

JEWELL LACKS CUTTING EDGE

02/03

WIGAN	1
Roberts (75)	
LUTON	1
Howard (57)	

BY LARRY HART

A DOUR encounter at the JJB Stadium saw leaders Wigan and play-off chasers Luton leave happy with a point.

Wigan boss Paul Jewell applauded his side's character and determination, despite their third consecutive draw, while Luton boss Joe Kinnear was proud of his team's display.

Wigan are still on course for the Second Division title and stay 14 points clear of their nearest rivals, but this was a tired-looking display on an awful pitch.

They fell behind to a goal from Luton striker Steve Howard and it needed a close-range header from substitute Neil Roberts to rescue Wigan from what would have been only their fourth defeat of the season.

Howard powerfully headed home his 16th goal of the season from Russell Perrett's right-wing cross.

The visitors were content to sit on their lead and frustrate Wigan, and they did so until 15 minutes from the end when Nicky Eaden's floated free-kick was headed home by substitute Neil Roberts. From then on the home side pushed forward, with defender Matt

Jackson volleying wide from 25 yards out, but they failed to find the killer finish and Luton held on.

Jewell said: "We have just lost that cutting edge in front of goal, but it will come back and I'm not worried.

"We started off well, but couldn't find the early goal, but our character and determination has brought us through once more.

"We are having a difficult patch in front of goal and our last three games have all ended in draws, but the teams below us aren't making any headway, so they have been points won rather than points dropped."

Luton will consider themselves unlucky not to become only the second side this season to take a league victory at the JJB Stadium and manager Joe Kinnear admitted: "I am disappointed not to win, but I was very pleased with our overall performance.

"We had to defend for our lives at times in the first half, but when we scored after the break we look like holding on to it."

With nine recognised defenders unavailable, the visitors somehow repelled a growing number of Wigan attacks until Roberts squared things.

Kinnear said: "We were hanging on in there, but a defensive error let Wigan back in the game. There were times when I thought we might steal another goal, but in the end I have to be delighted with a point."



OFF THE BENCH: Substitute Neil Roberts equalised for Wigan against Luton Town