

# Hatt's off as title-chasers are too good

**SKRILL PREMIER**

**LUTON TOWN 4**  
**GATESHEAD 2**

GATESHEAD were blown away in the opening half hour at Luton after they conceded three goals inside a 15-minute period. 13/14

Alex Lawless then grabbed his second of the afternoon on the hour before The Heed hit back through former Sunderland star John Oster and Liam Hatch.

It was too little, too late, however, for Gary Mills' men who host Gateshead-born Neil Aspin's FC Halifax Town on Boxing Day.

Mills, without captain Ben Clark and top scorer James Marwood, both through illness, rued his side's costly first-half display at Kenilworth Road.

"We had been the better side until they scored but you can't allow a side like Luton to score three goals in quarter of an hour and that left us with a mountain to climb," he said.

"A couple of players lost their discipline in terms of doing their jobs and you can't afford to do that against a good side like Luton who I believe will win the league.

"But we kept going and pulled two goals back to win the second half. We were much improved after the break when we had a better shape and there is no reason why we can't pick up points over the festive season."

Luton, unbeaten at Kenilworth Road, were slow out of the blocks in front of a near 7,000 crowd but were ahead in the 16th minute.

Adam Bartlett saved a Joe Davis header from the Hatters' first corner but when the ball was delivered back into the box by Lawless Paul Benson headed home at the back post.

Lawless then curled just wide before Luton doubled their lead after Carl Magnay had his pocket picked by the midfielder inside the box, and the ex-Aston Villa trainee drove the ball past Bartlett.

The rampant Hatters then swept downfield for Andre Gray to shoot powerfully past Bartlett for his 13th goal of the campaign.

There was no way back for a shell-shocked Gateshead and after Jonathon Smith shot just wide the Hatters made it four on the hour.

Gray began the move and after Benson's shot had been parried by Bartlett Lawless was on hand to knock home his second of the afternoon.

At that stage it was damage limitation time for Mills' men who never threw in the towel and were rewarded with two goals.

A good move saw Oster shoot across Tyler to find the far corner and then Hatch was on target against one of his former clubs.

The big striker earned the 84th minute free-kick that saw Phil Turnbull claim an assist on his 300th appearance for Gateshead as Hatch headed home the midfielder's set play.

**LUTON TOWN:** Tyler, Davis, Ruddock, Henry, McNulty, Davis, Guttridge (Robinson 78), Smith, Lawless, Benson, GRAY. Not used: Justham, Howells, Cullen, Mawson.

**GATESHEAD:** Bartlett, Baxter, Sirrell, Walker (Cummins 76), Curtis, Magnay, Larkin (Ramshaw 76), Turnbull, HATCH, Oster, Boyes (Maddison 66). Not used: Chandler, Baird.

**REFEREE:** Daniel Cook **Att:** 6,913