

Hatters fire blanks but Buckle's a happy man

By Kevin Miles

NEW Luton Town boss Paul Buckle had praise for his side despite them dropping two precious points in their bid to earn a play-off place.

Both the Hatters and their hosts Alferton had chances to win the game but neither side were clinical enough to grab the three points.

Buckle reflected: "I am delighted with the effort and the way the lads started the game.

"We created the big three chances of the match. The first goal was always important as it settles everything down.

"I really thought at half time that we deserved to be leading but it didn't happen.

"It was a big worry that we had created so many chances and dominated play. It didn't come off for us today but you can't knock players for missing chances.

"In the end though we had to be resilient. Maybe a week or so ago

we may have gone under with that many big high balls they stuck into our box, but we showed some real strength."

The Hatters began well with Keith Keane, Stuart Fleetwood and Andre Gray prominent down the right.

Chances fell to Fleetwood who curled a 25 yarder just past the far post before Gray had a shot well blocked by Reds keeper Jon Stewart.

Gray fired a low cross shot through the penalty area but out past the far post before he squandered a golden chance to put the Hatters in front.

He got clean through but put an eight-yard shot against the outside of Stewart's left-hand post on 29 minutes when he should have done better.

It was not all one-way traffic, though, and Luton keeper Mark Tyler had his fingers stung by an Adam Cunningham angled volley.

As the half wore on, the chances dried up and after the interval, Alferton got on top with Luton hardly featuring as an attacking



TOUGH CHALLENGE: Andre Gray tries to tackle Alferton's Lee Franks

PICTURE: Gareth Owen

force until right near the death.

Nathan Jarman almost won it for the hosts on 68 minutes but his stooping header on the end of a Josh Law free-kick hit the same piece of woodwork that had denied Gray earlier on.

And Jarman then squandered another chance of a winner six minutes later when he lashed an eight-yard shot wide after Anton Brown had flicked on a long throw from Leigh Franks.

The second half was littered with free-kicks as both sides refused to

give up territory and quality was in short supply.

One piece of skill from the unlikely source of Luton defender Janos Kovacs right at the death of added time almost carved out a winner for the Hatters.

His cross from the right byline to the far post picked out substitute Andre Boucaud, but his powerful downward header was heroically cleared off the line by Alferton's right-back Josh Law to ensure the hosts gained a point their overall display more than deserved.

It would have been harsh on Alferton's battling efforts, a fact not lost on manager Nicky Law

"A draw was probably a fair result," he said. "I think we more than held our own against a strong side.

"The introduction of Paul Clayton and Anthony Wilson in the second half gave their defence a bigger problem.

"I thought second half we were the better side but it would have been unfair on either side to have lost the game."

MATCH STATS

ALFRETON v LUTON

3	SHOTS ON TARGET	2
4	SHOTS OFF TARGET	7
4	CORNERS	7
2	OFFSIDE	2
8	FOULS CONCEDED	16
2	YELLOW CARDS	3
0	RED CARDS	0

STAR MAN: Connor Franklin (Alferton)

ATT: 1,654

ENTERTAINMENT: ★★ ★★

REF RATING: Ross Joyce 7/10

ALFRETON: 4-4-2: Stewart 7, Law 7, Franklin 9, Kempson 7, Franks 7, Deverdics 7 (Streete 84, 5), Meadows 8, Brown 7, Arnold 6 (Clayton 63, 7), Cunningham 7 (Wilson 63, 6), Jarman 7 **Subs not used:** Mullan, Conneely.

LUTON: 4-4-2: Tyler 6, Osano 6 (Gleeson 60, 6), Howells 8, Pilkington 6, Kovacs 7, Lawless 6, Keane 6, Poku 6 (Boucaud 60, 5), Willmott 6 (O'Connor 60, 6), Gray 7, Fleetwood 7 **Subs not used:** McAllister, Blackett.