

Still no stopping the super Hatters

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Swindon Town 1
Luton Town 3

A SILKY smooth Hatters performance gave Joe Kinnear four wins in five games.

On a beautiful surface, the Hatters slipped into a slick passing game only to concede the opening goal to the Robins.

But goals from Kevin Rowland, Emerson Boyce and superb Lee Mansell, in injury time, clinched a superb win.

Swindon boss and ex-Hatter Andy King threw on two extra strikers to try achieve the breakthrough but the defence held firm.

Paul McLaren returned after fully two months on the injury list to put in a masterly performance at the heart of the defence.

From the start, Luton looked much more up for a fight than the Robins, who put in the sort of frightened home performance that the town were showing earlier in the season.

Perhaps encouraged by an excellent playing surface after Tuesday's defeat on Walsall's cowfield, the Hatters slipped easily into a dominant passing game that had Swindon on the back foot.

McLaren held his head after eight minutes when he was presented with a golden chance from a well-worked short corner move by Matthew Spring and Rowland but he shot straight at Steve Mildenhall.

Swindon fielded the dangerous Michael Reddy, scorer of four goals in seven games since he joined on loan from Sunderland, and he carved out three good opportunities for himself.

Mark Ovendale smartly saved the first, a deflection diverted his second half inches wide and he really should have opened the scoring with the third.

He beat the offside trap close to halfway, took the ball on down the inside left channel and when Ovendale advanced, he dragged his shot inches wide of the far post.

But on 38 minutes Swindon did go in front. Ovendale came out to collect a routine high ball on his six yard line only to drop it slap on Gary Alexander's head. He simply had to let it bounce off him into the empty goal.

To their credit Hatters heads did not drop and



■ Supersub, super goal: Lee Mansell makes it safe with Luton's third in injury time

they hit back within three minutes to go into the break all square.

Boyce was up from the back, but appeared reluctant to move on to a ball down the right. However he overcame his temerity and produced a terrific centre for Rowland to score with a header.

Luton played into a low sun in the second that certainly inconvenienced Ovendale.

Fortunately, his defence protected him brilliantly and he only had one save to make in the second half, a good one from a Reddy header.

By then his opposite number had been forced to make a wonderful reaction save from substitute Mark Stein's point-blank header.

But the Town did take the lead through Emerson Boyce on 70 minutes.

After a period of Swindon pressure, Liam George fastened on to a long Ovendale kick to win a free kick on the left wing.

Rowland delivered a great curling ball across the face of goal and Boyce did the rest with an accurate header.

With the Town defence operating heroically to hang on to their lead, the Hatters made it safe

with seconds to play.

George looked suspiciously offside in the build-up but Thomson, on the for the substituted substitute Stein, forced the 'keeper to block his shot and young Mansell was on hand to slide the ball into the net for his fourth goal in six games.

Luton Town: Ovendale, Boyce, McLaren, Dryden, Helin, Taylor, Spring, Locke (Mansell 65), Rowland, Fotiadis (Stein 13, Thomson 85), George.

Subs not used: Abbey, Stirling.

Attendance: 7,160.

Luton Man of the Match: Paul McLaren.



□ Happy Hatters: Manager Joe Kinnear milks the applause, while Liam George congratulates Keith Rowland on the opening goal