



Town Player Watch

A birthday of note for skip Coyne

LUTON'S 2-0 win over Notts County at Kenilworth Road marked the perfect birthday present for skipper Chris Coyne.

Coyne celebrated his 25th birthday with another solid showing against the Division Two strugglers on Sunday.

Here's how he fared...

- Minutes on pitch: 90
- Passes to Luton: 14
- Passes to Barnsley: 6
- Pass completion rate: 70 per cent
- Shots on target: 0
- Shots off target: 0
- Shots blocked: 0
- Drabbles ball retained: 2
- Drabbles ball lost: 0
- Tackles won/interceptions: 6
- Tackles lost: 1
- Free-kicks won: 0
- Free-kicks lost: 0
- Headers won: 29
- Headers lost: 11
- Crosses: 1

VERDICT: Coyne was a tower of strength at the heart of the Hatters defence as he continued his impressive partnership with Emmerson Boyce at centre-half.

The Aussie stopper won the majority of his headed duels against his taller opponent Clive Platt, although Platt did flash a header just over the bar in the 62nd minute from Paul Riley's right wing cross. That chance aside, Coyne dealt comfortably with everything else that County threw his way.

The defender also showed his prowess in attack by playing a major role in Luton's vital second goal. After picking up the ball by the corner flag, Coyne slipped past Platt, played a one-two, and crossed low for Steve Howard whose shot was blocked on the edge of the six-yard box. The ball then rebounded perfectly for Emmerson Boyce to drill home from 15 yards.

Talk of the Town with Andy MacKenzie



Picture: Gareth Ower

THAT'S MY BOYCE: Emmerson Boyce celebrates with Peter Holmes and Steve Robinson after bagging Luton's second against Notts County

County tied in Notts!

HATTERS 2 NOTTS COUNTY 0

HATTERS spread some festive cheer around Kenilworth Road with an ultimately comfortable victory over struggling Notts County on Sunday.

But, as well as gaining satisfaction from a 2-0 win, the club will have been pleased to see signs of the fans returning to the stands.

A turn-out of 7,181 marked Luton's second highest home gate of the season, and that despite only a relatively small number of away fans making the trip from Nottingham.

Newell enjoyed the luxury of naming an unchanged starting line-up for the fourth game running. And his chosen 11 showed the benefit of a settled side by producing a sparkling opening 20 minutes of attacking football.

It took just four minutes for Luton to break the deadlock when Steve Howard's clever cushioned header behind the County defence allowed Adrian Forbes to burst through on goal.

Win sees Town rise to seventh

With just goalkeeper Steve Mildenhall to beat, Forbes calmly lobbed the ball over the Magpies number one from the edge of the area for the opener.

Hatters continued to move the ball around with urgency, sensing there could be a Christmas stuffing on the cards and Forbes again threatened in the seventh minute, volleying straight at Mildenhall from the corner of the penalty area after Sol Davis' throw.

Five minutes later Davis crossed for Howard to poke over on the stretch and Forbes then centred from the right for Howard, who saw his volley deflected just over the bar in the 14th minute.

But County worked their way back into the game and registered their first shot on target just after the half-hour when Simon Baldry's 25-yarder was fielded by Marlon Beresford.

A minute later Ahmet Brkovic spurned the chance to shoot for an empty goal when a through ball

rebounded to him off Howard with Mildenhall in no-man's-land. The ball squirmed through to Lee Mansell, but as he prepared to shoot from 10-yards Paul Riley made a last ditch challenge.

Forbes came close again in the 35th minute when his header from Brkovic's cross was parried by Mildenhall.

But for all Luton's dominance they could have gone in at the interval on level terms. A minute from half-time Davis gave the ball away on the edge of the area and Baldry ran through, only for Beresford to smother at his feet.

Beresford showed his worth again in the second period just after the hour

mark, diving low to his left to save Riley's shot from 18 yards.

Robinson hit the Barnsley bar direct from a corner in the 65th minute, but Luton finally had their solid defensive partnership of Chris Coyne and Boyce to thank for making the game safe. Coyne displayed his dribbling skills to good effect, beating Platt by the corner flag and rolling the ball to Howard.

The big striker's effort was blocked, but Boyce was on hand to rifle home the rebound with his right-foot from the penalty spot area.

STAR HATTER: Emmerson Boyce.
Effective in defence and attack.

HARFORD'S VERDICT



"We're delighted with the four points over Christmas. It's not an easy time, especially with a small squad."

"I thought we were totally in control of the game. But you always know a team might come back when it's only 1-0.

"I thought there was a spell in the first-half

where we looked a bit vulnerable, especially down the right-hand side, but we told them at half-time and it was dealt with.

"Boycie, Coyne and the goalkeeper were solid today. They coped comfortably with their two strikers and County looked a better team when Stallard came on the pitch."

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