our

chances of winning the game disappeared when Stuart Douglas missed after nine minutes but we looked good enough for a draw right until the 90th minute