



It's blankety blank for Hatters again

02/03

THE Hatters held on for a point in a messy game at Griffin Park – their third clean sheet in a row.

There were few chances for either side, although both the post and the Hatters have now gone three games unbeaten.

It was a hard fought point for the Hatters which they just about deserved for at least trying to play constructive football.

Luton started 20 places below Brentford in Division Two. Yet in a decidedly tense first half, Brentford, who started the day as league leaders, did little to show they will be there come May.

Manager Joe Kinnear named the same side that started against Chesterfield last Saturday, keeping faith with the striking partnership of Steve Howard and Dean Crowe, leaving summer signing Tony Thorpe to sit it out on the bench again.

Neither side imposed themselves in the first half, which went by in a blur of half chances and misplaced passes.

In the opening exchanges, Luton fared well although contained in their own half, they were rarely threatened to be stung by the Bees.

Paul Hughes was industrious in midfield and both Emmerson Boyce and Sol Davis made progress down the flanks.

Luton's first scare came on 14 minutes when a corner reached Eddie Hutchinson, who glanced his near-post header on to the woodwork and wide.

From then on Brentford had control for the rest of the half but Luton coped well and soaked up the pressure.

On 37 minutes Howard hit the bar with a powerful header in Luton's first telling attack of the game.

Great link-up play down the right wing between Boyce and Crowe resulted in Boyce's cross finding the bustling striker, who came close to breaking the deadlock.

After a lacklustre first half, Hatters came out after the break looking keen to take all three points.

Kinnear made no changes in personnel but had clearly galvanised his side with his team talk as Luton assumed control.

Boyce, in particular, made a series of decent runs and Crowe looked lively up front.

But for all Luton's early promise, all they could muster was a Hughes long shot that went wide of the target on 57 minutes.

The Hatters lost their way but Brentford were just as ineffectual and it wasn't until the 70th minute that the spectators saw some belated action.



■ Impressive: Dean Crowe up front for the Hatters at Griffin Park

It was a huge let-off for Luton as a deep cross from the Bees' left back Ijah Anderson ricocheted around the six yard box before falling to striker Mark McCammon, who fluffed his shot in front of goal, enabling Ben Roberts to clear the danger.

The remaining 20 minutes petered out as Kinnear replaced Ahmet Brkovic with Steve Robinson but the change did little to increase Luton's potency.

Nevertheless the point enabled the Hatters to build on last week's convincing win over Chesterfield.

Although the Hatters kept their second successive away clean sheet (the first was at Cardiff), Kinnear admitted there was precious little entertainment value.

"We have had to scrap this afternoon and we came here with our sleeves rolled up," said the Hatters boss.

"Most of my players have gone home with headaches as the ball was up in the air so much.

"It must have been a dreadful game to watch but we kept another clean sheet on the road which is a plus."



MATCH FACTS



LUTON TOWN (4-4-2): Roberts; Boyce, Bayliss, Perrett, Davis; Brkovic (Robinson 64m), Nicholls, Spring, Hughes (Neilson 84m); Crowe, Howard
Subs (not used): Emberson, Coyne, Thorpe

Referee: Mr D Pugh

GOALSCORERS

Luton: –
 Brentford: –

GOAL ATTEMPTS

Luton: 3
 Brentford: 6

CORNERS

Luton: 6
 Brentford: 15

BOOKINGS

Luton: Howard (25m), Perrett (61m)

ATTENDANCE: 7,145

HATTERS' STAR MAN: PAUL HUGHES

Combative in midfield

Nationwide Div Two results

Blackpool	3	Tranmere	0
Brentford	0	LUTON	0
Colchester	1	Cheltenham	1
Crewe	0	Chesterfield	0
Huddersfield	1	Barnsley	0
Mansfield	0	QPR	4
Notts County	1	Oldham	3
Swindon	1	Port Vale	2
Wigan	3	Wycombe	0

How they stand

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Wigan	7	5	0	2	12	4	15
Brentford	7	4	3	0	9	3	15
Plymouth	6	4	1	1	13	9	13
Bristol City	7	4	0	3	10	5	12
Crewe	7	3	3	1	10	5	12
Blackpool	7	3	3	1	9	4	12
QPR	7	3	2	2	13	9	11
Cardiff	6	3	2	1	8	5	11
Stockport	6	3	2	1	5	2	11
Oldham	7	3	2	2	7	5	11
Colchester	7	3	2	2	5	5	11
Chesterfield	7	3	1	3	11	11	10
Tranmere	7	3	1	3	8	10	10
Wycombe	7	2	3	2	11	12	9
Port Vale	7	3	0	4	7	11	9
Barnsley	7	2	2	3	6	8	8
Huddersfield	7	2	2	3	5	7	8
Northampton	7	2	2	3	5	11	8
Swindon	7	2	1	4	9	10	7
Notts County	7	1	4	2	7	8	7
Luton	7	1	2	4	10	13	5
Mansfield	7	1	1	5	9	22	4
Cheltenham	7	0	3	4	4	9	3
Peterborough	6	1	0	5	3	8	3



■ On the ball: Hatters skipper Kevin Nicholls at Brentford yesterday