

Battling Hatters!

LUTON Town were denied their first win in 13 matches last night by a fine goalkeeping display from Oxford's Richard Knight.

The Hatters were the better side at the Manor Ground, but still could not turn their superiority into an elusive victory and had to settle for a 0-0 draw against the division's bottom team.

Hatters' boss Ricky Hill recalled Nathan Abbey in place of £450,000 summer signing Mark Ovendale.

Adam Locke was also dropped from the starting line-up and replaced by youngster Peter Holmes in midfield, with Stuart Fraser returning in defence for injured captain Paul McLaren.

Mark Stein donned the skipper's armband in McLaren's absence.

The first-half offered little to contradict both teams' status as the worst two sides in the division going into this match.

But Oxford went closest to breaking the deadlock in a dire first period.

Dean Whitehead's low 15-yard shot on 20 minutes was turned on to a post by Abbey and, seconds earlier, the Hatters had survived a penalty appeal when Oxford striker Jamie Cook tumbled in the box after minimal contact from Emmerson Boyce.

At the other end, Luton failed to seriously threaten home keeper Richard Knight in the early stages with on-loan former Arsenal defender

Keeper Knight is Oxford's saviour



**Oxford United 0
Luton Town 0**

**Dave Flett on
last night's
Manor Ground
showdown...**

Andy Linighan rolling back the years with his effective use of the offside trap.

But the Hatters did get two sights of goal before the interval. On 33 minutes, Stein twisted inside the home defence but was denied a shot on goal by a fine tackle from Linighan.

Four minutes later, Stein was thwarted again when Oxford centre-half Lee Jarman cleared off the line after the Hatters' striker had shot past Knight.

On the stroke of half-time, home midfielder Paul Tait dragged an effort wide to complete what action there was in a first period devoid of any quality.

Hill handed Friedrich Breitenfelder his Hatters' debut in the second-half.

The Austrian defender replaced Gavin McGowan, who received a knock at the end of the first period. Fraser was switched to right-wing-back as Breitenfelder slotted in on the right-hand side of a three-man defence.

The Hatters showed more promise after the break and Tresor Kandol forced Knight into a good reflex save on 49 minutes after good trickery down the left from Liam George.

Matthew Taylor then stung Knight's hands from a narrow angle shortly afterwards and George fired an effort against a post following Spring's piledriver which was parried by the Oxford keeper.

The offside flag would have ruled the effort out anyway.

Spring's edge-of-the-area volley was then saved at a comfortable height by Knight before Oxford hit Abbey's woodwork for the second time in the evening on a rare counter-

attack. Home striker Derek Lilley was the unlucky man. His clever 74th minute shot with the outside of his boot beat Abbey but flicked off the relieved keeper's crossbar.

Shortly afterwards, George waltzed through the home defence but was denied a fine goal by the impressive Knight, who saved bravely at the Luton striker's feet.

On 74 minutes, Hill replaced the ineffective Kandol with Dean Brennan and the former Sheffield Wednesday reserve could have scored with his first touch but blazed over after being teed up by Stein.

Knight continued to frustrate the Hatters, pulling off fine saves from Boyce and Taylor in quick succession.

But Boyce should have earned the Hatters their first victory since August with three minutes to go, but somehow contrived to head wide from two yards out after he met Taylor's deep cross.

big match line-up

● **OXFORD UNITED:** Richard Knight, Sam Ricketts, Neil McGowan, Lee Jarman, Andy Linighan, Jon Richardson, Dean Whitehead, Paul Tait (John Robertson, 64 mins), Joey Beauchamp, Derek Lilley, Jamie Cook (Manny Omoyinmi, 70 mins). Other subs: Jimmy Glass, Steve Anthrobus, Jamie Brooks (gk).

● **LUTON TOWN:** Nathan Abbey, Stuart Fraser, Julian Watts, Gavin McGowan (Friedrich Breitenfelder, 46 mins), Emmerson Boyce, Matthew Taylor, Peter Holmes, Matthew Spring, Liam George, Mark Stein, Tresor Kandol (Dean Brennan, 79 mins). Other subs: Mark Ovendale (gk), Adam Locke, Peter Thomson.

● Referee: Rob Styles.

● Attendance: 4,537.

● Luton top player: Liam George.

Stars help launch new book



ROGER WASH

ROGER WASH'S new book 'Luton Town: An Illustrated History' will be launched next Thursday (October 26).

Former Luton Town stars David Pleat, Gary Doherty, John Moore and Brendan McNally will join club historian Roger at WH Smith in the Arndale Centre between 4.30 and 5.30pm.

All five will be on hand to sign copies, but anybody unable to make the launch can reserve autographed copies by telephoning WH Smith on 01582 391948.

The 160-page hardback book costs £16.99 and is published by Desert Island Books, who worked with Roger on his last book.