

Inept Hatters lose the plot

Luton Town 1
Wycombe Wanderers 2

STRUGGLING Hatters are now just four points off the bottom of Division Two.

After Friday night's defeat by Wycombe, Oxford United followed up with a shock 2-1 win over Walsall.

Adam Locke put the Hatters ahead, but dreadful defending led to the Town throwing away a lead yet again this season.

A drastic change of personnel and tactics by the visitors at half-time created two goals for big Andy Rammell to give the Chairboys their first ever win over the Hatters in ten tries.

Credit must go to visiting boss Lawrie Sanchez. He threw on all

three substitutes at the break, and Wycombe were galvanised into action.

"That was the worst we have played all season in the first half, and I thought we were lucky to go in only one down," said Sanchez.

"But I am paid to manage and send them out in shape to turn things around and, in fairness, we could have had more in the end."

Hatters boss Lil Fuccillo had his already inexperienced resources stretched even further when, on top of having to field a third choice back-line, Lee Nogan went down with 'flu on Thursday and Andrew Fotiadis failed a late fitness test after missing training all week with a groin strain.

A depressed Fuccillo said: "There were too many things wrong tonight.

"Douglas and Thomson weren't fit, but had to play. Even Abbey cried off ill today. The only plus is that we have got another 90 minutes into Douglas."

Fritz Breitenfelder was pressed into service as the right wing-back and he produced two excellent early crosses.

Peter Thomson did not winning much in the air, nor on the ground for that matter.

But when he failed to flick on a high ball on 19 minutes it came out off his marker to Locke, who rifled in a shot with the outside of his right boot from 25 yards.

It curled away from goalkeeper Martin Taylor on to the inside of the far post, cannoned back along the line, hit the unfortunate Taylor and eluded his grasp to bounce into the net.

Almost immediately Spring nearly made it two with a powerful low drive that Taylor did well to stop at his near post.

Taylor was again Wycombe's saviour when he just managed to punch a George centre off Thomson's head.

Despite receiving a footballing lesson, the visitors made the best chance of the half on 34 minutes. Michael Simpson's cross was headed back by Rammell to Andrew Baird five yards out, but he blasted over the bar.

As the interval approached, Breitenfelder's long throw was backheaded by Douglas over Taylor, but the ball hit the crossbar and bounced over.

Wycombe made the most of their reprieve.

Bringing on three substitutes smacked of desperation, but it had the desired effect within five minutes.

Luton simply could not clear their lines as the visitors swarmed all over them.

From their second consecutive corner, Emmerson Boyce completely lost his man and Rammell took full advantage to bury a powerful header past the helpless Ovendale.

Simpson missed a clear opportunity when he sprang the Town's offside trap, but the winning goal was not long in coming.

Sam Parkin, the strong Chelsea youngster who preferred the Chairboys on loan to Town, made a fine run and shot that Mark Ovendale should have held.

But the goalkeeper spilled it, Stuart Fraser could only poke the ball to Rammell, who easily beat Taylor on the line.

Having earned the lead Wycombe, prone themselves to surrendering late goals, ran down the clock comfortably.

Luton Town: Ovendale, Boyce (Stirling 83), Whitbread, Fraser, Breitenfelder (Scarlett 78), Locke, Spring, Taylor, George, Thomson (Kandol 71), Douglas.

Subs not used, Holmes, Ward (gk).

Attendance 4551



■ Kenilworth Road action: Peter Thomson (top) and Liam George, who saw plenty of action in the first half but then could only watch with the rest of the team as Wycombe took over after the break

'Loftus Road doesn't scare us'

LIL FUCCILLO believes his side have a great chance of meeting Arsenal in the fourth round of the FA Cup.

That will be Luton's reward if they win at Queens Park Rangers in Wednesday's third round reply at Loftus Road.

He said: "QPR have won only three at home this season. We are struggling, they are struggling and, just like at Kenilworth Road, it could be a cracker of a match.

"They have got to come at us now because they are at home and we have learned one or two things from the first game.

"They played long balls up to the big lad, Peter Crouch, and if they play like that again we should be able to deal with them a bit better.

"We will go there with confidence. It

is a one off game and I can't see why we shouldn't do it, especially with the incentive of facing Arsenal next."

The Town boss has put four players on the transfer list and is working hard to bring quality players in, but anyone he does sign will not be available for the Cup replay.

Players must be registered for seven days to play in F A Cup games, whereas for league games the qualifying time is just three hours before kick-off.

The Luton boss said: "With Petri Helin ruled out for upwards of four weeks with a bruised foot and ligament damage, my priorities for loan deals have changed."

Apparently Luton tried for experienced central defender Carl Tiler, presently out of favour at Charlton, only to find that they had competition from six other

clubs for his loan signature, including Watford, who are in need of cover having had their centre half Robert Page sent off last weekend.

Fuccillo has denied rumours that Nathan Abbey is on his way to Crewe and that Liam George is to be sold. He said: "I have not had any inquiries about any of my players even from Conference clubs, which tells you what other managers think of my squad.

"Four have gone on to the transfer list - James Ayres, who has gone to Peterborough on trial, Gavin McGowan, Rocky Baptiste and Dean Brennan.

"I have also suspended Brennan for many reasons, including not training properly and having a poor attitude so I will probably have a fight with the PFA, but I need people who will perform to the best of their ability."



■ Shortlived joy: Hatters players mob scorer Adam Locke