

Stuart stings the Bees as he nets first ever double

STUART DOUGLAS staged a comeback to rival Lazarus as he helped lift the gloom at Kenilworth Road.

The 22-year-old striker was thrust into the action after just one reserve match and four training sessions since picking up a pre-season hamstring injury.

But he responded in devastating fashion, scoring twice as the Hatters stormed to a 3-1 victory – their first win in 14 attempts!

Remarkably, the double-strike ended a 17-game barren spell for Douglas whose last goal was the Hatters first of the new millennium.

The London-born forward managed four goals in 48 matches last season but took just 29 minutes to net his first ever brace on Saturday.

Douglas terrorised Brentford's sluggish centre-half pairing of Scott Marshall and Ivar Ingimarsson from the start and he should have opened the scoring after 12 minutes.

An excellently-timed run saw him burst clear of the Bees defence to collect Matthew Spring's perfect pass.

Douglas then delicately lifted the ball over onrushing away keeper Olafur Gottskalksson only to see his effort bounce agonisingly wide.

Moments later, Liam George's inventive back heel was ruled out by an offside flag but the two strikers combined on 17 minutes to give their side a deserved lead.

Douglas out-paced his Brentford markers to race on to George's through ball and beat Gottskalksson with a low drive across the Icelandic keeper that pinged in off a post.

Twelve minutes later, Douglas started and finished a move to net the Hatters second goal.

His headed flick-on found Mark Stein who jostled for possession with two Brentford defenders before the ball broke loose in the visitors' penalty box. An alert Douglas used his pace and power to pounce and sidefoot under the body of Gottskalksson.

Six minutes later, Stein collected Matthew Taylor's pass into the penalty box before tumbling under a challenge from Ingimarsson. Referee Steve Dunn pointed to the spot and Spring placed the penalty into Gottskalksson's bottom right-hand corner.

Luton's fans were in raptures as their team, brimming with new-found

confidence, produced football that bordered on the exhibition at times against a shell-shocked Brentford team that had won their last three games.

Douglas departed to a standing ovation at half-time after being substituted a minute earlier as a precautionary measure, having felt a slight twinge in his other hamstring.

Brentford's only noteworthy effort of a one-sided first period had come after just five minutes when skipper Paul Evans' deflected shot went narrowly wide.

The Hatters lost some of their attacking impetus in the second half but could still have scored twice before Brentford's consolation. George, who must have impressed watching Republic of Ireland under-21 boss Don Givens, had a shot pushed on to the post by Gottskalksson after a quick free kick by Spring.

Peter Holmes also went close with a 25-yard drive that whistled wide.

But it was Bees' top

match facts

LUTON 3 BRENTFORD 1

● **HATTERS:** Nathan Abbey, Paul McLaren, Julian Watts, Emmerson Boyce, Adam Locke (Friedrich Breitenfelder, 19), Matthew Spring, Peter Holmes, Matthew Taylor, Liam George (Dean Brennan, 87), Mark Stein, Stuart Douglas (Peter Thomson, 45). Subs not used: Tresor Kandol, Mark Ovendale.

● **BRENTFORD:** Olafur Gottskalksson, Jason Crowe (Tony Folan, 75), Scott Marshall, Ivar Ingimarsson, Paul Evans (Mark Williams, 57), Gavin Mahon, Robert Quinn, Scott Partridge (Lorenzo Pinamonte, 63), Andy Scott, Martin Rowlands, Paul Gibbs. Not used: David Theobald, Paul Smith.

● **Referee:** Steve Dunn.

● **Shots on target:** Luton 8 Brentford 4.

● **Off target:** Luton 9 Brentford 4.

● **Corners:** Luton 4 Brentford 4.

● **Star Man:** Douglas – devastating

scorer Andy Scott who added to the scoreline with his ninth goal of the season.

Scott raced in behind Hatters captain Paul McLaren to latch on to Gavin Mahon's through ball before firing confidently past Nathan Abbey.

It was the only blemish on an otherwise much-improved performance by the home team which was far more than just the "Stuart Douglas Show".

There were fine individual displays all over the pitch with George's stamina and skill, Stein's persistence and Taylor's tenacity catching the eye.

McLaren and Julian Watts were committed and focussed in defence. Behind them, Abbey repaid Ricky Hill's faith in him with impeccable handling in difficult conditions.

Austrian Friedrich Breitenfelder, a first-half substitute for the injured Adam Locke, also made a composed and confident home debut at right-wing back.

Hill view

I want to dedicate the victory to the Luton Town fans and Chris Ramsey. We made an excellent start and the boys were up for it as they should be in all games. Stuart Douglas made a big difference to the front-line. His team play and runs were excellent in a very, very impressive 43 minutes. We had good balance and the passing was very pleasing. We need those habits to become habitual.

