

OFFICE BOYS DO BUSINESS FOR BUCKLE



LUTON TOWN 2 WREXHAM 0

Gray 22
Fleetwood 30

11/12(00)



LUTON manager Paul Buckle said his side's huge step towards the play-off final was a result of what happened in the office – but this was no David Brent-style philosophising.

The Hatters made it seven games unbeaten under their new manager with a display of passion, precision, pace and penalty box prowess that league runners-up Wrexham could not handle.

The Dragons were torn apart in the first half when – as in last season's semi-final first leg between the two clubs at the Racecourse – the Hatters took total control.

And after bringing back Robbie Willmott and Stuart Fleetwood for John Paul Kissock and Craig McAllister following their omission at Fleetwood last week, Buckle saluted his squad's spirit.

Willmott gave Wrexham right-back Stephen Wright a torrid night, while Fleetwood created the first goal for Andre Gray on 22 minutes, then produced a brilliant finish to round off a flowing move for the second eight minutes later.

Buckle said: "I spoke to the front four and Kissock in my office and said, 'This was the starting four up top, no-one's done anything wrong, it's a tactical move'.

"I felt it was right to bring the two guys back in and Kissock and Macca came on to do their bit. It's a real squad thing at the moment.

"All the boys who didn't play were down in the dressing room because I'm trying to create a togetherness at the club. You saw that tonight, as well as some real quality football. The biggest disappointment for us all is that we've not won by more."

The Dragons had conceded only 33 goals in a league campaign in which they racked up 98 points. But Buckle's back four – with right-back Curtis Osano and captain George Pilkington outstanding – are following their exam-

By Stuart Hammonds

ple with six successive clean sheets.

Keith Keane set Fleetwood racing to catch a raking ball on 22 minutes. He squeezed past left-back Neil Ashton on the byline and cut back for Gray to blast home.

Wrexham centre-half Nat Knight-Percival had barely put a foot wrong all season. But on the half-hour mark, he gave the ball away midway inside Luton's half, Alex Lawless fed Gray, who back-heeled into Fleetwood's path 40 yards from goal.

The former Forest Green and Hereford man's first touch took him away from Mark Creighton, and produced an exquisite side-foot finish with his second – on his weaker left foot – to net his 16th of the season.

They had already been denied a penalty when Jay Harris fouled Jake Howells, referee Darren Bond – who didn't have the best of nights – letting an assistant's flag, for what TV replays showed was a dubious offside, change his mind.

And although Wrexham came out with much more purpose after the break, they created little while Willmott should have made it three and only a last-ditch Knight-Percival tackle denied Janos Kovacs sliding into an open net after keeper Joslain Mayebi and Ashton had a communication breakdown.

Wrexham player-boss Andy Morrell had their best chance with the score still goalless, and he said: "We can't afford to not turn up for 45 minutes in a 180-minute tie.

"They broke on us when we were going forward and we didn't work hard enough as a unit. But the second half was loads better, we were right at them, had chances and put them under pressure.

"We moved the ball across the pitch better, but while it's certainly not killed us, the first half was the one that hurt us. We'll have to do better on Monday."

MATCH STATS

LUTON v WREXHAM

6	SHOTS ON TARGET	3
8	SHOTS OFF TARGET	5
8	CORNERS	7
6	OFFSIDE	1
15	FOULS CONCEDED	8
2	YELLOW CARDS	0
0	RED CARDS	0

STAR MAN: Stuart Fleetwood (Luton Town)
ATT: 9,012

ENTERTAINMENT: ★★★★★
REF RATING: Darren Bond 5/10

LUTON: 4-4-2: Tyler 7, Osano 7, Kovacs 7, Pilkington 7, Howells 7, Lawless 7, Keane 7, Watkins 7 (Kissock 83, 5), Willmott 7, Gray 7 (Morgan-Smith 88, 5), Fleetwood 8 (McAllister 71, 6). **Subs not used:** Taylor, Blackett.

WREXHAM: 4-3-3: Mayebi 5, S Wright 5, Creighton 7, Knight-Percival 6, Ashton 6, Keates 6, Harris 7, Tolley 5, Pogba 7, Morrell 6 (D Wright 69, 5), Cieslewicz 6 (Hunt 87, 5). **Subs not used:** Maxwell, Westwood, Clarke.