

ANTTI NIEMI

6

Was uneasy with a few crosses, but still kept a clean sheet.



RORY DELAP

6

Had a decent game until his late sending off.



DARREN KENTON

8

Very composed and assured. Read the game well.



DARREN POWELL

7

As always, does what he does best – is big and strong and wins the balls in the air.



DANNY HIGGINBOTHAM

8

Turning into a real leader for the team on the pitch. Another strong display.



KAMIL KOSOWSKI

7

Got about a bit. No killer passes, but still a useful performance.



MATT OAKLEY

7

In Quashie's absence, he and Prutton are forming a good partnership in the centre of midfield.



DAVID PRUTTON

7

Really adds drive to the team as well as more purpose as he gets fitter.



NEIL McCANN

6

Did so much good work but gave the ball away a few times.



THEO WALCOTT

8

What a finish!



KENWYNE JONES

6

Was big, strong and his presence gave Saints some balance up front.



SUBSTITUTES

Chris Baird (Kosowski 73)7
Defended manfully on his long-awaited return to Saints league action.

Leon Best (Walcott 85)

Martin Cranie (Jones 90)

Unused: Paul Smith, Brett Ormerod.

New-look Saints team gets the



SEEING RED: Rory Delap has to leave the field after being sent off for a second bookable offence.

Walcott wonder goal



COMEBACK: Chris Baird in his first league outing since May 2004.

THE said the result would make no difference.

But everybody at St Mary's yesterday knew a Saints win would give caretaker management duo Dave Bassett and Dennis Wise a great shout to be appointed Harry Redknapp's successors on a permanent basis.

And the pair, who first began working together at Wimbledon back in the mid-1980s after Wise didn't get taken on as a player at The Dell, delivered three points in a battling display that underlined everything the two of them can offer.

There was a terrific spirit about the Saints side.

Many of Bassett's best teams have been built on such a spirit and unity, instilling that underdog mentality and using it to get results.

Wise, likewise, has displayed that throughout his playing career and his short time in management with Millwall where, against all the odds, he guided them to an FA Cup final in 2004.

After just a full week in charge, in which some of the players have raved over their training, the Saints camp seemed happy.

And when it came to heads going in where it hurts out on the field to ensure the win was theirs, they defended like marines.

Not only was there a spirit about the team, but an organisation and purpose as well.

Bassett is also well known for making his teams well drilled, for ensuring every individual knows what is expected of them.

And Saints looked just that.

Bassett and Wise bring a fresh perspective to the job while also needing no settling-in period.

Although the likes of Djamel Belmadi and Ricardo Fuller will still have a part to play this season, the temporary management team have their own ideas.

Hence Kenwyne Jones was given his first start since late September while some of the young blood – Martin Cranie, Chris Baird and Leon Best – were back on the bench in a new-look squad.

Baird hadn't played a league match for Saints since May 2004 and Best since October 30, 2004, while Cranie's last game before injury was at Millwall in October.

The advantage Bassett and Wise have when it comes to choosing a new boss is they don't need time to assess the squad, to get to know the players.

They already know them inside

out and vice-versa. That means everybody can get cracking straight away.

That is a massive advantage with the important Christmas schedule coming up.

If Saints are to strengthen their claim for a play-off place, they need points over this period.

It can't wait much longer while a new man finds his feet.

Yesterday's game was hardly the greatest spectacle in the world.

The lowest ever league crowd at St Mary's – some 19,086 – weren't massively entertained but went home having seen a win, the opposite of what it's been like recently.

There was, however, one magic moment.

It came from Theo Walcott.

On 23 minutes he sprinted after a long punt down the field. His pace allowed him to catch defender Chris Coyne but it was hard to see what he would do next as he was level with the edge of the area but on the left touchline.

Totally out of the blue, he tried an outrageous left-footed lob shot on the half-volley.

What was even more outrageous was the fact that it worked.

Keeper Dean Brill was left stranded as the ball sailed over his head and into the far corner.

The first half was otherwise

GOALS

SAINTS | LUTON
Walcott 23

ATMOSPHERE

The fans who came made plenty of noise for their team.

8/10

ENTERTAINMENT

Not the greatest game, not the worst. But a win is all that matters.

6/10

ATTENDANCE

19,086

DAVE'S WORDS

It seems if you're over 50 you're a dinosaur, you need your pension book. But it doesn't work that way in my opinion.



job done for Bassett and Wise



BATTLING DISPLAY: Darren Powell goes up with Luton's Steve Howard for a high ball.

Daily Echo picture by Paul Collins

lights up St Mary's

rather forgettable. Neil McCann had a decent penalty shout turned down, Brill saved direct from Matt Oakley's left-wing free kick, while in stoppage time Rory Delap headed off the line from Coyne's overhead kick. The second half didn't improve much. Walcott got a couple of one-on-one openings but was denied by a good tackle and a good save. Luton, who have now lost six away games in a row, failing to score in the last five of them, tried hard but couldn't produce a killer edge to equalise. As the game developed into a scrap, Delap was sent off for a second bookable foul – the fourth dismissal of his professional career and the first since seeing red at home to Bolton in February 2002. And, when Saints needed to show some backbone and determination, they dug in and held out for the win – only their sixth in 22 league matches this season. The jubilation at the final whistle summed it up. Perhaps this is the start of a new Bassett-Wise era for Saints. They have certainly converted a few more fans after yesterday. And there was no better covering note for the job application than three much-needed points.



MAKING HIMSELF HEARD: Dennis Wise.

VERDICT:

Dave Bassett and Dennis Wise showed a glimpse of what they have to offer as an organised and determined Saints side earned a deserved win. They should deservedly be front-runners for the job and have proved their worth.



Adam Leitch



LUTON



DEAN BRILL	7
KEVIN FOLEY	7
CHRIS COYNE	6
MARCUS HEIKKINEN	6
PAUL UNDERWOOD	6
AHMET BRKOVIC	5
KEVIN NICHOLLS	7
STEVE ROBINSON	6
CARLOS EDWARDS	6
ENOCH SHOWUNMI	5
STEVE HOWARD	6

SUBSTITUTES

Rowan Vine (Showunmi 61)7
Peter Holmes (Edwards 69)6
Unused: Rob Beckwith, Leon Barnett, Warren Feeney.

BAD BOYS

SAINTS
Booked: Delap, Niemi.
Sent off: Delap.

LUTON
Booked: Heikkinen, Nicholls, Howard.

REFEREE

LEE PROBERT
Loved the sound of his whistle.
Is probably still blowing it now.

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BET24 MAN OF THE MATCH

THEO WALCOTT

What an incredible goal to win the match.

Skates & Ladders

Southampton get promoted
Pompey get relegated

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CHAMPIONSHIP INFORMATION PANEL

COCA COLA CHAMPIONSHIP

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1 Reading	23	17	5	1	46	12	56
2 Sheff Utd	23	16	4	3	46	21	52
3 Watford	23	10	9	4	38	27	39
4 Leeds	22	11	6	5	28	20	39
5 Cardiff	23	9	7	7	33	26	34
6 Luton	23	10	4	9	33	32	34
7 Stoke	23	11	1	11	29	32	34
8 Preston	23	7	12	4	27	21	39
9 Crystal Palace	21	9	5	7	33	24	32
10 Wolves	23	7	11	5	28	20	32
11 Burnley	23	9	5	9	31	29	32
12 SAINTS	22	6	13	3	25	19	31
13 QPR	23	7	8	8	27	33	29
14 Derby	23	5	11	7	30	33	26
15 Hull	23	6	8	9	21	25	26
16 Norwich	23	7	5	11	23	30	26
17 Ipswich	23	6	8	9	26	36	26
18 Coventry	23	5	10	8	28	34	25
19 Leicester	22	5	9	8	25	28	24
20 Plymouth	22	4	9	9	18	29	21
21 Sheff Wed	23	4	8	11	17	29	20
22 Brighton	23	2	13	8	22	35	19
23 Crewe	23	4	7	12	24	45	19
24 Millwall	23	3	8	12	17	35	17

FORTHCOMING CHAMPIONSHIP GAMES

Friday, December 16
Brighton v Hull, Preston v Sheff Utd.

Saturday, December 17
Burnley v Watford, Cardiff v Derby, Leicester v Crewe, Luton v Stoke, Millwall v Reading, Norwich v SAINTS, Plymouth v Crystal Palace, Sheff Wed v Ipswich, Wolverhampton v Leeds.

TOP SCORERS

	LLC	T		
Akinbiyi (Burnley)	11	2	13	Bangoura (Stoke) 8 0 8
Kitson (Reading)	8	4	12	Doyle (Reading) 8 0 8
Jerome (Cardiff)	10	1	11	Healy (Leeds) 8 0 8
King (Watford)	11	0	11	Hulse (Leeds) 8 0 8
Young (Watford)	9	1	10	Koumas (Cardiff) 7 1 8
Cort (Wolves)	9	0	9	McSheffrey (Cov) 7 1 8
Kabba (Sheff Utd)	9	0	9	Shipperley (S Utd) 8 0 8
				de Vries (Leicester) 6 2 8

STAT ATTACK

Shots on target: Saints 4 Luton 5
Shots off target: Saints 5 Luton 7
Corners: Saints 4 Luton 10
Fouls: Saints 19 Luton 18
Offsides: Saints 10 Luton 6

HIGHLIGHT

Walcott's goal. A touch of class worthy of winning the match.



LOWLIGHT

No more goals for Saints – but that's being picky!

