

Winning run over

Thorpe and City halt the Hatters

LUTON Town's run of successive victories came to an end with a home defeat against Bristol City last night.

The Hatters were hoping to chalk up four league wins in a row for the first time since Boxing Day, 1996.

But they were sunk by goals from Scott Murray and Micky Bell and, despite Gary Doherty's consolation and a spirited finish, they lost to a strong City side.

Lennie Lawrence fielded an unchanged side for the third successive game, while Bristol City included ex-Hatters striker Tony Thorpe, who received a warm welcome before the game.

The visitors started brightest but on 13 minutes Peter Beadle made a hash of his free header.

On a rain-drenched pitch, Luton gradually settled into their passing game and their best attacking spell of the half came with three chances in as many minutes.

First, Gary Doherty had a close-range glancing header saved by City keeper Billy Mercer on 17 minutes.

Seconds later, Phil Gray fired wide after a well-worked one-two with Liam George.

George then dragged an effort across the face of Mercer's goal from the edge of the area.

At the other end, Ben Roberts produced a brilliant finger-tip save to push Paul Holland's thunderbolt around a post after 23 minutes. Hot-



**LUTON TOWN 1
BRISTOL CITY 2**

**Dave Flett on
last night's
Kenilworth
Road match...**

shot Holland then sent another effort inches over from the resulting corner. City broke the deadlock on 29 minutes with an exquisite goal from Scott Murray. The visitors' midfielder carried the ball forward before sending a perfectly-weighted chip over a helpless Roberts on 25 yards.

Hatters' keeper Roberts had only strayed a few yards off his line but Murray punished him brilliantly.

The home side improved after the interval and Matthew Taylor was unlucky not to level the scores when his stinging drive was beaten out by Mercer.

On 51 minutes, George beat Mercer

in a race to the ball but fluffed his cross with Gray and Doherty both waiting for a square pass inside the six-yard box.

Three minutes later, Gray's clever chipped pass gave George a quick chance to make amends but the Hatters' leading scorer's shot on the turn was straight at Mercer.

Mercer then safely gathered Gray's downward header after the Northern Ireland international rose well to meet Marvin Johnson's cross.

At the other end, a laid back Bristol side rarely threatened to increase their lead.

Andrew Jordan had a flicked header easily stopped by Roberts and Micky Bell's 25-yard effort drifted just over, but there were few other attacking moves from the Ashton Gate side and Thorpe, starved of service, was virtually anonymous.

Lawrence introduced Adam Locke and then Stuart Douglas for Paul McLaren and Gray as he tried to conjure up an equaliser.

But it was the Hatters' third

substitution, Gavin McGowan, who was caught out of position immediately after coming on and was at fault for Bristol's second goal.

Bell took full advantage, racing inside McGowan to shoot past Roberts on 77 minutes.

Luton's response was swift, with Doherty scoring his fifth goal in five games to reduce the deficit straight from the restart. The Republic of Ireland under 21 international struck a tame shot but Mercer allowed the ball to slip under his body.

In a rousing finale both teams had chances in the last 10 minutes.

City again saw Bell go close but this time McGowan reacted quickly enough to clear the danger.

Douglas' pace troubled City late on and Mercer had to be alert to block his shot on 82 minutes with Hill clearing Spring's goal-bound follow-up.

The dangerous Douglas also had a header cleared off the line and sent a super overhead kick inches over.

big match line-up

● **LUTON TOWN:** Ben Roberts, Emmerson Boyce (Gavin McGowan, 77 min), Julian Watts, Alan White, Marvin Johnson, Liam George, Paul McLaren (Adam Locke, 65 min), Matthew Spring, Phil Gray (Stuart Douglas, 74 min), Gary Doherty, Matthew Taylor. Other subs: Stuart Fraser, Nathan Abbey (gk).

● **BRISTOL CITY:** Billy Mercer, Micky Bell, Louis Carey, Andrew Jordan, Keith Millen, Brian Tinnion, Scott Murray (Joe Bernell, 90 min), Paul Holland, Damian Spencer (Matthew Hill, 64 min), Peter Beadle, Tony Thorpe (John Burns, 90 min). Other subs: Kevin Amankwaah, Steve Phillips (gk).

● Referee: Tony Leake (Darwen).

● Attendance: 4771.

● Luton top player: Matthew Taylor.

White is the boss for a day



BOSS: White.

HATTERS defender Alan White took his first steps into management on Sunday when he took charge of North Home Counties Premier Division leaders Hexton.

Hexton, without normal boss Colin Neufville, beat their title rivals Luton Old Boys 2-1.

But White refused to comment afterwards on whether he was eyeing up Lennie Lawrence's job.

He simply rushed off in the direction of the bar, saying: "I need a drink."