

# Lions hold Luton as gloominess is lifted

by Alec Swann

09/09

CHANGE was the order of the day at Kenilworth Road last night.

With the early evening announcement that LTFC 2020 had conditionally agreed to take control of the club, subject to approval by the Inland Revenue and the Football League, the Hatters looked like a refreshed outfit on the field.

Nick Owen's tannoy address to the crowd before the clash with Millwall added to the feel good factor after a period of instability and uncertainty at the club.

A 1-1 draw against Millwall might not be an earth shattering result, but it was certainly a step in the right direction as the Hatters picked up only their second point under Mick Harford's reign.

A deflected David Martin shot in the third minute resulted in the first corner to the visitors who should have taken the lead, but Zak Whitbread's point-blank header was cleared off the line.

Drew Talbot's stumble in the box represented Luton's first attack, while seconds later a quick break ended with Gary Alexander firing over the bar for the Lions.

The opening stages held enough promise to suggest an entertaining affair with the Hatters' initial efforts not those of a team who had failed to win since New Year's Day.

Martin's 10th minute free-kick sailed wide of Dean Brill's right-hand post as the visitors pressed, and they created the next chance when Alexander headed Jay Simpson's cross wide.

A minute later Matthew Spring rose well to meet a Dean Morgan centre, but he could only direct his header straight at Rhys Evans.

Marc Laird then messed up a great chance for the visitors, heading weakly at Brill from a well directed Simpson cross.

If Millwall had had the better of proceedings, it was the hosts who went in front on 18 minutes when the recalled Paul Furlong powerfully



BACK WITH A BANG: Veteran striker Paul Furlong rises highest to head Luton into a first half lead

## Luton Town 1 Millwall 1

headed home from Morgan's inviting ball into the box.

David Bell then saw his 10 yard shot cleared off the line two minutes later, before Lewis Emanuel limped off to be replaced by Alan Goodall.

Both sides looked threatening on the break, although Millwall possessed more pace, and the Lions who almost opened their account on 36 minutes, but a superb covering tackle by Keith Keane thwarted Lewis Grabban as he prepared to pull the trigger.

Seconds later Brill reacted well to

palm over Whitbread's towering header from a left sided corner.

However, the visitors hauled themselves level seven minutes before the break. Brill misjudged a corner and Grabban found the net with his downward header.

The warning signs had been evident throughout and on the balance of play, 1-1 was a fair reflection of an even first half.

The second period started with Simpson showing some nice touches on the right before firing straight into Brill's midriff.

Stephen O'Leary - who formed an impressive pairing in central midfield with Matthew Spring - connected with a Bell cross, but only succeeded in finding Evans.

Hatters old boy Ahmet Brkovic received a warm reception upon his introduction just before the hour, part of a double change that also saw Bas Savage make his bow in a Lions shirt.

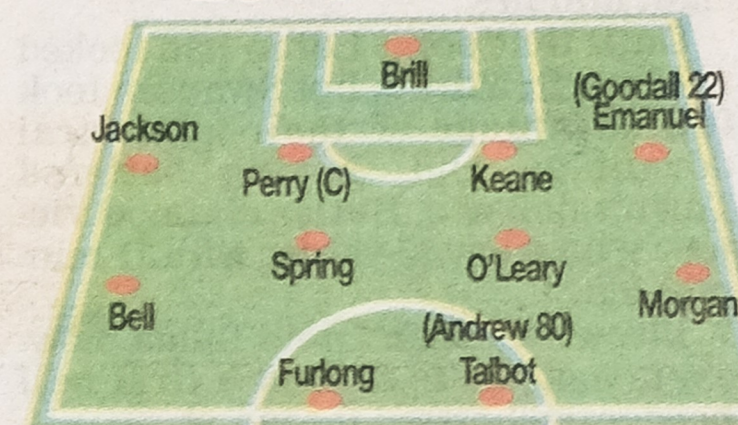
Lacking the punchiness of the opening 45 minutes, Luton nevertheless enjoyed the better of the second half.

Takeover fever seemed to have gripped Morgan and Furlong who were lively all night, but it was O'Leary who tried his luck next, dragging a shot wide from outside the area.

With the hosts firmly on top, Spring shot well wide from distance

**STAR HATTER** Dean Morgan. Where has he been hiding?

### LUTON TOWN



Unused subs: McVeigh, Charles, Beavan

### MILLWALL



Unused subs: Frampton, Edwards

Referee: Andy Woolmer (Northamptonshire)

Attendance: 6,417

and then skewed a glorious chance into the crowd from near point-blank range after Talbot had failed to connect with an overhead kick.

A strong shout for a penalty was then turned down after Furlong had been used as a stepladder.

However, the edginess that has been a hallmark of recent Hatters performances was now the preserve of the Londoners.

Calvin Andrew replaced Talbot as the game entered the final 10 minutes and immediately won a corner, but Bell could only drag his subsequent effort harmlessly past the post and into the advertising boards.

A rash challenge by O'Leary earned the youngster a booking and in the final seconds, Spring forced Evans into a hasty save.

It goes without saying that the Hatters will need more than this to beat the drop, but on a night of change, at least the doom and gloom was lifted at Kenilworth Road.