

Luton's hopes slump despite bold rally

Hartlepool 1, Luton 0

LUTON'S hopes of offering a challenge to the Third Division leaders continue to be bedevilled by their disastrous away form. This was their seventh successive defeat and, despite a bold bid in the dying minutes they got what they deserved.

Hartlepool, badly needing the points to aid their struggle at the opposite end of the table, should have enjoyed a more clear-cut success. They were cleverer at creating chances but not so smart at using them.

Hartlepool got their goal after 11 minutes. Young's shot following a free kick by Bircumshaw, was scrambled out but Blowman, Hartlepool's leading marksman, was there to drive in the rebound through a forest of legs.

Most of Luton's forward enterprise came from French, who offered some excellent promptings from the right wing. The inside trio, however, were sadly unresponsive and Stevenson, who was making his debut at inside-left, never got into the game.

Luton were always well to the fore in the second half but their mediocre finishing continued to let them down. Hartlepool should have made the points safe midway through the half when Young, presented with an open goal from a throw in by Bircumshaw which bounced beyond Davies' reach, headed over.

Luton almost saved a point with a grandstand finish. Smith, in goal, was Hartlepool's saviour, brilliantly tipping over successive shots by Lewis and Branston.

Hartlepool: Smith; Bircumshaw, Goad; Sheridan, Gill, Parry; Blowman, Cummings, Thompson, Wright, Young.

Luton: Davie; Dougan, Bannister; Allen, Branston, Slough; French, Lewis, Buxton, Stevenson, Harrison.

Referee: D. C. Fieldsend (Sheffield).