

Darlington 0, Luton Town 0

PETER Thomson, last week's two-goal hero, proved villain of the piece yesterday by a missing an 85th minute open goal that would surely have won this game.

But at least the Hatters will figure in tonight's third round draw having achieved a clean sheet in this strangely passionless FA cup tie.

With five minutes to play, an unusually quiet Mathew Taylor at last produced a dangerous swinging cross that landed on Thompson's head.

Just 4 yards out and with the goal yawning he only had to stoop and bounce a header down over the line but instead, he went for power, got right underneath it and over the bar it flew.

With a minute to play Nathan Abbey, who had kept the Town in the game with three magnificent saves in the opening hour, nearly presented the Quakers with a ticket to the third round.

Abbey dithered over a back pass and was very close to being caught out by Glenn Naylor's challenge.

He just managed to get his clearance away at the cost of taking a knock from the striker who was booked for his trouble.

This nearly inflamed the only people in the ground who did show some passion, the home crowd.

They love their football in the North East and took issue with every Luton challenge, were responsible for Marvin Johnson's booking, and loudly showed their disgust at the manager's substitutions and even the man of the match award.

Excellent

With Petri Helin ruled out with a leg injury, sustained at Peterborough in midweek, Stuart Fraser came into the right wing back position □ the only change from last week's victorious line-up at Stoke.

Twice Richard Hodgson was put clear by Little through balls and twice he forced excellent saves from Abbey. Two similar low, fierce drives were comprehensively stopped by the in-form Town keeper.

On the credit side, Adam Locke got on the end of a lovely passing move to fire home, only for it to be ruled for offside.

And then Fraser was pulled up for a foul on the 'keeper Andy Collett just as Mathew Spring lashed the loose ball into the net.

Six minutes from the interval the 18-year-old lanky Kevin Kyle, on loan from Sunderland, fired in a shot from Brian Atkinson's centre that clipped the crossbar on its way over and out.

Before the flourish in the last five minutes, Abbey had made the save of the

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Tommo miss means a replay for Hatters



game.

A shot from fully 35 yards from full back Gary Hinsworth looked a certain score until Abbey threw himself to tip over a ball bound for the top left hand corner.

The Hatters hit back when Liam George cut inside to unleash a curling left footer that zipped inches wide of the far post.

After the game, Hatters manager Lil Fuccillo said: "Over the ninety minutes I thought we looked after the game well.

"But if both sides had played at their best we should have won the game. At the end of the day, we came away with a clean sheet and I was pleased with the way we battled."

Luton Town Abbey, Whitbread, Watts, Johnson, Fraser, Spring, Locke, McLaren, Taylor, Thomson, George, Subs not used Ovendale, Stein, Nogan, Karlisen, Stirling.

Attendance 3,641

Luton man of the match:

Nathan Abbey



Fuccillo lines up new target man

LIL FUCCILLO insists Luton have a new striker in time for the home game with Colchester on Saturday.

The Town have been thwarted too often recently for him to be drawn into giving details, but he has been speaking to Manchester City's Gareth Taylor.

The Welsh international is a target man - the type of player the Luton boss has been working hard to bring to the club.

Fuccillo said: "I can categorically state that we will have a new striker by the end of the week.

"When he comes, it will hopefully lift the whole club. We still need more from Peter Thomson and a new target man will put the pressure on him to perform like he did for some of the second half at Stoke."

A new forward would certainly be welcome over the busy Christmas period, especially now that Mark Stein will be out through suspension after being sent off in the last minute of the defeat at Peterborough.

Fuccillo said: "I never like to lose a game, even a five a side kickabout but, with our league position, the disappointing thing was Stein's sending off.

"O'Hanlon gave him a little push and when Mark fell over his back, he lashed out with his arm.

"The referee saw Stein aim a definite

punch and although he only just made contact with the lad he had to go. O'Hanlon said sorry to him afterwards, but Stein is the senior pro at this place and should have known better.

"Now we have lost him for three games and I am not very happy about that at all. The club rules say we fine him for breaking club discipline - and that we will do.

"Andrew Fotiadis was another disappointment because he isn't showing me what other people tell me that he can do. He is not working hard enough to make himself the chances.

"We were able to give Mark Ovendale a game at Peterborough to keep him sharp, but I am not one to be swayed by money. If a Luton player is performing well in a Town shirt, he keeps that shirt for the next match.

"To be fair to the lad he hasn't moaned or knocked on my door every week, but I would like to think that he is upset at not getting into the team.

"When he does come in he will know that he has to play well to stay in," said Fuccillo.

"Emmerson Boyce was probably due a rest anyway, but he has been ill and lost about half a stone. He was in on Wednesday and trained on his own, but he

is experiencing a drastic loss of energy at the moment."

Luton have appointed a new reserve team coach on a part time basis. He is Kevin Broadhurst, who has been the assistant manager at Northampton Town.

The Luton boss said: "He played for Birmingham as a marking midfielder until a nasty injury forced him to give up playing and I worked with him as a youth team coach in my time there.

"Kevin knows how I like to play football and we have a rapport on that side of things. His Midlands base will let him keep an eye on that part of the country for us.

"The game on Saturday against Colchester is our first home match for three weeks and I am looking for us to make a bright start.

"As a professional, you always look forward to your next home game; I know I always did.

"We need to take the game to them because they are a side that can hurt you. Jason Dozzell will always play if you let him and Steve McGavin is clever around the box.

"If we can keep up a good tempo, there is no reason we can't put together a good run of home results."

■ Hatters action: (top left) Peter Thomson heads wide in the dying minutes. (Top): Matthew Taylor takes on a Darlington defender. (Above): Paul McLaren gets in a sliding tackle