



■ Petri Helin battles for the ball with Colchester's Karl Duguid and (below) Liam George and Paul McLaren attempt to initiate a Hatters attack



No end to the misery

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Luton Town 0, Colchester Utd 3

A MISERABLE week for Luton and the Hatters was completed by the seventh home defeat of the season.

Any thoughts that the Hatters would offer some cheer after the devastating Vauxhall news were hopelessly wide of the mark.

The Hatters were their own worst enemy in the first half, failing to convert two clear chances before United's Barry Conlon opened the scoring with an excellent goal in the 27th minute.

After David Gregory's header added to the score two minutes into the second period, Luton commendably showed great spirit by laying siege to the visitors goal.

But the U's must have had their very own Christmas fairy sitting on their crossbar as they survived several versions of the Great Escape.

On the hour Matthew Taylor cracked a vicious 25 yard drive against the inside of Andy Woodman's post.

A goal then would surely have put them in position for a result, but it came back along the goal-line and in the resulting scramble Taylor and Fotiadis both had efforts knocked off the Colchester line by desperate defenders.

As it was, following numerous Town chances, United showed them how it was done when Thomas Pinault cracked his first senior goal home from the edge of the area through a forest of bodies with 15 minutes left.

Both sides started at 100 miles per hour and after 19 minutes Liam George should have put the Town ahead.

Matthew Spring's through ball allowed the little Irishman to outpace Gavin Johnson.

But after he checked and turned inside his man, he topped his shot allowing the advancing Woodman to pounce on the ball.

Nathan Abbey showed his excellent recent form with a great save from Conlon at point blank range, Karl Duguid hitting the rebound along the goal line to safety.

Petri Helin missed the second clear chance when he was given a sight of goal by a great move involving Taylor, Spring, George and Nogan but he hit his drive straight at Woodman's legs.

When Adrian Whitbread was left stranded by an unlucky rebound, Conlon took full advantage.

He used Duguid as a decoy to deceive Julian Watts, ran on and planted a neat shot past the helpless Abbey.

Luton continued to have the lion's share of the play, but an outstanding display by former Town player, Aaron Skelton and their obsession with trying to walk the ball into goal kept their side of the score sheet blank.

And it was Skelton who crossed for Gregory to get in front of his marker to head in a couple of minutes into the second half.

Sacrificed

Adam Locke had been playing well in midfield, but was sacrificed to bring on another forward, Fotiadis and Luton looked much more dangerous with three strikers.

The substitute crossed beautifully to find George all alone at the far post and he forced an excellent save from Woodman but probably should have scored.

Fotiadis's follow-up shot looked goalbound before a brave block by Simon Clark intervened.

And even after the third United goal, Fotiadis zipped one narrowly wide with the goalkeeper beaten.

McLaren twice missed the target completely with only the 'keeper to beat and Helin also missed a decent opportunity.

In the last two minutes, Nogan's drive looked all over a score but was deflected off target and George had another effort saved by Woodman's legs as another "must win" fixture was lost.

Luton Town: Abbey, Whitbread, Watts, Johnson, Helen, Locke (Fotiadis 56), McLaren, Spring, Taylor, Nogan, George.
Subs not used: Scarlett, Holmes, Fraser, Ovendale.

Attendance: 4791