

WE NEED TO GET A WAY OUT

■ By Jon Dunham

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MARK STIMSON believes that something has to give at Kettering Town.

The Poppies were plunged into the relegation zone in the Blue Square Bet Premier as they suffered a second successive 5-0 defeat to promotion-chasing Luton Town at Nene Park yesterday.

Kettering had Phil Ifil sent off with the score at 2-0 but the Hatters turned on the style and ran away with it after half-time.

But the problems continue to run deep at the Poppies with no sign of any movement in terms of new investment or a takeover and they remain under a transfer embargo.

Chairman Imraan Ladak was at the game and boss Stimson believes a new year must bring some big changes if the Poppies are to find a way out of the bottom four.

"I am just full of frustration," he said.

"It's difficult because I don't see a winning mentality in our squad and sometimes it has to come from within.

"We are in the relegation zone for the first time since I came here and it's not a nice feeling. It is hard to get out of this league at the top end, just ask Luton.

"But it's no different in the bottom four, it's extremely difficult to get out of it.

"It's 2012 and hopefully something happens with a takeover of some sort.

"It has to happen because with the group of players we have got, I don't know if they have got enough about them to get out of this fight.

"Something has got to happen. Whether it does, I don't know. Whether we are told about things, I don't know. But one way or another something has to give."

Stimson, meanwhile, had no arguments after another heavy defeat and admitted Saturday's trip to fellow strugglers AFC Telford United is a 'massive' game.

"They (Luton) have been on a totally different level to us over the two games," Stimson added. "We gave them two poor goals and you can't do that."

■ OFF YOU GO – Poppies defender Phil Ifil is shown a red card during yesterday's 5-0 defeat

Picture by Mike Capps/www.kappasport.co.uk

Problems continue for another heavy defeat

with Jon Dunham

A NEW year is under way and you get the feeling it is going to be a big one for the future of Kettering Town.

For the second time in less than a week they were put to the sword by a classy Luton Town side who once again could have racked up double figures.

The Poppies lacked quality and, unfortunately, heart at times as they went 2-0 down early on before having their chances firmly ended by Phil Hill's red card for a reckless challenge on Greg Taylor.

The returning Jean-Paul Marna recorded his team's only shot on target after Luton's fifth goal in stoppage-time and the ironic cheers around the ground just summed it up.

There are no signs of Kettering's off-field problems clearing up and as long as that remains the case, they will continue to struggle on it. Luton wasted little time in arriving on from where they left off on Boxing Day.

And, like at Kenilworth Road, it was Jake Howells who opened the scoring as he easily rolled away from Hill and found Aaron O'Connor whose shot was parried by Laurie Walker. However, Howells followed in and blasted home.

The Hatters' passing and movement was just too good for the hapless hosts.

Walker saved brilliantly from Howells before Adam Watkins' magnificent curling shot found the top corner as Kettering switched off for a short corner routine.

Walker kept out former Poppy Taylor's deflected strike and saved again from Alex Lawless and, even when the keeper was beaten, the post came to his rescue as Taylor was frustrated.

Chances were in short supply for the hosts and the closest they came was when David Bridges

headed well wide from a corner, although Marna did get in and had a shot blocked but the flag was already up for offside.

However, any chance Kettering might have had disappeared five minutes before the break when Hill lunged in on Taylor on the left touchline. It looked an ugly challenge and referee Nicholas Kinsey quickly brandished the red card.

O'Connor almost made it three when his shot was deflected onto the top of the crossbar but the Poppies did at least come out fighting after half-time.

They were a bit more competitive despite being a man down and, while Luton continued to dominate possession, they came up against a Kettering defence that finally showed some resistance.

That was until just past the hour when a routine near post corner wasn't defended properly and Janos Kovacs powered in a header to make the game safe.

And from there, it was a procession. Former Kettering man James Dance somehow hit the bar from a couple of yards after Taylor had uselessly squared the ball.

But it was 4-0 from the resulting corner as Taylor hammered home after Watkins' header came back off the post.

There were numerous chances for the visitors after that with Sol Davis' challenge denying substitute Stuart Fleetwood who was out of luck soon after when his volley cannoned back off the post.

However, Fleetwood did get his moment in stoppage-time when Watkins' pass sent him clear and he hammered past Walker to send the large army of Luton fans home extremely happy.

The Poppies were well beaten again. They are now in the relegation zone and unless big changes at the top of the club are made, that's where they will probably stay.



HEADS WE WIN - Aaron O'Connor beats Sol Davis in an aerial challenge

'Spirited performance' praised by Brabin

LUTON TOWN boss Gary Brabin admitted he never felt comfortable despite his side's crushing five-point Kettering Town for the second successive game.

The Hatters maintained their pursuit of the Blue Square Bet Premier's top two with another dominant display at Nene Park as they inflicted more misery on the Poppies who remain deep in crisis on and off the pitch.

Former Kettering man Greg Taylor was among the scorers while Luton were aided by Phil Hill's sending-off just before half-time for a poor challenge on Taylor.

It was as comfortable as the first scoreline suggests. "We knew it would be tough," he said.

"We had to prepare the same way as we did for Boxing Day and we did that."

"A lot has been made of what is going on at Kettering but they have a really good manager in Mark Stimson and they have some decent players, despite being low on numbers."

"They put in a spirited performance and I never felt comfortable, even at 2-0."

"We had a 10-minute period early on when I felt we were top drawer. People will look at the scoreline

and make their own judgements but Kettering were better than that and we needed to produce some good spells to get the result."

Brabin, meanwhile, was happy with the way his team dealt with the game after the Poppies had gone down to 10 men.

And he was in no doubt that his deserved to go for the challenge.

"When they went down to 10 men we played some good football and in the end, we got what we deserved," he added.

"But I am not being disrespectful to the opposition, they put up a good fight and made it hard for us."

"I can't see them complaining too much about the red card."



Post-match review

Teams

Poppies (4-5-3):
Laurie Walker 6
Keep score down again
Phil Hill 4
Needless lunge was a silly error
Dionisie Sargare 5
Looks as if he is trying
Jalme Navarro 4
Too sluggish for the most part
Sol Davis 4
Hard work against Dance
David Bridges 5
Bury but had no help
Stephen O'Leary 4
Passing was off key
Patrick Noubissi 5
Did better at right back
Josh Dawkins 4
Was outmuscled easily
Jean-Paul Marna 5
Plenty of passion but struggled
Kieran Hughes-Mason 4
Ran hard but up against it
Substitutes
Jones (for Hughes-Mason, 77 mins)
Pryor (for Davis, 89 mins)
Luton (4-5-3): K Pilkington, Osano, G Pilkington, Kovacs, Taylor, Lawless (sub Fleetwood, 81 mins), Keane, Watkins, Dance (sub Wilmore, 77 mins), O'Connor (sub Brunt, 60 mins), Howells, Subs not used, Tyler, Kissack.

Goals

4 mins: Howells 0-1
9 mins: Watkins 0-2
62 mins: Kovacs 0-3
72 mins: Taylor 0-4
90 mins: Fleetwood 0-5

Cards

Hill (lunge on Taylor) R
Kovacs (shot on Bridges) Y
Davis (banged into Kovacs) Y
O'Connor (shot on Navarro) Y
Marna (shot on Lawless) Y
Bridges (fool on Howells) Y

Referee

Nicholas Kinsey

Match stats

	KT	LT
Attempts on	1	10
Attempts off	2	10
Blocked	0	4
Corners	2	12
Caught offside	3	12
Fouls conceded	11	8
Attendance:	1,247	
Away fans:	2,018	

Match verdict

It was pretty much a repeat of Boxing Day.

The Poppies simply weren't good enough against an impressive Luton side whose passing and movement was excellent.

The fact Kettering went down to 10 men before the break made little difference in truth because the damage probably would have been the same anyway. They remain in desperate trouble on and off the pitch and it's hard to see a solution to either problem at the moment.

Star man

It's a sad state of affairs that over two games that have seen the Poppies ship 10 goals, their best player has been their goalkeeper. There wasn't a great deal Laurie Walker could do about the goals at Kenilworth Road and at Nene Park yesterday. But he comes out of it with credit.

Who's next?

The Poppies are back on the road at the weekend when they travel to another one of the Division's strugglers AFC Bournemouth.

Clockwatch

JEAN-PAUL MARNA
The frontman started as part of a three-man attack after he returned a day early from his loan spell at Corby Town. 1 min. Gets an early touch and holds off a couple of Luton defenders. 2 mins. Plays in Josh Dawkins and then, at the end of the move, shoots well wide. 15 mins. Receives a throw-in from Sol Davis and holds off Curtis Osano. 17 mins. Concedes a free-kick for a foul on former teammate Greg Taylor. 25 mins. Turns away well from George Pilkington and spreads play wide to Phil Hill. 35 mins. Exchanges passes with Dawkins and finds himself with a sight of goal but he is denied by a block and an offside flag. 43 mins. Released by Dawkins but his cross to David Bridges is too strong. 66 mins. Shows good hold-up play again as he turns away from Adam Watkins and Alex Lawless. 75 mins. Booked for putting back Lawless. 83 mins. Races onto Dawkins' pass but is stopped by an offside flag.



ON TARGET - Janos Kovacs heads home and Stuart Fleetwood completes the rout as Luton run out five-goal winners over Kettering again

Pictures by Mike Caggs/www.kapsport.co.uk

Your Shout

www.poppies.net.uk

Result never in doubt - formation, as said by others, wrong, no leaders at the back, keeper poor kicking but made some good saves and found his level I'm afraid.

Stimson needs to convince me he is right for the job. In my opinion he needs to force Ladd's hand and resign. As you are aware he has to do the best he can with what he has. Unlike some he is still being paid.

PIPPIES ON THE LINE

Hard to moan at players after what they've been through but Bridges should have handled his boots to Solihon who was watching. Aside from that what can you say? Please go WRAAH.

PAULK

If anyone really thinks that the money from today will see us through the rest of the season they are in cloud cuckoo land.

We have a business with little or no income and lots of outgoings, it's simple arithmetic I'm afraid, sinking ship, without a captain.

REDJEM

