

Lions maul Hatters again

THE POPE'S Catholic, night follows day and Millwall always win at Luton!

Some things in life can be relied upon and, after Saturday's 2-0 away win, three points for Millwall at Kenilworth Road is fast falling into that category.

The New Den club enjoyed their fourth successive victory at Luton to stay on the promotion trail of top two Preston and Bristol Rovers. The Lions call themselves the "pride of South London" but on Saturday it was an exiled Australian and a lofty Liverpoolian who plotted the Hatters downfall.

Antipodean ace Tim Cahill bagged a brace of first-half goals from midfield to give the visitors a 2-0 lead and, after the break, 6ft 4in keeper Tony Warner was a giant between the sticks as he thwarted wave after wave of home attacks.

He was aided and abetted by some woeful finishing that saw the Hatters fail to convert any of their 19 goal attempts.

In a one-sided first-half that Lennie Lawrence later called an "absolute disgrace" Millwall seized the initiative.

Adam Locke and Matthew Spring were brushed aside in midfield and a three-man defence that had the recalled Efetobore Sodje at its nucleus struggled to adjust to the re-organisation caused by Julian Watts' suspension.

match facts

● **HATTERS:** Ben Roberts, Emmerson Boyce, Alan White, Gary Doherty, Marvin Johnson, Efetobore Sodje (Liam George, 46), Adam Locke, Matthew Spring, Phil Gray, Stuart Douglas (Andrew Fotiadis, 70), Gavin McGowan (Matthew Taylor, 66). Subs not used: Paul McLaren, Nathan Abbey.

● **MILLWALL:** Tony Warner, Sean Dyche, David Tuttle, Robbie Ryan, Lucas Neill,

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Paul Ifill, Ronnie Bull, Michael Gilkes, Tim Cahill, Richard Sadlier, Neil Harris (Paul Moody, 83).

● **Shots on target:** Luton 9, Millwall 8.

● **Off target:** Luton 10, Millwall 5.

● **Corners:** Luton 6, Millwall 8.

● **Referee:** Michael Dean (Wirral).

● **Top Hatter:** Doherty – steadied the ship.

At the other end, Sean Dyche, on loan with the Hatters last season, was outstanding as he captained the Lions in his first appearance since a summer move beset by a back injury problem.

Millwall went close four times before Cahill made the breakthrough on 18 minutes. Ben Roberts produced three brilliant early stops to deny Lucas Neill, Richard Sadlier and David Tuttle.

Gavin McGowan also cleared a scrambled effort off the line as the visitors bombarded Roberts' goal.

Cahill gave his side a belated lead when he escaped the attentions of Hatters skipper Marvin Johnson to sidefoot home Michael Gilkes' low cross. Spring had lost possession in the visitors half to start the move.

Cahill doubled the lead on 39 minutes,

sweeping the ball into an empty goal after Roberts could only parry Sadlier's stinging drive.

Luton mustered little in response, Phil Gray wasting the best opportunity before the break when, under pressure from Dyche, his control let him down as he bore down on Warner's goal.

Spring also tested the Millwall keeper on the stroke of half-time with a low drive from the edge of the area.

Lawrence, unhappy with his side's defensive display, withdrew Sodje for the second-half, bringing on Liam George, moving Alan White back to the right-hand side of defence and shifting Gary Doherty across to the centre.

The eager George helped lift his lacklustre team-mates. On 52 minutes, McGowan, still to score a goal during

five years of senior football, had a shot cleared off the line and then skied the rebound over from four yards out.

Moments later, Gray's quickly-taken free kick saw Warner scampering across his goal-line to tip around a post.

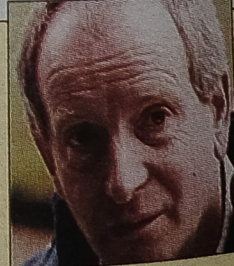
Gray was denied again on 76 minutes when the Millwall keeper instinctively punched his powerful header into the air and sub Andrew Fotiadis could not bundle the rebound over the line.

Warner's outstretched arm then kept George off the scoresheet after dazzling footwork and a curling shot from Luton's leading scorer. This time it was sub Matthew Taylor who could not convert the loose ball.

The last minute of the game summed up a bizarre afternoon when Fotiadis shot straight at Warner and saw his follow up cleared off the line by Neill before Taylor blazed wildly over.

It was another depressing day for the Hatters who, having only lost one of their first 12 league games at home, have now lost four out of their last five at Kenilworth Road. They have also won just once on a Saturday since November 6.

A disappointed Lawrence knows that his team might be able to beat anybody in Division Two on their day but they do not possess the consistency or durability to last the pace for a whole season.



Lennie's verdict

The first-half was an absolute disgrace and I'd like to apologise to fans for the display. We were out fought. It was the worst half defensively of the season. Amazingly, in spite of that, we could have won. After the break, we had four goal attempts inside the six-yard box and missed them all which, is astonishing. Some of the efforts were unsuccessful, some laughable.