

Happy Mike pays price for victory

HATTERS chairman Mike Watson-Challis will be a happy man this week even if he is still counting the cost of his club's opening day victory at Carlisle.

Second-half goals by new boys Paul Hughes and Carl Griffiths secured a deserved 2-0 win at Brunton Park on Saturday.

The result left Luton lying third in the first league table of the season and, under Joe Kinnear's new bonus scheme, that means the players will be financially rewarded for occupying a promotion spot.

Watson-Challis' wallet may also be hit by a considerable mobile phone bill. Kinnear was banished to the stands for Saturday's Cumbria clash after his FA reprimand.

But the Hatters boss was in constant communication with his number two Mick Harford during the game, engaging in conversations that have probably sent Vodafone profits soaring.

Watson-Challis, though, will no doubt feel the extra costs are a small price to pay if, after the disappointments of his first season as the club's owner, his fourth manager can mount a successful promotion bid from Division Three.

Saturday's result provided optimism for both the chairman and the sizeable army of supporters who made the long trip even if it was against a Carlisle side who look destined to fulfil their role, once more, as the Football League's perennial strugglers.

Trips to Hull, Bristol Rovers and Rushden should give a sterner indication of the Hatters' promotion credentials.

Carlisle's new manager might be the brother of ex-world boxing champion Steve Collins, but Roddy

Collins' new charges displayed little of his famous sibling's punch in front of goal.

Hatters' new keeper Carl Emberson only had two saves to make all afternoon, although he was well protected by a defence in which fellow debutant Russell Perrett enjoyed a solid display.

Teenage striker Jonny Allen was closest to finding the net for Carlisle when his 24th-minute curling effort brushed the top of Emberson's net.

Luton's attacking threat was equally as poor before the break. Kinnear's men failed to muster a single goal attempt - on target or off target - in a first-half that was severely lacking in flair.

But the second-half transformation was instant with the Hatters taking the lead just 28 seconds after the restart.

Matthew Taylor flicked a perfectly-weighted ball over the home defence with the outside of his boot for Lee Mansell to collect.

match facts

CARLISLE UNITED 0 LUTON 2

● **CARLISLE UNITED:** Luke Weaver, Lee Maddison, Stuart Whitehead (Peter Murphy, 58), David Morley, Steve Soley, Steve Halliday, Mark Thurstan (Scot Willis, 84), Tony Hopper, Mark Winstanley, Jonny Allan (Ian Stevens, 69), Lee Andrews.

● **HATTERS:** Carl Emberson, Emmerson Boyce, Russell Perrett, Aaron Skelton, Marvin Johnson (Adam Locke, 54), Lee Mansell (Stuart Douglas, 72), Paul Hughes, Kevin Nicholls, Matthew Taylor, Steve Howard, Carl Griffiths (Andy Fotiadis, 90). Not used: Ward, Dryden.

● **Shots on target:** Carlisle 2, Luton 6.

● **Off target:** Carlisle 5, Luton 0.

● **Corners:** Carlisle 4, Luton 2.

● **Referee:** M Clattenburg.

● **Top Hatter:** Matthew Taylor - dangerous.

Mansell then drove into the penalty box before sending a firmly-driven low cross into the six-yard box where Hughes was waiting to open his Hatters account with a simple tap-in goal.

Steve Howard forced Luke Weaver into a low save five minutes later before Griffiths doubled the advantage with a goal contrived on the Wimbledon training ground let alone that of Luton.

Taylor, whose set-piece delivery was excellent throughout the match, sent an inswinging free-kick to the far post where Perrett had escaped the attentions of his markers.

The former Portsmouth and Cardiff defender then headed across goal where poacher Griffiths nodded the ball into an open net from close range.

It was an effort reminiscent of so many Robbie Earle goals from Kinnear's Wimbledon teams down the years and put the game beyond a limited Carlisle team.



GOAL-DEN BOY: Carl Griffiths celebrates his first goal for Luton. Picture: GARETH OWEN

Kinnear's verdict



“We were a bit apprehensive in the first-half because we did not know too much about their side. We paid them far too much respect and were not positive enough going forward. We needed to be more adventurous and scored before I had time to sit down

after the break. We defended exceptionally well after the goals, kept the ball well and played well within ourselves. It was a well-worked performance rather than an impressive one. Lot of good things came out of it but still room for improvement.”



IMPRESSED: Paul Hughes.

Joe chasing four more

NEW signings Paul Hughes and Russell Perrett both impressed on their debuts at Carlisle but Joe Kinnear insists he is still four players short of his ideal squad.

Kinnear signed seven players over the summer and only Adrian Forbes' groin strain prevented the Hatters boss from fielding all his new players in Saturday's line-up.

But Kinnear's transfer market activity is not over yet. The Hatters manager said: "I honestly believe we are 50 or 60 per cent better off than last season but I'm still talking to players and believe we are four players short of an ideal squad. If we stay injury free and I

get the players here that I want then I think we will be as good as anything in Division Three.

"I want two good players in every position but there's already more buzz in a happy dressing room. The place was all over the shop when I came here with not enough people pulling in the right direction with me."

Perrett and Hughes were both free transfer captures for Kinnear. Ex-Portsmouth defender Perrett has joined the Hatters from Cardiff after turning down Division Two clubs Bournemouth and Wycombe and has signed a three-year deal.

Hughes, who played under

Glenn Hoddle for Chelsea and Southampton, has signed a three-month deal after missing the whole of last season through injury.

But Kinnear has not ruled out a permanent deal for the 25-year-old midfielder in November, saying: "He ripped his groin and was out for nine months so that's the reason we've given him three months not because of his ability. He's got a good pedigree and in training he's looked fit and well."

Ex-Hatter Chris Willmott, now at Wimbledon, is on Kinnear's hit-list and Sunderland striker Michael Reddy is believed to have been targeted.