

It's misery!

02/03

BLACKPOOL 5 LUTON TOWN 2

DAVE FLETT reports from
Bloomfield Road

LUTON Town's miserable start to the new season continued at Blackpool last night.

The Hatters are still looking for their first point of the new campaign and have already conceded eight goals in their first two matches.

Striker Steve Howard had headed the Hatters into an early lead and Tony Thorpe also netted but Blackpool, like Peterborough on Saturday, deserved maximum points after a superior display.

Hatters' boss Joe Kinnear had made three changes from the side that lost 3-2 to Posh.

Russell Perrett, nursing an ankle injury, and Steve Robinson dropped to the bench, while David Bayliss and Ahmet Brkovic both made the starting line-up, with Peter Holmes replacing Robbie Winters, who has left to go on trial at Oldham.

Thorpe started brightly for the Hatters and his fifth minute shot from Brkovic's cross was blocked by Simon Grayson.

The visitors went ahead from the subsequent corner when Steve Howard, Division Three's top scorer last season, opened his account for the current campaign. Howard rose unchallenged to head in Kevin Nicholls' flag-kick from six yards.

But Blackpool's response was swift, with John Hills curling a low free-kick wide on nine minutes.

And the Seaside's were level

match facts

BLACKPOOL: Phil Barnes, Simon Grayson, Tommy Jaszczun, Richie Wellens, Peter Clarke, Paul Dalglish, John Hills, Keith Southern, Martin Bullock, Richard Walker (sub 64 mins, Scott Taylor), Chris Clarke.

Other subs: M Theoklitos, John O'Kane, Ian Hughes, Lee Collins.

LUTON TOWN: Carl Emberson, Alan Neilson (sub Emmerson Boyce, 30 mins), David Bayliss, Chris Coyne, Alan Kimble, Ahmet Brkovic, Kevin Nicholls, Matthew Spring (sub 85 mins, Andrew Fotladis), Peter Holmes (sub 30 mins, Dean Crowe), Steve Howard, Tony Thorpe.

Other subs: Russell Perrett, Steve Robinson.

REFEREE: M Clattenburg.

ATTENDANCE: 6,377.

TOP HATTER: Ahmet Brkovic.

10 minutes later when Peter Clarke had the luxury of a poor touch in the Hatters penalty box after Richie Wellens' cross but still had the space to turn and shoot past Carl Emberson.

Hills motored past a lethargic Alan Neilson repeatedly during the opening exchanges and one such raid led to Blackpool's second goal on 23 minutes.

The Blackpool midfielder forced a corner that was taken by Wellens and flicked on by Chris Clarke for Peter Clarke to head in his second at the far post.

Martin Bullock waltzed through the Hatters' midfield and sent a low 20-yard shot narrowly wide moments later and a disgusted Kinnear made a double substitution after 30 minutes.

Neilson and Holmes were hauled off, with Emmerson

Boyce and Dean Crowe taking their places. Crowe was introduced on to the left-wing and his low 36th minute shot forced home keeper Phil Barnes to make his first save of the night.

Blackpool's summer signing Paul Dalglish, son of ex-Liverpool and Scotland legend Kenny, almost added to the Hatters' first-half woe when his clever 30-yard chip beat Emberson but bounced back off the crossbar.

Crowe was pushed up alongside Howard and Thorpe to form a three-pronged strike force for the second-half and saw a deflected shot go wide on 54 minutes.

Bullock's 30-yard drive forced a low save from Emberson on 62 minutes but Blackpool scored a third goal from substitute Scott Taylor's first touch of the match.

Taylor collected a cleverly-cushioned header by Dalglish on 65 minutes before beating Emberson with a low shot into the bottom corner from 15 yards.

Howard sent a diving header wide from Nicholls' right-wing free-kick four minutes later before striking partner Thorpe reduced the deficit on 71 minutes.

The Hatters striker headed in after Brkovic's deep cross to the far post.

But Blackpool made the points safe on 79 minutes when they carved open the Hatters defence with a slick passing move that ended with a simple tap-in for Dalglish.

Taylor then rubbed salt into the wound by adding a fifth goal in injury time.



FOILED: This last-ditch Peterborough tackle stopped Steve Howard scoring on Saturday but he struck after just six minutes at Blackpool. Picture: JANE SHERLOCK