

Town head for last-day drama

by Mark Wood

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**Blue Square Bet Premier
Gateshead 0 (0) Luton Town 0 (0)**

AN instinctive Mark Tyler save helped the Hatters claim a hard-fought point as they held out for a goalless draw at Gateshead last night.

Tyler spared substitute Greg Taylor's blushes with a fabulous stop five minutes from the end, while the post then came to Town's rescue in injury time.

The point means Luton need just a draw at Blue Square Bet Premier champions Fleetwood Town on the last day of the season this Saturday to scrape into the play-offs.

The Hatters named an unchanged side from the one that beat Kidderminster 1-0 on Saturday although the fit-again Dan Walker replaced Dan Gleeson on the bench.

Despite the inclement weather and a rugby league game having been played on the pitch on Sunday, the International Stadium turf was in good nick and the home side should have taken the lead on two minutes when Micky Cummins laid the ball off and Josh Gillies dragged his low effort just past the far post.

Good harrying by Andre Gray forced a corner at the other end and Keith Keane's volley flew just wide before Town spurned an even better chance on five minutes when Alex Lawless' low cross found Stuart Fleetwood in the six-yard box but he swept his first-time effort over.

An underhit Adam Watkins back-pass then sold Tyler short, but he somehow beat striker Alan O'Brien to the ball.

A breathless start continued



SAVIOUR: Mark Tyler

when Gray broke and crossed for Fleetwood at the far post only for Carl Magnay to make an important intervention.

Janos Kovacs failed to deal with a long ball down the middle on 13 minutes and Tyler gathered Gillies' powerful effort at the second attempt.

A brilliant Phil Turnbull tackle thwarted Gray and he then turned defence into attack in an instant but O'Brien dragged his shot agonisingly across the face of goal.

A crazy short goal kick by Tim Deasy put Turnbull in trouble on 21 minutes as Fleetwood nipped in, but despite getting a touch the ball ricocheted just wide.

Gray slipped Fleetwood in three minutes later and he got the better of Ben Clark only to see Eddie Odhiambo get a touch to deflect it well over.

An end-to-end encounter saw Gil-

lies feed Kris Gate, but he curled tamely at Tyler while Robbie Willmott shanked wide at the other end.

Clark marauded forward from the back on 35 minutes but rolled tamely at Tyler as the Tynesiders started to dominate.

George Pilkington had to be aware to stop Clark slipping Gillies through who then swung in a corner but Cummins' effort was deflected over and Turnbull thrashed wide of the mark.

A rare Lawless effort never threatened with two minutes of the half left, while a Magnay shot was deflected behind for a corner as the Tynesiders almost took the lead.

Cummins' header was cleared off the line by Jake Howells and ex-Hatter Liam Hatch then went down in the box as his appeals for a penalty were dismissed.

Gray's daisycutter was fumbled past the post two minutes into the second half, before Howells was tripped on the very edge of the box by Odhiambo as a free-kick and not a penalty was given.

A Watkins slip almost cost Luton as O'Brien broke but Curtis Osano made a good challenge with Hatch lurking.

Kovacs was booked on 57 minutes for what looked like a great challenge on Gillies, whose long-range free-kick was straight at Tyler.

A mistake by substitute Godfrey Poku allowed Gillies to break but he wasted his shot and a lovely move saw Hatch, Gillies and Cummins combine and Kovacs had to be aware to put it out for a corner, from which Magnay's header flew just wide.

Substitute Poku lasted just 18 minutes before injury forced him

off and he was replaced by McAllister as disoriented Luton looked for a winner.

Both teams had chances to score on 77 minutes as Gillies' corner headed straight at Tyler by Newcastle United loan man Paul Dummett.

At the other end Fleetwood were in behind and slid past Deasy as Odhiambo was in the way to clear. Seconds later McAllister broke the left but rather than hitting it tried to find Gray at the far post as Deasy gratefully snaffled.

McAllister and Lawless combine to tee up Howells with 10 minutes left but he thundered straight at keeper.

With six minutes to go Hatch looked to be pushed in the box by Osano but nothing was given as seconds later a wonder save as Tyler kept the scores level.

James Marwood's effort was turned towards his own goal as Taylor and Tyler pulled off an instinctive stop to turn the ball to the post.

A nerve-racking ending saw Magnay's effort blocked by Pilkington Gray fire miles over and Osano in a great block to deny Gillies.

Three minutes of injury time were added and Town needed to find woodwork to come to their rescue. 91 minutes when Cummins' header found Marwood and he hooked against the post as Luton survived to hold on for a hard-fought point to take them one step closer to the play-offs.

Hatters (4-5-1): Mark Tyler, Keith Keane, George Pilkington (C), Alex Lawless, Robbie Willmott (Greg Taylor 56), Stuart Fleetwood, Jake Howells, Curtis Osano, Andre Gray, Adam Watkins (Godfrey Poku 54, Craig McAllister 72), Janos Kovacs. **Substitutes not used:** Shane Blackett, Dan Walker.