

The lights go out on Altrincham's FA Cup dreams

08/09(FAC)

ALTRINCHAM 0
LUTON 0
(After extra time. Luton won 4-2 on pens)

JONATHAN SMITH

BRIGHT spark Bob Large lit up Altrincham's FA Cup tie last night – but the Robins ended up plunging into the darkness of an FA Cup exit after a penalty shoot-out.

Electrician Bob, 49, saved the first round replay against Luton by fixing the floodlights after Moss Lane suffered a power failure almost an hour before kick-off.

But after a tense, tight 120 minutes and the drama of the shoot-out it was the League Two side which progressed to a second round tie away to South-

end. And Altrincham manager Graham Heathcote was left ruing the fact that the electrician provided the only spark all night, saying: "I'm just so disappointed.

"This side will never have a better opportunity of causing a cup upset than tonight.

"It's not just about the penalties. We should have won before 90 minutes or 120 minutes but we were inept as an attacking force. It was a miserable performance. We lacked that vital ingredient to go out to win the game and we lacked passion.

"We've got a very good team and good players but tonight we just didn't perform.

"It's a shame because there was a good crowd here tonight. But in all my years here we've



» CUP WOE Alty's Greg Young shows his disappointment last night

never bottled it on the big occasions."

After Alty's dreams had faded back into the murk, chairman Geoff Goodwin expressed his pride in the team: "We were the better side and it's great that we had such a massive crowd of 2,397.

"The club is in a healthy state and we live to fight another day. We are part-timers and our lads did a day's before playing.

Warren Peyton was left wishing electrician Bob had not bothered when he blew the Robins' golden chance to clinch another scalp, by missing from the spot in the 67th minute.

That allowed Luton to take the game to penalties, and Mark McGregor and Rob Lawton missed the crucial kicks in the

4-2 defeat. The floodlights had suddenly gone off 15 minutes before kick-off leaving both sets of players on the pitch in the dark.

Injuries forced Altrincham boss Graham Heathcote to shuffle his pack with James Smith coming in at right back while forward Chris Senior dropped into midfield with striker Dale Johnson offering a more physical threat to the Hatters. But the delay seemed to affect both sides during a dull opening when the game eventually kicked off 35 minutes late.

The Robins back four picked up where they had left off 11 days before and reduced Mick Harford's side to little more than half-chances. Luton may be bottom of League Two but if

it was not for a 30-point deduction, they would be sitting comfortably in mid-table. Yet they had to wait until the half hour mark for a clear-cut chance – Gareth O'Connor and Paul McVeigh missing the target with the goal at their mercy.

Disappointing Alty's only first half effort was a mis-hit free-kick from full-back Matt Doughty, while Luton full back Claude Gnaka hit the post with a header.

Alty got their big chance when Chris Senior was barged over in the box by Sol Davis but Peyton drilled his penalty too close to the keeper.

ALTRINCHAM: Ralph 6, Smith 6, Dougherty 7, McGregor 7, Young 7, Lawton 7, Danyluk 7, Senior 6 (Meechan 75), Peyton 5, Johnson 6 (Lane 105), Little 6 (Elam 45, 5).