



■ Sliding in: Matthew Spring ends up on his backside as Wrexham burst clear to victory

Luton goalie denies Town

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Wrexham 1 Luton Town 0
A SCRAPPY game played at a three-quarters empty Race-course ground saw Luton slide to their fourth consecutive defeat.

The result was probably about right, and dispels any lingering hopes of first division football at Kenilworth Road next season. If the Hatters do not pull their collective socks up it will leave them looking over their shoulders at the relegation pack.

The difference between the sides yesterday boiled down to the difference between the respective goalkeepers. Luton-born Kevin Dearden, who still lives in the town, denied Andrew Fotiadis with an inspired block from his outstretched foot when the striker was prematurely celebrating an open goal for the Hatters after 24 minutes.

Whereas the strike that counted came as a result of Gareth Owen waltzing past Town skipper Marvin Johnson and laying a beautifully weighted ball to Danny Allsopp on 54 minutes.

The striker, making his home debut on loan from Manchester City, hit a hard, low shot that evaded Ben Roberts' grasp and went into the net under his body as he dived.

Roberts should be disappointed with his attempt.

Luton certainly had their chances to wrap this match up before half time, but several times Stuart Douglas let himself and his team down. Fotiadis pulled a shot just wide and Emmerson Boyce, on as sub for the injured Stuart Fraser, had two golden chances within minutes of coming on.

His first touch of the game took him clean away down the right wing, but his cross-shot rolled narrowly wide of the back post.

Then, when Matthew Springs' free kick was headed on by Gary Doherty, Boyce found himself totally unmarked but pulled his shot from a narrow angle across the face of the goal to safety.

Almost immediately, Dearden had to come well outside his area to head a long Julian Watts' ball clear. He only found Phil Gray, who caused the Wrexham defence plenty of discomfort throughout, but his instantaneous lob from fully 35 yards, dropped a matter of inches over the empty net.

All the home side could muster in reply was a couple of shots from Karl Connolly and Allsopp

blazed wildly too high, whereas Spring went close with a couple of blinding drives that the keeper hardly saw.

It was a different story after the interval. Wrexham had great success playing little through balls between and beyond the Hatters defenders and timed their runs to collect them to perfection.

Several of these went begging before and after Allsopp finally struck.

At least Lenny Lawrence's tactics of replacing Gavin McGowan with Matthew Taylor and Fotiadis with Liam George, as well as throwing both Doherty and Boyce up front in the dying minutes, produced a grandstand finish.

Several near misses ensued, but Douglas had a golden chance to grab a point with two minutes to go. He collected a miscued defensive header but, just when a cool finish was required, he blasted the ball high and wide enabling Wrexham to escape with three vital points in their fight for safety.

Luton Town: Roberts, McGowan (Taylor, 70), Doherty, Watts, Johnson, Fraser (Boyce, 25), Spring, Locke, Gray, Douglas, Fotiadis (George, 59), subs not used Scarlett, Ward (G K).

Attendance 2,703.