

Joe's boys out to avoid worst run since the sixties

LUTON TOWN must beat Brentford tomorrow (Thursday) night if they are to avoid the club's longest win-less league run since 1964.

The Hatters' 3-1 defeat at Bristol City on Saturday means Joe Kinnear's men have gone almost a quarter of a season since their last victory.

Eleven matches have been played since the club's last success and that sequence of results has only been equalled four times since a 16-game nadir in '64 - twice in 1974, and in 1990 and 1991.

On the last occasion it took a goal from Mick Harford to end the Kenilworth Road club's miserable run against Coventry. But Manchester United, Tottenham Hotspur and eventual champions Leeds United were among the teams David Pleat's side failed to beat 10 years ago, as opposed to the likes of Oxford United, Colchester and 10-man Bury this time around.

Hatters boss Joe Kinnear called on his side to show more "anger" after Saturday's Ashton Gate defeat and the club are still crying out for a talismanic figure in the mould of Harford to rally the troops on the pitch.

Kinnear also complained that he now had a video tape full of "Mickey Mouse" goals that his side has conceded this season.

But Walt Disney would have been burning in his grave after the lack of animation displayed in the Hatters' defence at times in Bristol.

At the other end, the Hatters continue to produce a catalogue of glaring misses with Paul McLaren, Steve Howard and Matthew Taylor the chief culprits on Saturday.

Danny Wilson's men finished the game with a goals-to-shots ratio of one in four while the visitors only found the net once in 18 attempts!

Liam George's 59th-minute equaliser was well-crafted but could not save Luton crashing to their 24th defeat of the season.

George had earlier forced home keeper Steve Phillips into a second-minute save after he tried his luck from 20 yards.

Howard then fired high and wide on the turn before the home side went in front on 34 minutes when Paul Shepherd failed to clear Lee Peacock's cross and Aaron Brown swept the ball in at the far post.

Luton's response was swift with Matthew Spring crashing a thundering effort against the underside of the bar seconds later.

Howard, who failed to score in open play for the 10th successive game, was unlucky not to break his

match facts

BRISTOL CITY 3 LUTON TOWN 1

● **BRISTOL CITY:** Steve Phillips, Louis Carey, Mickey Bell, Scott Murray, Brian Tinnion, Lee Peacock, Lorenzo da Silva (Tony Thorpe, 56), Aaron Brown, Joe Burnell (Kevin Amankwaah, 46), Matt Hill, Simon Clist (Nell Maddison, 62).

● **HATTERS:** Mark Ovendale, Paul Shepherd, Emmerson Boyce, Richard Dryden, Marvin Johnson, Petri Helin (Adam Locke, 76), Matthew Spring, Paul McLaren, Matthew Taylor, Steve Howard (Stuart Douglas, 73), Liam George (Mark Stein, 73). Subs not used: Scott Ward, Julian Watts.

● **Shots on target:** Bristol City 8, Luton 11.

● **Off target:** Bristol City 4, Luton 7.

● **Comers:** Bristol City 2, Luton 4.

● **Referee:** Peter Walton (Long Buckley).

● **Top Hatter:** Spring - Inventive.

□ **ROBERT GILLMAN scored the Hatters juniors goal in Monday's 1-1 Youth Alliance Merit Division, Southern Section Division One clash at Cardiff City. Brian Stein's youngsters finish the season on Saturday with an away game at Brentford.**

duck when Simon Clist cleared his header off the line moments later.

Taylor and Spring then missed the target with long-range efforts as the visitors reached the break wondering how they could be trailing.

The same pattern continued early in the second-half with Phillips saving from Howard and McLaren sidefooting woefully wide after the ex-Northampton striker's cushioned header had given Luton's captain a clear sight of goal.

Luton's one moment of quality in the opposition penalty box came on 59 minutes when Spring slipped the ball through to George.

The Republic of Ireland under-21 international cut smartly inside City's Brian Tinnion before sidefooting into the bottom corner.

Howard should then have put the visitors in front but completely

missed his kick with the goal at his mercy after more good work by George.

Brown was more clinical on 65 minutes when he headed in his second at the far post after Scott Murray's cross had sailed over a static Emmerson Boyce.

Murray then fired over before Kinnear replaced the anonymous Petri Helin and the labouring Howard with Adam Locke and Mark Stein.

Stein forced Phillips into a low save but only after sub Tony Thorpe had secured the points for City.

The Hatters old boy displayed all his predatory skills to steal in front of the visitors defence and direct a near-post header into the top corner from Brown's left-wing cross.

It was Thorpe's 23rd goal of the season - the kind of tally that could have meant the difference between relegation and mid-table safety for the Hatters this season.

Luton still managed to miss another excellent opportunity on 87 minutes when McLaren released Taylor for a one-on-one opportunity with home keeper Phillips.

But the Hatters wing-back shot with his weaker right foot and Phillips charged off his line to block the effort.

Joe Kinnear's verdict

“We were a soft touch again in both boxes. We dominated the game at times and it would not have been a disgrace if we had scored six times but we missed chances again. Players are also accepting defeat and conceding goals far too easily. There's no anger on the pitch when a goal goes in. I've got a video tape full of Mickey Mouse goals that we have conceded this season and that's an area we need to improve in this summer.”

