

Home season in flat finale

01/02

THE party champagne went a little flat as the Hatters championship ambitions suffered a huge dent with this first goalless draw of the season.

All thoughts of a 100 goals foundered on the rock solid defending of centre halves Darren Tinson and Dave Riddler as distinguished Luton old boy David Moss returned to thwart his former club.

The Hatters only had themselves to blame for the end of their record 12-match winning run by giving the visiting goalkeeper an easy time.

The quality of the final ball was miserable all afternoon and when they got that right, their finishing was dreadful.

Indeed, Matthew Spring's first half header that flew into Steve Wilson's arms was their only effort on target in the whole match.

And they had Carl Emberson to thank for the point they did get with a brilliant late save from Michael Welch's low power-drive.

Kevin Nicholls' delivery from deadball kicks was not the precision accuracy of recent weeks.

But on nine minutes he did find Russell Perrett's head at the far post but, typical of the day, his header

Luton Town 0 Macclesfield 0

back across goal was fractionally behind Dean Crowe, who could only hook it over the bar with the goal at his mercy.

Luton's best work as usual was done on the left. Jean-Louis Valois and Matthew Taylor combined to put in a dangerous low centre along the byline that Tinson got to first, but could only hack it high in the air.

Howard certainly looked to be pushed in the melee that followed but no penalty was awarded. From the resulting corner kick, Howard nodded into the net only for referee Mr Ryan to award a free-kick against Crowe for a foul on the keeper.

Lee Glover, who once played for the Town, gave notice that there was another striker on the park when he turned Chris Coyne but his shot trickled past a post.

There was a tremendous scramble when Wilson was played into trouble by an awful Tinson backpass. But with the ball at his toes only a few feet from goal, Spring was prevented from turning by blue shirts and the danger was cleared.

Hatters boss Joe Kinnear tried an attacking change at half time by introducing Marvin Johnson for

Paul Hughes, pushing Taylor up on the left and switching Valois to the right.

But the move failed to produce dividends and Adrian Forbes was brought on to add more thrust with 20 minutes to play and Steven Kabba was given a run out in place of Crowe.

Macclesfield, in trying to exploit the Hatters increasing frustration, were beginning to pose a threat or two themselves and Rickie Lambert's dummy fooled the Town rearguard to allow Danny Whitaker a sight of goal – but he screwed a decent chance wide.

Substitute Kabba missed the chance of the game when a Nicholls corner was nodded back to him by Howard. He headed over the yawning net and despite some desperate late attacking and five minutes of injury time, two priceless points went begging...and probably the championship as well.

Luton Town: Emberson, Boyce, Coyne, Perrett, Taylor, Hughes (Johnson 46), Spring, Nicholls, Valois (Forbes 70), Howard, Crowe (Kabba 70).

Subs not used: Ovendale (GK), Neilson

Luton Bookings: Nicholls (61), Forbes (94)

Attendance: 7,873

Luton Man of the Match: Russell Perrett