



● Seconds out, round one: The mass brawl which broke out at Griffin Park yesterday – despite a whole minute's worth of whistle-blowing from referee

■ Sigh of relief: Lawrence breathes out after sweating on a match

Brawling Hatters safe

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Lennie: I'm no Houdini

LENNIE Lawrence breathed a huge sigh of relief after yesterday's result and revealed that this year has been the toughest of his managerial career.

"It has been the hardest year I have ever had in football but we have done it. The players have shown terrific commitment in the last three months but they lost their way before Christmas.

"We need to learn some lessons from this season and show an absolute determination that we will never face the same situation again.

"This was no Houdini act. It was an experienced manager taking a group of players through to safety."

And Lawrence fired a broadside at some of his senior pros, who he feels may have let him down over the course of the season.

"This year we have had to use so many very young players, but they have managed to come in and do a man's job.

"The future is bright here but we can't have the same

Brentford 2 Luton Town 2
By **PETE KENYON**
LUTON are safe.

But boy, did 1,200 travelling fans have to sweat after never-say-die Brentford snatched a second equaliser 10 minutes from time – then missed an absolute sitter with the very last kick of the game.

Quite simply, this match had everything – with the stakes so high for both clubs it was scarcely surprising.

A pitch invasion, fighting on the terraces, a mass brawl on the pitch, yellow cards being brandished like they have gone out of fashion, a tackle dirty enough to test the cleaning powers of even the newly-improved Ariel Ultra, four goals, the goalkeeping gaffe of the century and a thunder and lightning storm midway through the second half.

Everything short of fire and brimstone, in fact – although there were hailstones aplenty.

On 13 minutes Hatters sneaked into the lead after Dwight Marshall pounced on Steve Davis' header across goal from Graham Alexander's corner.

But the little Jamaican injured himself in the process and was to play no further part in proceedings.

Luton looked like they might run away with it but then a dreadful error in defence let the Bees back in.

Steven Blaney launched a long throw from near the corner flag which was allowed to bounce and run straight through to Andy Scott to tap in from close range unchallenged.

David Oldfield was flattened by an uncompromising challenge from skipper Jamie Bates which left the Luton striker out cold for a few

seconds, and Hatters physio Clive Goodyear was quickly becoming the busiest man on the park. Oldfield and McLaren both missed good opportunities to get Luton back in front before, on the stroke of half time, Douglas got himself booked for a kick on Blaney. But in the second half the match really took off.

Warren Aspinall, looking more like a pudding than a football player, crashed a fearsome drive against Hatters' bar just before the hour.

But as the crowd drew breath Kelvin Davis launched a massive long kick upfield, new-found hero Rory Allen brought the ball down, sneaked between two defenders and rolled the ball into the net under the keeper.

Cue pitch invasion, as tens of Brentford supporters started piling into the Luton terraces looking for trouble.

Referee Mr Holsey had to stop play for four minutes as police and stewards chased sparring fans all round the pitch.

It wasn't long before the bad behaviour on the terraces was being matched on the pitch. Aspinall made a horrifying late challenge on Kelvin Davis which could have broken his leg, but was extremely lucky to escape with just a yellow card.

Moments after the flashpoint, players from both sides were involved in a huge punch-up which the referee was powerless to bring under control despite more than a minute of solid whistling.

Steve Davis found himself in the book for his trouble, but when Mr Holsey saw fit only to book Aspinall it was only through the grace of God that there wasn't a full-scale riot.

Had the situation been reversed, and a Luton player been guilty of such an awful challenge and remained on the pitch, one feels certain this match might have had to be abandoned because of

crowd trouble. Aspinall was immediately substituted – a wise decision in the circumstances – and Hatters started an early celebration with a rendition of "You're down, and you know you are."

With 15 minutes left, an Allen chip came close to giving Hatters an unassailable lead, but hit the top of the bar with keeper Kevin Dearden beaten all ends up.

A minute later, Kelvin Davis, who made a couple of marvellous saves during the afternoon, nearly gifted Brentford what would have been the season's most bizarre goal.

Substitute Kevin Dennis hit a hopeless 50-yard free-kick straight at the Luton keeper, but as the Brentford supporters hurled abuse at their man, Davis allowed the ball to bounce in front of him and run through his hands.

The race was then on and Davis had to sprint 10 yards back to his goalline and dive at full stretch to claw the ball around the post as the crowd fell about laughing.

And with 10 minutes left Brentford got the equaliser that their direct football had threatened.

Paul Watson curled in a left-foot free-kick and Hutchings sneaked in unchallenged to glance a header past Davis and into the net off the far post.

Griffin Park went wild and for the last 10 minutes Luton faced a terrific battle to keep revitalised Brentford at bay as they searched for the winner that they desperately needed to ease their relegation fears.

In stoppage time from five yards out and unmarked, Brentford skipper Bates somehow managed to put his header wide of the post much to Hatters' relief.

Team: K Davis, Alexander, Thomas, Waddock, S Davis, White, Evers, McLaren (Spring 87), Oldfield, Allen, Marshall (Douglas 14, Doherty 82).

Hero Allen in last fling

HATTERS hero Rory Allen will play Luton's final match at Kenilworth Road on Saturday.

The Spurs youngster, whose five goals in seven games have steered Luton to safety, has had his loan extended for an extra month.

Hatters boss Lennie Lawrence said after yesterday's match that as a 'gesture' to Allen and Luton fans, the club had agreed to pay Allen's wages for a whole month just so that he can play the final game.

Lawrence said: "As a gesture we will be paying Tottenham for an extra month when we will only have use of the player for one week, but we feel it is only fair that fans should be able to say thank-you to Rory for what he has done for this club in the short time here."

Lawrence also said that Luton are trying to sign Allen on a three-month loan for the beginning of next season, but Tottenham have not yet made a decision.

Lawrence rates Allen at £500,000, but it would be a massive coup if Luton were to