

Bourn losers

LUTON TOWN failed to give their fans a Happy New Year when they started 2001 with a demoralising 3-2 defeat at Bournemouth on Monday.

Lil Fuccillo's men were leading 2-1 with just seven minutes left to play thanks to goals from Andrew Fotiadis and Adam Locke.

But the Hatters pressed the self-destruct button when Jude Stirling conceded a penalty that was converted by Richard Hughes and impressive on-loan West Ham striker Jermain Defoe went on to net the 96th-minute winner.

Matthew Taylor's red card for swearing at referee Paul Alcock then completed a very painful end to a game that had just minutes earlier promised a priceless three points towards the Hatters' desperate fight against promotion.

The game's opening exchanges were played in a curiously morgue-like atmosphere before bursting into life on 39 minutes.

Hatters boss Fuccillo retained the same starting line-up that lost 2-0 to Wigan on Saturday but lost Julian Watts with a recurrence of his hamstring injury.

Physio Bruce Sewell signalled immediately to the bench that Watts was unfit to continue but the visitors were unable to make the substitution because, staggeringly, Stirling had left his shirt in the dressing room.

Inevitably, the home side scored from the next throw-in when the Hatters' 10 men were unable to cope with Steve Fletcher's aerial presence, as the Cherries captain sent a looping header over old

Hatters crash and Taylor is sent off



**Bournemouth 3
Luton Town 2**
Dave Flett on the
Division Two
showdown

team-mate Mark Ovendale and in off a post. Stirling, with his jersey recovered, then joined the action and in a crazy spell on the stroke of half-time Luton, having posed little attacking threat, scored twice and could have added three more in first-half injury time.

Fotiadis escaped his markers to meet Taylor's cross and send a glancing header past Bournemouth keeper Gareth Stewart with 45 minutes played.

The Hatters striker then combined with Lee Nogan to release Locke who fed an overlapping Petri Helin before charging into the penalty box to meet the Finnish international's cross with a forceful header for his first goal of the season in the second minute of added-on time.

Amazingly, Luton should have added to their score before the break with Stewart beating out Peter Holmes' deflected effort,

Matthew Spring sending a ferocious drive whistling inches over the crossbar and Fotiadis firing straight at the Bournemouth keeper when clear through.

But puzzling second-half tactics saw the visitors hand the initiative back to Bournemouth.

The visitors chose to defend their slender advantage by putting 11 men behind the ball and looked to catch their opponents on the break instead of pressing forward for a third goal to kill the game off.

A hard-working Fotiadis was left alone up front with his striking partner Nogan switched to a more withdrawn midfield role.

It seemed a baffling approach, considering Luton's recent defensive record but almost paid off when Taylor's 54th-minute header was tipped over brilliantly by Stewart after more good work from Fotiadis and Nogan.

A bobble then caused Spring to slice wide with only Stewart to beat before Bournemouth began to take advantage of the possession given them and apply pressure at the other end.

Luton were dealt another blow on 75 minutes when they lost Stuart Fraser with a groin strain and Friedrich Breitenfelder's introduction gave the visitors defence an even more fragile look. The dangerous Defoe twice tested Ovendale before being poleaxed by Breitenfelder on the edge of the area and the free kick led to the Cherries' 83rd-minute equaliser.

Stirling was the culprit as he appeared to punch the ball in the penalty box and Alcock pointed to the spot.

It was a case of *deja vu* for the big defender who, in his



FOT A GOAL: Scorers Andrew Fotiadis and Adam Locke celebrate Luton's equaliser.

only previous first-team appearance, had given away a penalty for handball at Swansea but, on this occasion, he was not sent off, probably because the ball was not goal-bound.

Richard Hughes sent his good friend Ovendale the wrong way from the spot and, shortly afterwards, cracked a long-range effort against the inside of a post with the Hatters keeper

well beaten. Luton were rocking badly and, having replaced a tired Fotiadis with the tiny Andre Scarlett on 81 minutes, had no real outlet.

It was left to Defoe to clinch all three points with a scrambled effort after the visitors struggled to clear a corner.

The goal saw the precocious teenager set a new club record by scoring in

eight successive matches. Taylor then received his marching orders for swearing at Alcock after giving away a free kick for a foul on Karl Broadhurst.

Fuccillo, initially, expressed his sympathy for the 19-year-old wing back, believing he had been sent off for the challenge but he was furious later when he learned the real reason for Taylor seeing red.

big match line-up

● **BOURNEMOUTH:** Gareth Stewart, Stephen Purches (Gareth O'Connor, 56), Eddie Howe, Steve Fletcher, Wade Elliott, Jason Tindall, Jermain Defoe, Karl Broadhurst, Peter Grant (James Hayler, 46), Richard Hughes, Claus Jorgensen. Sub not used: Michael Menestrier, Danny Smith, Chukki Eribenne.

● **LUTON TOWN:** Mark Ovendale, Adrian Whitbread, Julian Watts (Jude

Stirling, 40), Stuart Fraser (Friedrich Breitenfelder, 75), Petri Helin, Adam Locke, Matthew Spring, Peter Holmes, Matthew Taylor, Andrew Fotiadis (Andre Scarlett, 81), Lee Nogan, Subs Not Used: Nathan Abbey, Rocky Baptiste.

● **Referee:** Paul Alcock.

● **Attendance:** 5,411.

● **Luton top player:** Andrew Fotiadis – determination.