

Nicholls goal proves too little too late

03/04

Luton Town 1
Nicholls (85 pen)

Grimsby Town 2
Anderson (34)
Boulding (77)

Half-time: 0-1 Attendance: 5,827

Luton		Grimsby
48	Possession %	52
6	Corners	3
1	Yellow	2
0	Red	0
5	Shots On Target	6
6	Shots Off Target	1

LUTON: Beckwith 6, Neilson 6, Coyne 6, Boyce 6, Foley 6, Spring 6 (Brkovic 80), Nicholls 6, Pitt 6, Hughes 6, Howard 6, McSheffrey 6 (Crowe 66). **Subs not used:** Bayliss, Davis, Brill. **Booked:** McSheffrey.

GRIMSBY: Davison 6, Barnard 6, Ford 5, Crane 6, Cas 7 (Groves 81), Campbell 7, Hamilton 7, Anderson 8 (Mansaram 90), Crowe 7, Boulding 8, Ten Heuvel 7 (Rowan 57). **Subs not used:** Pettinger, Edwards. **Booked:** Crane, Ten Heuvel.

NEXT FIXTURES

Brighton (a) 25/08 Wycombe (h) 25/08

BY PAUL WALKER

LUTON manager Mike Newell blamed the club's off-field problems after his side lost their 100 per cent record to Grimsby at Kenilworth Road.

The club is in receivership with debts of £11million, and players have been asked to take a pay cut.

Luton missed striker Tony Thorpe who left for QPR this week in response to wage cuts but manager Newell thinks the problems go far deeper than that.

He said: "This is the first time I have seen what is going on at the club affect our players.

"Losing Thorpe hasn't helped but the situation has been dragging on and it showed on the pitch. We had plenty of the ball but didn't go that extra couple of yards to make things happen. We looked as though we were feeling sorry for ourselves."

Grimsby earned their first win of the season by being uncompromising in defence

and sharper than Luton in attack. Both goalkeepers had a fairly easy afternoon.

"Iain Anderson produced the first on-target shot of the match after 34 minutes, an expert strike to put Grimsby ahead.

They scarcely deserved it at the time but their performance improved.

Stuart Campbell and Marcel Cas both went close to extending the lead before Michael Boulding effectively settled the match after 77 minutes with a header from a right-wing centre by Cas.

Luton stirred themselves for a late effort. Having several penalty appeals turned down earlier they struck lucky in the 84th minute when Simon Ford tangled with Dean Crowe. Kevin Nicholls converted but it was too late to save the Hatters.

Grimsby manager Paul Groves said: "I'm very pleased for our supporters and absolutely delighted for the players. In the other games this season they didn't get the rewards they should have got but they did today.

"Luton put on a bit of pressure in the second half but didn't really trouble our goalkeeper, although at times we sat back a little too much and we panicked a little bit. But we made it difficult for Luton and they didn't have many chances."

Newell found some consolation in the debut 22-year-old striker Gary McSheffrey. Luton are working under a Football League transfer embargo but with a tiny squad were allowed to recruit McSheffrey on loan from Coventry.

"I'm happy with the way he started," said Newell. "But the situation is hardly ideal, bringing in a new lad when a few team-mates are not at the races."