

Hill gets off mark as the Cherries are pipped

IT TOOK 255 minutes to arrive but Ricky Hill will not forget his first home goal as Hatters boss.

Matthew Spring's 75th-minute penalty against Bournemouth on Saturday also secured Hill's first win as manager and prevented his side from firing blanks for the third successive game at Kenilworth Road.

The game also proved fruitful for ex-Cherries Mark Stein and Mark Ovendale, who both played important roles in securing victory against their old pals.

Stein tricked a foul out of Bournemouth's Richard Hughes for Spring's match-winning penalty and Ovendale produced another stupendous save to claim his second successive clean sheet.

Luton did not manage such a sequence once last season and, although Hill's Hatters are still lacking attacking impetus, the acquisition of Ovendale and the employment of a four-four-two formation seems to have stiffened the back line.

Athletic displays from enthusiastic youngsters Emmerson Boyce and Matthew Taylor are also helping combined with the experience of Julian Watts and Stuart Fraser's growing maturity.

On this evidence, George Graham, the man Hill worked under as youth team coach at Tottenham, would be proud of his protege.

Like Graham, Hill was a flamboyant midfielder as a player.

And, again like Graham, Hill seems to be working from the back in his bid to bring success to Kenilworth Road.

The Hatters defence were rarely breached on Saturday and when they were Ovendale or one of his defenders proved equal to the threat.

Danish midfielder Claus Jorgensen provided the only sense of danger before the break and only a tremendously acrobatic reflex save from Ovendale prevented his header from breaking

match facts

LUTON 1 B'MOUTH 0

● **LUTON:** Mark Ovendale, Stuart Fraser, Emmerson Boyce, Julian Watts, Matthew Taylor, Peter Holmes (Adam Locke, 87), Paul McLaren, Matthew Spring, Liam George (Dean Brennan, 57), Andrew Fotiadis, Mark Stein. Subs not used: Tresor Kandol, Nathan Abbey, Jude Stirling.

● **BOURNEMOUTH:** Michael Menetrier, Neil Young, Stephen Purches, Jason Tindall, Nick Fenton, Richard Hughes, Claus Jorgensen, Peter Grant (William Huck, 78), Carl Fletcher (Stevland Angus, 46), Steve Fletcher, Chukl Erlbenne (James Hayter, 65).

● **Shots on target:** Luton 6 B'mouth 2.

● **Off target:** Luton 7 B'mouth 5.

● **Corners:** Luton 7 B'mouth 4.

● **Top Hatter:** Emmerson Boyce - athletic determination.



PENALTY: Spring.

the deadlock on 22 minutes. Jorgensen also hooked over on 34 minutes.

At the other end, Stein raced clear for three first-half one-on-one chances but was twice denied by Michael Menetrier saves and then blazed the third and best opportunity over.

The 34-year-old striker

was subjected to cruel jibes of "same old Steino, always missing" from the away end at half-time.

But it was Stein who had the last laugh, winning the penalty that Spring duly drilled into Menetrier's bottom right-hand corner.

Earlier, Dean Brennan, who made a lively substitute appearance, flashed a shot across goal after linking well with Stein.

Steve Fletcher came closest to scoring for the visitors, climbing above a flailing Ovendale to head goalwards, only for Taylor to react brilliantly and make a tremendous headed clearance off the line.

After the Hatters goal, Stein could have increased the lead but his weaving and penetrating run at the death forced another save from Menetrier.