

It's over!



ON THE CHASE: Dean Crowe in the thick of the action during last night's LDV Vans Trophy Southern Area quarter-final at Southend. Picture: GARETH OWEN

SOUTHEND UNITED 3 LUTON TOWN 0

ANDY MacKENZIE reports
from Roots Hall

LUTON Town crashed out of the LDV Vans Trophy after this miserable performance at Third Division Southend last night.

The Southern Area quarter-final saw Hatters run of nine games without defeat come to an end.

Luton were rocked by an 80-second goal from Southend top scorer Leon Constantine and a slip by 16-year-old David Deeney let in Michael Kightly for the second after 27 minutes. Then substitute Drewe Broughton rubbed it in with Southend's third goal in the 83rd minute.

Luton showed three changes to the side that beat Rochdale in the FA Cup at the weekend.

Matthew Spring returned after suspension, Dean Crowe made only his second start of the season and Deeney stepped up for his first senior start.

Club skipper Kevin Nicholls, who had hoped to make his first appearance since August, was withdrawn from the starting 11 shortly before kick-off.

Kick-off was delayed by 15 minutes due to traffic congestion on the M25. However, there was no hold-up to the action once the game got under way.

Just 80 seconds were on the clock when Southend's Constantine gave the home side the lead. The big striker let fly from

match facts

SOUTHEND UNITED: Darryl Flahavan, David McSweeney, Leon Cort, Lewis Hunt, Michael Kightly, Mark Gower, Kevin Maher, Jay Smith, Che Wilson, Tes Bramble, Leon Constantine. Subs: Carl Emberson, Mark Warren, Steven Clark, Drewe Broughton, Michael Husband.

LUTON TOWN: Marlon Beresford, Matthew Spring, Chris Coyne, Sol Davis, Ian Hillier, David Deeney, Steve Robinson, Dean Crowe, Steve Howard, Peter Holmes, Lee Mansell. Subs: Dean Brill, Michael Leary, Steven O'Leary, Adrian Forbes, Enoch Showunmi.

REFEREE: David Crick (Surrey).
ATTENDANCE: 2,027.

30 yards and the ball bounced over Marlon Beresford as the Hatters keeper dived to his right. Two minutes later Tes Bramble volleyed Mark Gower's right-wing free-kick goalwards, but Beresford tipped the ball over the bar.

Gower's resulting corner was then only half punched clear by the Luton keeper, but Lewis Hunt could only fire over.

The hosts continued to pile on the pressure and with still only five minutes played Bramble's flick-on almost put Constantine clean through, but Ian Hillier produced a great saving tackle.

Hatters slowly found their feet and Crowe and Lee Mansell had 20-yard efforts deflected wide in the 12th and 16th min-

utes respectively. The Town did have the ball in the net in the 17th minute when Steve Howard headed home Spring's cross, but the effort was ruled out for offside.

Instead, it was Southend who moved further ahead in the 27th minute after an horrendous defensive mix-up. Skipper Chris Coyne played the ball square to Deeney, but the youngster slipped, allowing Kightly to run clean through on goal.

Beresford blocked the winger's first effort but the 17-year-old fired home the rebound left-footed from just inside the area to claim his first senior goal.

More defensive errors allowed Constantine the chance to flash a spectacular overhead effort just past the post. Luton's first shot on target didn't come until the 36th minute when Howard found a way between Hunt and Leon Cort, but he could only shoot weakly at Darryl Flahavan.

Luton started the second period in slightly better fashion, with Spring and Howard going close. But with Southend still in control Luton made a double substitution just after the hour, introducing the re-registered Showunmi and Adrian Forbes for Crowe and Mansell.

The change made little difference, however, and Southend missed a hatful of chances to add to their lead before substitute Broughton headed home Steven Clark's left-wing cross from close range in the 83rd minute.