

GRITTY TOWN GRAB A USEFUL POINT

GRIMSBY O LUTON TOWN O

On a night when they were putting the finishing touches to a £600,000 deal to sell Jurgen Sommer, Luton brought home another valuable away point from Blundell Park.

It was gritty rather than pretty with both attacks woefully short of fire power, with the result that Sommer's replacement, 18-year-old Kelvin Davis, was rarely tested.

The problem for the Hatters was that nor was Paul Crichton, at the other end.

Sommer's transfer to Loftus Road, was expected to be completed today. The New Yorker turned down a contract at Kenilworth Road in the summer, and wanted guaranteed first team football to boost his hopes of winning a regular place in the American team.

When the cash is banked, Luton intend to make a bid for Newcastle's number three Mike Hooper, who is available for £200,000. Newcastle have accepted Luton's offer, but Hooper refused to make the move when he was first asked about it a month ago.

But Westley believed he can changes the goalkeeper's mind, this time.

Hooper would have found it a doddle last night. In a low key first half the two sides cancelled each other out in just about every department.

The result was that although Kelvin Davis was slightly the busier goalkeeper neither he nor his opposite number was called upon to make a serious save in the first 45 minutes.

The Hatters looked the more promising attacking force in the early stages but when Linton and Guentchev combined down the right the final cross saw Gavin Johnson



Jurgen Sommer – on his way to Loftus Road as he seeks Premiership football in the company of Queens Park Rangers

making tracks from midfield, but putting his header straight at goalkeeper Paul Crichton.

Guentchev met a good cross from Richard Harvey also with a header but that too lacked real power and in the end drifted over the bar.

Harvey was finding plenty of space for overlapping runs down the left while on the other flank Graham Alexander, recalled in place of injured Ceri Hughes, made his tackles count but too often was inaccurate with his distribution.

Guentchev and Dwight Marshall, operating as a two man attack, did not get the quality service they needed from midfield.

When Grimsby attacked Neil Woods laid on a chance for Nicky Southall, but Marvin Johnson read the situation perfectly and got back to make a tremendous covering tackle.

Luton hearts were in mouths when Grimsby player-manager Brian Laws tried to inject a little more attacking power into the proceedings.

He stormed forward from his right back slot, and fired in a fierce drive.

It came from the sort of position from

which Gary Parker scored Leicester's equaliser at Kenilworth Road on Saturday. On that occasion a deflection off Tony Thorpe saw the shot hit the net, but last night James was highly relieved when his deflection from Laws sent the ball spinning inches wide of the post.

Gavin Johnson had a run at a retreating Grimsby defence, but smashed his shot along way over the bar from about 25 yards.

Guentchev was a little closer with a curling shot from the edge of the box, but that too was wide of the target.

Skipper Steve Davis, looking as comfortable as ever at the back, did his best to get the attack moving, but for the most part Grimsby were looking just as comfortable as the Hatters rearguard was at the other end.

Grimsby increased the tempo in the second half and Luton were relieved to see a cross shot by Woods flash narrowly wide of the far post.

The Hatters replied with Gavin Johnson seeing a shot charged down after a corner was half cleared to him on the edge of the box.

The most audacious scoring attempt of the night was made by Laws. Kelvin Davis was way out of his goal to try to hack the ball clear, but only put it to the Grimsby player-boss. Laws sized up the situation in a trice and with Davis hopelessly out of position tried a 40-yard lob which flew a yard wide of a post.

LUTON: K Davis; James, S Davis, M Johnson; Linton, Alexander, G Johnson, Harvey; Oldfield, Guentchev, Marshall; subs Taylor, Peake, Woodsford

GRIMSBY: Crichton; Laws; Handyside, Beaver; Croft; Dobbin, Groves, Shakespeare, Southall; Woods, Livingstone; subs Jewell, Frickling, Pearcey.

Referee: Bill Burns of Scarborough.

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