

Lads stunned by PAOK

30 November 2011

Our future in this season's Europa League is sitting on a knife-edge after an eventful 2-1 defeat at home against PAOK on Wednesday night.



The result means we're on seven points in Group A with PAOK top on 11 and Rubin Kazan second on 10 having beaten Shamrock Rovers 4-1 in the night's other match.

Suffice to day, a draw between PAOK and Rubin in their final match in Salonika and we'll be out.

Quite how we ended up with this rare defeat at the Lane is somewhat of a mystery.

We were camped in PAOK's half for the duration of the second half as we searched for the equaliser that would keep our Europa League destiny in our hands.

But it wasn't to be. Jermain Defoe had two goals disallowed - one clearly offside, the second a more unclear call - and although we knocked, knocked, knocked and knocked again, we couldn't find the breakthrough.

Ultimately though, we paid the price for a disappointing first 20 minutes where PAOK opened the scoring and as we came to terms with that shock, grabbed a second.

Harry Redknapp made plenty of changes again for Matchday Five of the competition.

Only Defoe and Aaron Lennon survived from Saturday's win at West Brom and they were joined by Luka Modric, back from illness.

This was an experienced side, however, including Heurelho Gomes in goal, Vedran Corluka, William Gallas, Seb Bassong, Steven Pienaar, Modric, Defoe and Lennon.

PAOK made the perfect start when Gallas lost possession and Giorgos Georgiadis crossed from the left for Dimitris Salpingidis to head home, six minutes on the clock.

Gomes saved from Fotakis and it was soon 2-0 as Athanasiadis slid in Salpingidis' cross.

We slowly clawed our way back into the game. Harry Kane fired wide, Defoe forced a fine save from Kostas Chalkias and we were then handed a lifeline.

Corluka's initial header was cleared off the line, Kane followed up and his goalbound shot was handled by Kostas Stafylidis.

Referee Mr H Bas Nijhuis pointed to the penalty spot and had little option but to show Stafylidis the red card.

Modric slotted home from 12 yards and it was 2-1, PAOK down to 10 men and a different game.

The pattern of the second half was set immediately as PAOK's 10 men dropped deeper and deeper - a man in black and white barely entered our half.

Defoe's first strike was a clear-cut offside decision, Kane headed wide from Rose's cross and Pienaar dragged his effort across goal.

Gareth Bale and Kyle Walker entered the fray for Rose and Pienaar as we pushed on with 20 minutes left.

The ball seemed camped in PAOK's half as Kane almost converted Walker's cross and Bale lashed just over.

Then the controversial call of the night. Contreras somehow kept Yago Falque's low drive out and was then injured as Defoe went for the follow up. As he was prone on the goal-line, play continued and the ball fell to Defoe who finished from 12 yards.

Not in an offside position, the goal was nevertheless disallowed with the only apparent reason if Defoe was penalised for the initial clash with Contreras.

We poured forward after that. Bassong's header hit Defoe, Falque drilled just wide and Defoe's looping header was touched over by Chalkias.

Our final chance arrived when Defoe was upended on the edge of the box. Bale's free-kick cleared the wall and bounced trickily in front of Chalkias - who held on, just like his teammates.

Spurs (4-4-2): Gomes; Corluka, Bassong, Gallas, Rose (Bale, 63); Lennon, Livermore, Pienaar (Walker, 68); Defoe, Kane (Falque, 72). Subs: Cudicini, Fredericks, Carroll, Townsend.

PAOK (4-2-3-1): Chalkias; Etto, Malezas, Contreras (Crillo, 81), Stafylidis; Garcia, Lazar (Arias, 84); Salpingidis, Fotakis, Georgiadis (Sznaucner, 63); Athanasiadis. Subs: Kresic, Balafas, Papazoglou, Ivic.

Goals: Spurs - Modric (penalty, 37). PAOK - Salpingidis (6), Athanasiadis (14).

Attendance: 26,224.

Referee: Mr H Bas Nijhuis (Holland).