

## NUMBERS GAME



### LINE-UPS

**NOTTS:** Pilkington, Picken, Tann, Hunt, Clapham, Hamshaw, Butcher, Thompson, Weston, Forte, Facey. Subs: Edwards, Strachan, Fairclough, Forrester, Canham.

**LUTON:** Brill, Asafu-Adjaye, Spillane, Bower, Davis, Keane, Henderson (Nicholls, 93), Hall, Martin, Craddock (Howells, 86), Gallen. Subs: Button, Pilkington, Parkin.

**REFEREE:** 2,886 (407 away)

**ATTENDANCE:** Chris Sarginson (Staffordshire).

### GOALS

**NOTTS:** None

**LUTON:** Martin 25; Craddock (pen) 46.

**Notts** **Luton**

### SHOTS ON TARGET

**4** **8**

### OFF TARGET

**5** **4**

### FOULS

**12** **17**

### OFF SIDES

**4** **4**

### CORNERS

**4** **2**

### BOOKINGS

**1** **1**

Picken (68)

Spillane (62)

### SENDINGS OFF

**0** **0**

### JAMES PALLATT'S MAN-OF-THE-MATCH

**MATT HAMSHAW** The Magpies' winger produced an impressive display on his return to the starting line-up after a hamstring injury, particularly in the first half. He was their chief threat and created a series of good scoring chances in the opening period. Notts' inability to take any of them proved costly.



**IMPRESSIVE:** Hamshaw

### PICTURE GALLERY

See more action from the game at [thisisnottingham.co.uk](http://thisisnottingham.co.uk)

# Abject performance as they are humbled by Luton Toothless Magpies flatter to deceive

Coca Cola League Two  
**BIG MATCH VERDICT**  
Notts County **0** Luton Town **2**  
Martin 25  
Craddock 46 (pen)  
Meadow Lane, Tuesday March 10, 2009

By James Pallatt



**AERIAL BATTLE:** Delroy Facey and Chris Martin challenge for the ball

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**A**S IAN McParland stood at the mouth of the tunnel giving his damning post-match verdict, all of his players trudged past him and back out onto the pitch in sombre silence.

It was almost like they wanted to start the game all over again.

None said a word. Not because they didn't want to disrupt their manager during his interviews but because of a deep despondence in defeat, or rather the manner of it.

When they lost at Shrewsbury on Saturday, their performance at least offered a shred of solace. Against the league's bottom side, however, there was little, or no, comfort.

Yes, the Magpies started brightly. And yes, they created a series of chances in the first half, with winger Matt Hamshaw in threatening form on his return to the starting line-up after a hamstring injury.

But they never took any of them, they conceded two poor goals and, in truth, never looked likely to stage a fight-back in the second half.

If their 3-1 win against Bradford City in their previous league outing at Meadow Lane was extraordinary, they were very ordinary against Luton.

Their performance was as surprising as it was substandard, given they went into it on the back of four wins out of five on home soil. They had started to look entirely more confident in front of their own fans since the start of the year, but they didn't last night.

And if they were stunned by Chris Martin's opening goal, they never recovered from Tom Craddock's penalty strike on the stroke of half-time. That was the killer blow. Martin's finish was flawless as he fired an unstoppable shot past keeper Kevin Pilkington midway through the first half. But he should never have been allowed space to cut inside onto his left foot. The defending, or rather the lack of it, was disgraceful.

As for the penalty. Well, Adam Tann should never have tried to tackle Martin as he carried the ball into the box on the left. He should have stayed on his feet. It

### Hunt confident he will be fit for Saturday

STEPHEN Hunt is confident he will be fit to face Accrington, despite hurting his ankle against Luton Town last night.

The Magpies' defender had to have his left ankle strapped-up in the first half of the 2-0 defeat, after twisting it in a challenge. He managed to play the full 90 minutes – but was in some discomfort.

After missing most of the season through injury, he is desperate to keep his place in the side for Saturday's game at Meadow Lane.

He said: "I pressed their wide man and I stepped on his foot and rolled my ankle. I had it strapped-up and it was a bit painful. I had it re-strapped and iced at half-time and it felt like I had a plaster-cast on my foot because it was so tight. Luckily we didn't have a great deal to do in the second half."

"It shouldn't be a problem. Obviously

we will see how it is over the next couple of days. I think it will be sore for 48 hours but I think I'll be fine for Saturday."

It was only Hunt's fifth start of the season in League Two. "I am still quite rusty but I feel better than I did after Saturday (against Shrewsbury)," he added.

"I am not at my peak fitness because I haven't played a great deal of football but over the last two games I feel I have been fairly solid and that was my aim."

"It would be nice to play every game until the end of the season now because I have missed a fair bit of the season. I don't want to finish with just a few starts."

Hunt felt the Magpies' performance merited greater reward than a defeat – but admitted they conceded two poor goals in the first half.

"I don't think they troubled us for the

best part of the game, which is why it's disappointing to lose," he said.

"I don't think we deserved to lose on our performance but we gave away two rubbish goals, cheap goals which could have been prevented."

"I think Tanny (Adam Tann) knows he shouldn't have gone to ground in the penalty area because the lad was going nowhere and they didn't have many players in the box."

"It's always hard to get two or three goals back. We had a few chances, Del (Delroy Facey) had a header. But if you don't score goals you don't win games, it's as simple as that. They sat back in the second half. They knew we were going to try and hit Delroy with longer passes and play off him."

"We have to try to put it right on Saturday."

was a rash, ill-judged, tackle and there was only ever going to be one outcome.

So many times this season the Magpies have conceded bad goals and caused their own downfall. Until they cut out their costly mistakes at the back they will always struggle to win games.

Hamshaw was almost alone in being impressive. After making a substitute appearance in the second half at Shrewsbury, he started for the first time since he injured his hamstring at Bury on February 21 – and he was the Magpies' chief threat.

He jinked his way brilliantly past two defenders and into the penalty area on 12 minutes but when his cross fell to Myles Weston he headed tamely straight at Luton keeper Dean Brill.

The visitors' replied five minutes later with Craddock forcing Pilkington into a good save at full-stretch to his right with a low drive from 20 yards. After falling behind, Hamshaw then tried to lead the Magpies' response just

after the half-hour mark, lifting a cross into the penalty area for Richard Butcher. But the goalscoring midfielder was crowded out.

Hamshaw then teed up Delroy Facey with a delightful cross to the far post – and he should have made it 1-1. But instead of directing a header at goal at the far post, he tried to nod it back to Butcher on the edge of the six-yard box. Facey's selflessness seemed to surprise him and he was unable to react quickly enough.

It was the best chance Notts created.

Instead, the visitors went on to double their lead and then protected it resolutely in the second half. They abandoned all attacking intent to stifle the Magpies.



**NOT HAPPY:** Ian McParland

It was hardly surprising, given they are fighting for their Football League lives.

There was a flurry of attacks early in the second half, with on-loan striker Jonathan Forte prodding wide from close-range. Weston too, blazed over. But that was it. It was hardly stirring stuff.

Facey flicked on a long ball forward from Stephen Hunt into the flight path of Forte on 77 minutes, as his pacy strike partner broke into the penalty area. Forte did well to control it at pace but his effort was blocked.

Hamshaw then had a shot blocked at the near post and Weston flashed a cross dangerously across the face of goal in injury-time but no one got on the end of it. It would have been little consolation.

It is now seven months since the Magpies last won a midweek game – when Weston memorably scored an extra-time winner against Championship outfit Doncaster Rovers in the Carling Cup.

They will hope to bring an end to that abysmal record against Gillingham at Meadow Lane next Tuesday night.

But before that they have an equally important game against Accrington on home soil. How they need to win that one now.