

Supermac!

LUTON TOWN 2 PORT VALE 0

ANDY MacKENZIE reports
from Kenilworth Road

HATTERS downed table-topping Port Vale thanks to another strike from hot-shot loan signing Gary McSheffrey and a second from whiz-kid Kevin Foley.

Vale, managed by ex-Luton captain and fans' favourite Brian Horton, went into the Kenilworth Road match as surprise Division Two leaders.

But McSheffrey's third strike in four games and Foley's first league goal for the Hatters sent the Valiants home empty-handed.

Hatters handed a first start to the season to Adrian Forbes in place of new non-contract signing Enoch Showunmi, who dropped to the bench.

Defender David Bayliss shrugged off a hip and lower back injury sustained in Saturday's defeat at Plymouth to return to the starting line-up.

Port Vale were unchanged from their weekend victory over Barnsley.

Luton could have taken the lead after just 30 seconds.

A poor clearance from Vale skipper Sam Collins fell to Kevin Foley, who immediately fed Matthew Spring in the penalty area. From 10 yards out the midfielder saw his low shot pushed around the post by Dean Delaney.

But Vale soon showed that they were in their lofty league

match facts

LUTON TOWN: Robert Beckwith, Emmerson Boyce, David Bayliss, Chris Coyne, Sol Davis, Kevin Foley, Matthew Spring, Paul Hughes, Ahmet Brkovic, Gary McSheffrey, Adrian Forbes. Subs: Enoch Showunmi, Dean Crowe, Lee Mansell, Dean Brill, Ian Hillier.

PORT VALE: Dean Delaney, George Pilkington, Andreas Lipa, Sam Collins, Steve Brooker, Steve McPhee, Mark Boyd, Billy Paynter, Adrian Littlejohn, Liam Burns, Ryan Brown. Subs: Neil Brisco, Levi Reid, Ian Armstrong, Steve Rowland, Jonathan Brain.

REFEREE: Joe Ross (London).

ATTENDANCE: 5,079.

position for good reason with a series of attacks on the Luton goal.

After threatening with a low cross after six minutes, 19-year-old striker Billy Paynter then showed great strength to set up Mark Boyd on the edge of the penalty area in the 10th minute.

From 25 yards out the midfielder's sweetly-struck shot cannoned back off the Luton crossbar, with Robert Beckwith well beaten.

Three minutes later the home fans thought Luton had taken the lead when Spring latched on to Ahmet Brkovic's pass and curled home a beautifully-struck right-foot shot from 20 yards. But the effort was disallowed for offside.

As the Hatters questioned the decision, Vale attacked down the right and Beckwith had to be

alert to turn George Pilkington's low drive around his right-hand post.

Vale were forced into an early change when centre-half Liam Burns had to be stretchered off after crashing into empty seating behind the Oak Road goal in the 25th minute.

And the Hatters took advantage of Vale's enforced defensive change in the 31st minute.

Foley helped a long ball into McSheffrey's path and the 21-year-old's instant turn and shot from 25 yards flew inside Delaney's left-hand post for his third goal in four games.

Ex-Watford forward Steve Brooker almost equalised after 38 minutes when his header from Steve McPhee's right-wing cross bounced just over.

Two minutes before half-time a delightful dummy from McSheffrey allowed Brkovic a clear run into the penalty area but the Croat blasted wastefully wide.

Luton laid siege to the Vale goal after the break with Forbes and Spring both forcing excellent saves from Delaney, but the Hatters had referee Joe Ross to thank for their second goal.

Vale midfielder Boyd ran into the official, allowing Spring to pick out Foley and the youngster made no mistake with just the goalkeeper to beat.

Showunmi then made his home league debut, coming on for the lively-looking Forbes in the 82nd minute.

McSheffrey then rattled the woodwork with a 30-yard free-kick. Foley was named man-of-the-match.



SUPERMAC: Gary McSheffrey in the thick of the action for Hatters at Kenilworth Road last night before firing them in front.
Picture: JANE SHERLOCK