

WHAT WATSON
MADE OF IT



CHANGING to 4-4-2 caused Rochdale plenty of problems at Kenilworth Road on Saturday, and first team coach Kevin Watson believes the visitors were left with no alternative but to alternate their formation to match the Hatters.

Watson believes Town "carved Dale to shreds" in the first half but admitted they looked vulnerable in the second half as the visitors threatened to take all three points after Tom Craddock had smashed home a first-half penalty for the Hatters.

Manager Mick Harford's right-hand man asserted Dale could have had no complaints with the spot-kick, but felt Luton should have been more ruthless in front of goal.

He said: "First half I thought today we were great. We passed the ball very well and should have been out of sight."

"Most definitely we didn't need half time today."

"We made them change at half time and they went 4-4-2 as well as giving them credit they forced us on to the back foot."

"The game took the shape of a lot of games, especially since Christmas. We didn't kill them off. We had numerous good positions today."

"You don't take your chances and that's what happens. They had to come and match us second half rather than play their own system. It's disappointing we couldn't sign off with a win."

On the change in formation, Watson said: "Four-four-two was the obvious change."

"There are different ways to play it, but we didn't have the chance to tinker with it and played a flat four across the middle."

And Watson admitted that the minus 30-point penalty at the beginning of the season was, in hindsight, far too big, but was pleased with the way the players have stuck to their task.

He added: "They haven't downed tools for us. That's why we still have 7,000 people watching us today because we haven't chucked it in."

"We have to start looking at personnel who will be with us next year. Chris Martin and Michael Spillane are going back to Norwich. We don't know 100 per cent who will be with us next year. They will want to play at the highest level possible."

Town 10 unbeaten

HATTERS: An 88th-minute equaliser robbed Luton Town's reserves of victory against Leyton Orient in the tote-sport Combination on Thursday as they drew 2-2 in their 10th game unbeaten.

Aidan Quinn had fired youthful Hatters ahead on 28 minutes, only for Bradley Gray to find the net in the trialist keeper Stuart Tomlinson to level the scores. Substitute Liam Toomey looked to have given Town victory, only for James Dayton to net a late leveller for the hosts.

Howells is hopeful over penning deal

Luton Town 1 Rochdale 1

PRODIGIOUS youngster Jake Howells was keen to sign his first Hatters pro deal after helping Town to a 1-1 draw against high-flying Rochdale on Saturday, writes Mark Wood.

The point was enough for Dale to confirm their place in the League Two play-offs against already relegated Town – but you'd never have guessed going on the first half performance.

Luton bossed the first period and thoroughly deserved their 1-0 lead courtesy of Tom Craddock's thumping penalty after Chris Martin had been pushed in the box.

However, the Hatters wilted in the spring sun after the break and Dale's double half-time substitution paid dividends with an equaliser courtesy of Adam Rundle.

On the game Howells, who has just turned 18, said: "It was quite hot out there and hard to play. First half they couldn't get near us."

And on the prospect of his first pro deal, he continued: "It's exciting for me to get it. It's been a long wait, I've played over 30 games."

"I've got a meeting next week and will sort it out and get it all done and dusted."

"Every day I go to training with a smile on my face and look to get in the team on the Saturday."

"We've got a really young team and everyone is doing well in the youth team and reserves."

"Everyone works together. The older ones help the younger ones out."

"They are good lads. Everyone gets on with everyone."

And, having spent much of the second half of the season on the sidelines, the full-back is hoping he will be able to make his mark in the last few games of the season.

Howells said: "It's shown me how I can improve as a player."

"I can watch Sol Davis and Lewis



TALENTED: Young left-back Jake Howells skips through Dale's midfield

Emanuel and learn off them. I played 90 minutes for the reserves on Thursday and the gaffer said I would get my chance."

"[Mick Harford] said to just try and get more experience and hopefully I can play next year and get us back into the League."

And on the players' motivation for the rest of the season, he added: "I think everyone just wants to play games and play as well as they can and do it every game sincerely."

"It's for the fans as well. They play to come and watch us play. We have to play for them as well as ourselves."

Flag day at Kenilworth Road and a late conga in the main stand may have helped give the day a carnival feel, but sadly Luton couldn't find a win-

ner as their home campaign ended.

Town controlled the first half as Harford employed a 4-4-2 formation.

Asa Hall had a fierce close-range effort well blocked by Claran Toner after just four minutes, before Nathan Stanton then managed to deflect Ian Henderson's effort over the bar after good work by Howells and Craddock.

Martin looked a constant threat, but poor first touches and wayward shooting let him down, while fit-again Kevin Gallen flashed an effort just wide.

Town were then gifted a penalty on 32 minutes when Rory McArdle inexplicably shoved Martin in the back as he competed for a high ball in the box.

Hampshire referee James Lining-

ton had little option but to point to the spot and Craddock gleefully smashed home his 12th goal of the season into the roof of the net.

Luton continued to look the most likely in the closing stages, with Spillane's stinging effort thumping a defender, Martin spiralling a header over and Craddock hitting a pass just too strongly for Henderson after more good work by Howells.

A double substitution from Dale at the break, coupled with a change in formation to 4-4-2, turned the game on its head.

And, after some initial Town pressure, the visitors levelled out of the blue on 56 minutes.

A cross was allowed to run all the way through to substitute Rundle at the far post, who got the better of Spillane before firing past the exposed Brill.

Suddenly the game exploded open. Martin's ball across the face of goal yelled out for someone to score, but no-one was on hand to accept the invitation, while Dale should have made it 2-1 on 58 minutes.

Left two-against-one, Rundle teed up Adam Le Fondre in acres of space, but the striker hesitated too long before lashing wastefully over.

The visitors seemed much more interested and Thorpe should possibly have done better when he streaked over from six yards out on 66 minutes.

With Dale on top, the Hatters stopped playing completely and struggled to put two passes together as the League Two high-flyers took control.

Hall forced his way through with 11 minutes left but thrashed well off target, while Martin had a decent long-range effort deflected into Frank Fielding's arms with three minutes left on the clock.

Le Fondre fired a snapshot straight at Brill in the closing moments, but somewhat appropriately the last game of the season ended, like so many others, in a frustrating draw.

STAR HATTER Jake Howells. Youngster has bright future ahead.

Can they finish in style? – the 2008/09 season so far.....

AUG	Opponents	Score	Scorers	Att	Pos	DEC	Opponents	Score	Scorers	Att	Pos
Sat 9	PORT VALE	1-3	Parkin 35	7,149	24	Fri 26	Chesterfield	2-2	Craddock 56, Roper 90	4,243	24
Tue 12	PLYMOUTH (LGCP)	2-0	Jarvis 15, Plummer 77	2,682	24	Sun 28	LINCOLN CITY	3-2	Martin 31, 33, Roper 50	6,643	24
Sat 16	Gillingham	1-0	Parkin 3	6,085	24	JAN					
Sat 23	NOTS COUNTY	1-1	Martin 49	7,498	-	Tue 13	Chester City	2-2	Martin 22, Emanuel 27	1,652	24
Tue 26	Reading (LGCP)	1-5	Charles 81	5,328	24	Sat 17	Darlington	0-0		6,127	24
Sat 30	Exeter City	1-0	Parkin 47	5,328	24	Sat 20	Brighton (JPSF1)	0-0		6,063	24
SEP						Sat 24	BRADFORD CITY	3-3	Hall 5, 90, Waslu 37	5,230	24
Sat 6	Macclesfield	1-2	Charles 90	6,462	24	Tue 27	Bournemouth	1-1	Hollands og 11	5,545	24
Sat 13	ALDERSHOT TN	3-1	Spillane 17, Hall 89, Martin 90	4,095	24	Sat 31	BURY	1-2	Hall 36		24
Sat 20	Rotherham	0-1		5,731	24	FEB					
Sat 27	CHESTER CITY	1-1	Hall 41	13,083	24	Sat 14	Dagenham & Red.	1-2	Henderson 58	2,310	24
OCT						Tue 17	BRIGHTON (JPSF2)	1-1	Craddock 2 (won 4-3 on pens)	9,711	-
Sat 4	Bradford City	2-1	Spillane 86	2,029	-	Sat 21	SHREWSBURY	3-1	Craddock 15, Parkin 35, Hall 73	5,661	24
Tue 7	BRENTFORD (JP2)	1-2	Martin 39, 55 (won 4-3 on pens)	5,560	24	Tue 24	Accrington	0-0		1,033	24
Sat 11	DARLINGTON	1-2	Gnakpa 31	5,492	24	Sat 28	Port Vale	3-1	Hall 43, Gallen 52, Martin 63	5,689	24
Sat 18	ACCRINGTON	1-2	Hall 34	4,021	24	MAR					
Tue 21	Grimsey Town	2-2	Craddock 24, 90	3,052	24	Sat 7	EXETER CITY	0-0	Craddock 39	6,460	24
Sat 25	Bury	2-1	Craddock 35, Roper 44		24	Sat 14	NOTTS COUNTY	1-2	Craddock 35	3,098	24
Tue 28	BOURNEMOUTH	ABANDONED DUE TO SNOW			24	Sat 14	GRIMSEY TOWN	2-1	Bower 45+2, Hall 89	5,363	24
NOV						Tue 17	MACCLESFIELD	1-0	Craddock 69	2,599	24
Sat 1	Shrewsbury	0-3	Jarvis 90	1,844	-	Sat 21	Morecambe	2-1	Martin 43, Gallen 50	5,975	24
Sat 8	Walsall (JP3)	1-0		3,200	24	Tue 31	ROTHERHAM	3-4	Martin 42, Hall 70		24
Sat 15	DAGENHAM & RED	2-1	Davis 6, McVeigh 41 (Luton won 4-2 on penalties)	2,397	-	APR					
Tue 19	Altrincham (FA1R)	0-0		2,901	24	Sun 5	SCUNTHORPE (JP)	2-2	Martin 32, Craddock 70, Gnakpa 95	55,378	-
Sat 22	Rochdale	0-2		5,248	24	Sat 11	LINCOLN CITY	0-0		4,694	24
Tue 25	BRENTFORD	0-1		4,111	-	Mon 13	CHESTERFIELD	0-0	Jarvis 49	2,808	24
Sat 29	Southend (FA2)	1-3	Spillane 80	6,773	24	Sat 18	Barnet	0-1		6,565	24
DEC						Tue 21	WYCOMBE	1-1	Craddock 32	7,025	24
Tue 2	BOURNEMOUTH	3-3	OG 18, Gallen 56, McVeigh 83	5,536	24	Sat 25	ROCHDALE	1-1			24
Sat 6	BARNET	3-1	McVeigh 11, Martin 15, OG 88	5,567	24	MAY					
Sat 13	Wycombe	0-0		2,639	24	Sat 2	Brentford				
Tue 16	COLCHESTER (JP4)	0-0	Gnakpa 30	5,664	24						
Sat 20	MORECAMBE	1-1	Spillane 51		24						