

Embers did not need to turn up

LUTON TOWN could have played without a goalkeeper against Swansea City on Saturday and still taken maximum points.

The Hatters won 3-0 in a ridiculously one-sided contest and should have enjoyed a greater margin of victory.

Swansea scored seven goals against the Hatters in two matches last season but could not muster a single shot on target in Saturday's match.

And afterwards home boss Joe Kinnear said: "Carl Emberson could have fallen asleep and it would not have mattered. It was his quietest game of the season."

Swansea are a clearly a club in turmoil. Players have been sacked and others asked to take pay cuts as the cash-strapped club struggles to meet its wage bill.

Away supporters called for the departure of chairman Tony Petty on Saturday, but whether their players would have fared better without the off-field uncertainty is doubtful.

The Hatters looked a class above their Welsh visitors and goals from Dean Crowe, Russell Perrett and super-sub Adrian Forbes did not reflect the home side's level of superiority.

Crowe terrorised the Swansea defence with his pace before limping out of the action just 12 minutes after opening the scoring.

Matthew Spring, who was the only player in Saturday's starting line-up that was picked by Kinnear for his first home game as Hatters manager in February against Swansea, dominated the midfield and Frenchman Jean-Louis Valois was once more a menace at corners and free-kicks.

Club captain Aaron Skelton also made an assured return after injury at right-back, nullifying the threat of on-loan Reading winger Nathan Tyson, who was comfortably Swansea's best player.

Crowe almost netted on 11 minutes when his ambitious 35-yard lob beat stranded Swansea keeper Roger Freestone but bounced wide.

Steve Howard's close-range header then lacked the power to beat Freestone before Crowe broke the deadlock on 22 minutes. Ahmet Brkovic, who enjoyed his best game in a Hatters shirt, released Crowe on the left and the speedy striker bore down on goal before sending a confident side-footed shot into Freestone's bottom corner.

Crowe looks an absolute snip on a free transfer from Stoke and shaved the post

Joe verdict



It was a thoroughly deserved victory. We carved out a fair amount of opportunities but I'll settle for three goals and a clean sheet. We dominated in nearly every position and it was a really good team performance. It could have been six or seven because Steve Howard and Chris Coyne both missed sitters. But I do not want to be too critical because we played exceptionally well and they could not get the ball off us.

moments later when he latched on to a quickly-taken Spring free-kick.

Howard then sent a rising drive just over Freestone's crossbar and centre-back Chris Coyne missed the target from two yards after a perfectly-delivered Valois free-kick.

The confident Crowe sadly departed on 34 minutes after twisting an ankle, but his replacement Forbes was soon sprinting clear of the visitors' defence, only to be denied by Freestone. Swansea's only chance of the half came in

stoppage time when Ryan Casey's curling effort brushed the top of the net. Luton continued to dominate after the break and Valois dragged a shot wide after another excellent pass by Spring seconds after the restart.

Brkovic then went close to scoring his first Hatters goal with a well-struck deflected volley after more good work from Spring and Valois.

The impressive pair combined again on 54 minutes to create the chance for Perrett to double his side's lead.

Spring came short to receive Valois' quickly-taken corner before passing back to the Frenchman, whose dangerous low cross saw Perrett direct the ball in at the near post despite an attempted save by Freestone.

Valois and Spring's communication potential may be limited by language barriers but, on Saturday, they enjoyed an almost telepathic understanding and were also instrumental in the Hatters' third goal.

This time, Valois used a free-kick to nudge the ball square for Spring and the 21-year-old midfielder's perfectly-flighted cross was headed in by Forbes from six yards.

It was Forbes' third goal for the Hatters and all of them have come after climbing off the subs bench.

The former Norwich winger was preferred to fit-again Andrew Fotiadis as an out-and-out striker to replace crooked Crowe and Kinnear later said he made the decision because "Forbes is a better player".

Swansea's best chance of the game saw sub Steve Watkin steer the ball wide from close range on 62 minutes, but the Hatters could have made the scoreline more emphatic with Valois hitting the post and Coyne's header forcing a point-blank save from Freestone.



SUPER-SUB: Adrian Forbes scores his third goal for the Hatters in Saturday's 3-0 victory against Swansea. All three Forbes goals have come after climbing off the subs bench but he could now start at Mansfield. Picture: JANE SHERLOCK

playerwatch

MIDFIELD STAR MATTHEW SPRING

OUR super new series Player Watch continues this week with a look at midfield dynamo Matthew Spring. He came under the microscope in Saturday's clash with Swansea.

- Time on pitch: 90 mins
- Shots on target: 1
- Shots off target: 2
- Blocked shots: 0
- Passes to own player: 27
- Passes to opposition: 4
- Crosses to own player: 1
- Crosses to opposition: 0
- Pass completion rate: 87.5 per cent
- Headers: 2
- Tackles: 7
- Clearances, blocks and interceptions: 10
- Dribble ball retained: 0
- Dribble ball lost: 2
- Dribble completion rate: 0 per cent
- Fouls: 2
- Offsides: 0

● **FINAL VERDICT:** Spring, pictured during Saturday's match, enjoyed an immaculate match as his excellent pass completion rate indicates. The 21-year-old midfielder only hit four stray passes all afternoon and claimed an assist in Adrian Forbes' goal, as well as having a hand in Russell Perrett's second-half strike.

matchfacts

● **HATTERS:** Carl Emberson, Aaron Skelton, Russell Perrett, Chris Coyne, Ian Hillier, Ahmet Brkovic, Kevin Nicholls, Matthew Spring, Jean-Louis Valois, Steve Howard (Andrew Fotiadis, 82), Dean Crowe (Adrian Forbes, 34). Subs not used: Mark Ovendale, Peter Holmes, Richard Dryden.

● **SWANSEA:** Roger Freestone, Gareth Phillips, Michael Howard, Nell Sharp (Jason Smith, 73), Nick Cusack, Matthew Bound, Chris Todd, John Williams, Nathan Tyson, Ryan Casey (Steve Watkin, 46), Jon Coates (Damien Lacey, 58).

- Shots on target: Luton 9 Swansea 0.
- Off target: Luton 11 Swansea 7.
- Corners: Luton 11 Swansea 2.
- Referee: Paul Durkin (Dorset).
- Top Hatter: Spring — excellent.



Super-sub Forbes is ready to start now

SUPER-SUBSTITUTE Adrian Forbes will start Saturday's game at Mansfield if Dean Crowe is ruled out through injury.

Forbes, 22, has scored three goals after coming off the bench but he is expected to be handed an opportunity to shine from the start at Field Mill if Crowe misses the trip.

Hatters boss Joe Kinnear said: "I'd play him up front straight away before Andrew Fotiadis, Liam George and Peter Thomson."

"He's best known as a winger but he can play anywhere along the front line."

Stuart Douglas, who has been loaned out to Oxford United with the view to a permanent deal, came on for the last 15 minutes of Saturday's 1-0 victory at Hartlepool.

Hatters juniors beat Peterborough 3-0 on Saturday thanks to Matthew Judge's brace and a John Carroll goal.

The reserve match with Reading, scheduled for this afternoon (Wednesday) has been called off.

Places are still available for Town On Tour coaches travelling to Mansfield and can be reserved at the club shop.