

Hatters in flying start

01/02

Carlisle 0 Luton Town 2

THE Hatters started their first campaign in the bottom division for over 30 years with an easy win yesterday.

Second half goals from Paul Hughes and Carl Griffiths, both making their debuts, saw the Town leave Cumbria with three comfortable points from a club in disarray.

The football League equivalent of a pub team, without an active manager for almost all the summer, a fans' boycott in place and big problems in the boardroom, showed practically no attacking ambition throughout. Their only effort on target came as late as the 87th, a free kick driven straight at Carl Emberson.

A new-look Luton lined up with Friday's

signing Russell Perrett in central defence alongside team skipper Aaron Skelton and a strong midfield of Lee Mansell, Kevin Nicholls, Paul Hughes and Matthew Taylor.

The first half was a dire affair with Carlisle playing only one man up front and the Hatters' moves either misfiring or breaking down against a mass defence.

New boy Perrett, a free transfer from Cardiff, was handed a three year contract on Friday and had a great chance of a debut goal within five minutes, but he slipped when totally unmarked from Taylor's inswinging freekick and the chance was gone.

Griffiths looked as if he had been pushed in the back going for an Emmerson Boyce cross, but the referee wasn't interested in his penalty appeal.

The nearest they came to a goal was Jonny Allen's long range shot skimming the crossbar with Emberson beaten.

If Luton thought they only had to turn up to get the win they were surely put right by Joe Kinnear and Mick Harford during the interval.

They came out firing on all cylinders and scored with a neat move within 28 seconds of the restart.

Mansell, popping on the wrong wing, was well found with a ball over the top of the fullback by Taylor. Mansell's driven cross took out 'keeper Luke Weaver and Hughes smashed a right footer into the roof of the net from three yards out.

Steve Howard then got into the act with a crisp shot on the turn towards the bottom corner but Weaver made a splendid save and Taylor then got in a gorgeous cross but nobody could get a touch.

When Nicholls was brought down in full flight by Lee Maddison, Taylor curled in a 57th minute cross beyond the far post where Perrett was waiting. He headed back beautifully for Griffiths, his goal poaching instincts intact, to net from a yard.

Two down, United did raise their game a little but there was nothing to trouble Emberson. Skelton and Perrett dealt easily with anything that came their way.

Chairman Mao once said: "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."

This round trip of over 600 miles saw the Hatters make a satisfactory start on the road back to the Second Division, but Luton fans should remember there are still another 45 steps – a long, long way to go.

Luton Town: Emberson, Boyce, Skelton, Perrett, Johnson (Locke 53), Mansell (Douglas 72), Nicholls, Hughes, Taylor, Griffiths (Fotiadis 89), Howard.

Subs Not Used: Dryden, Ward (GK).

Attendance: 4,432

Luton Man of the Match: Matthew Taylor.



■ Action from Carlisle. Above: Lee Mansell attempts a block. Bottom left: Carl Emberson joins in a post-match celebration after the 2-0 win Bottom right: Steve Howard in the thick of the action

