

The Sport



LUTON TOWN FOOTBALL CLUB

Town Player Watch

Hughes is back after leg injury

RETURNING midfielder Paul Hughes made his first Hatters start for four months when he lined up against Peterborough United on Saturday.

Former Southampton and Chelsea man Hughes, 27, was passed in the middle to youngster Michael Leary. Here's how he fared at London Road...

- Minutes on pitch: 90
- Passes to Luton: 17
- Passes to Posh: 7
- Pass completion rate: 71 per cent

- Tackles won: 5
- Tackles lost: 0
- Free-kicks won: 0
- Free-kicks conceded: 1
- Headers won: 7
- Headers lost: 5
- Shots on target: 1
- Shots off target: 0
- Shots blocked: 0
- Dribbles ball retained: 1
- Dribbles ball lost: 0
- Crosses: 0

VERDICT: Hughes had little chance to shine in a game that bypassed the midfield for long periods.

But when he did get the ball, Hughes was quick to pick out a Luton shirt as shown by his high pass completion rate.

He was also strong in the tackle when needed and was one of the few Luton players who managed to keep possession when Town found themselves under pressure in the second-half.

NEWELL'S VERDICT: "The thinking behind the changes was that we just felt we needed a bit more experience across the middle of the park. "It was nothing to do with Michael's performances or Holmes's; we've been very happy with both of them. "I think we've missed Hughes the way he was playing earlier in the season. But he's been out for a while and he's not quite there yet fitness-wise."

Talk of the Town with Andy MacKenzie



ALL FALL DOWN: Steve Robinson emerges with the ball at London Road as Peterborough's Andy Legg tumbles and the grounded Kevin Nicholls looks on.

Howie powers Town

POSH 1 HATTERS 2

STEVE Howard thundered home his 10th goal of the season to set Hatters on their way to victory against Peterborough United.

And the big striker admitted it was nice to get back on the scoring trail after his double at Grimsby made it three goals in two games.

Howard's strikes took him into the top 10 Luton Town post war scorers list at the expense of former fans' favourite Malcolm Macdonald.

They also saw him pass the 100 league goal mark, taking him to 110 career goals in all competitions.

The 27-year-old's latest effort was one of his more spectacular – a first time drive from the edge of the area that slammed against the underside of the Posh bar and bounced powerfully up into the roof of the net.

That 25th minute strike coupled with Ahmet Brkovic's second-half header ensured the Town held on for three points despite a late Posh fight-back.

Howard said of Saturday's goal: "The ball just dropped to me and I managed to put my foot through it."

"It was nice to see it go in and that makes it three in two for me. I've passed my 100th league goal and it was also nice to get into the top 10 Luton scorers, espe-

But Harford sent to seats

cially passing Malcolm Macdonald because he's a legend where I'm from back home in the north-east."

Howard also dismissed any talk of him having a lean spell in front of goal. He said: "I've been saying all along that I've got the most number of assists. My game's still there and the gaffer seems to be happy with me, so if he's happy I'm happy."

Mike Newell may be happy with Howard's return to goalscoring form. But he was not pleased by a controversial second-half decision that saw Hatters Director of Football Mick Harford banished to the London Road stands.

Posh defender Sagi Burton launched into a hard but fair tackle on Enoch Showunmi in front of the dug-outs in the 69th minute. But as the pair picked themselves up off the floor, Burton appeared to kick Showunmi in the head.

When no action was taken, Harford took issue with the fourth official, only for referee Phil Crossley to order him from the touchline. Newell said: "What

annoys me is there were three officials including the fourth official within 15 yards of the incident yet nobody saw it."

"I'm not one for getting players booked or sent off, but if they commit an offence on the field I don't know how it can go unpunished."

"We know as managers and coaches when players are guilty of something."

Although Hatters led 1-0 at the break, the hosts had enjoyed large periods of possession, forcing 10 corners in the first 45 minutes. Morten Hyldgaard saved well from Guy Branson's seventh minute header and Calum Willock's 25-yarder after half-an-hour.

But the big Dane did look vulnerable on crosses and from long throw-ins from Peterborough's Andy Legg.

Howard's goal came after Paul

Hughes tried to feed Emmerson Boyce in the area and the ball rebounded for Howard to slam home. Howard should have made it two in the 43rd minute, but sidefooted Showunmi's pass wide.

Burton's controversial moment sparked the second-half into life and Willock drove across the face of goal a minute before Brkovic rose unmarked to head home Steve Robinson's 77th minute free-kick.

Willock finally found the net 11 minutes from time, firing Adam Newton's cross into the roof of the net. Posh increased the pressure and Branson came closest to equalising when he hit the side-netting from David Farrell's corner in injury time.

STAR HATTER: Steve Howard. Showed his worth in defence as well as attack.

MIKE NEWELL'S VERDICT



"IT'S always nice to win, particularly away from home. Our away form we were talking about before the game because we know we can do better."

"We got the points in the bag today, but it wasn't convincing at all in the second-half."

"Peterborough threw everything at us and it sur-

prises me how they've only won two games at home all season."

"Our second goal came at a good time, but they scored straight after and it was heart attack time for the next 15 minutes."

"We played some good stuff in the first-half, but didn't get it down or show composure in the second."

Peterborough 1-2 Luton		Where Scored For/Agt		When Scored For/Agt		Luton Town's Scorers		Seasonal Progress Chart		Last 6 League Games		Swings	
Willcock 79	Howard 27	6 yd	9 15	12-10	10-15	Adrian Forbes	1	1	1	Opponents	W/A	Score	Won when behind
Willcock 77	Brkovic 77	18 yd	37 22	10-15	16-30	Steve Howard	9	2	2	Peterborough	A	2-1	Drawn when behind
Atk Off Target	Atk Off Target	Outside	6 7	31-45	31-45	Guy McSheffrey	1	1	1	Grimsby	A	2-3	Lost when ahead
Camers	Camers	18 yd	6 7	46-60	61-75	Enoch Showunmi	4	0	0	Brentford	H	4-1	Drawn when ahead
Offside	Offside	How Scored For/Agt		76-90		Ben Thorpe	2	0	0	Wylcombe	A	0-0	Set Piece Goals
Offside	Offside	Shots	31 16			Lee Marshall	2	0	0	Brighton	H	2-0	Scored from Corners
Offside	Offside	Headers	13 15			Steve Robinson	2	0	0	Colchester	H	1-0	Scored from Free Kicks
Offside	Offside	Volleys	3 6			Kevin Foley	2	0	0				Conceded from Corners
Offside	Offside	Penalties	3 4			Emmerson Boyce	2	0	0				Conceded from Free Kicks
Offside	Offside	Free Kicks	0 1			Russell Perrett	2	0	0				Conceded from Free Kicks
Offside	Offside	Own Goals	2 2			Kevin Nicholls	2	0	0				Conceded from Free Kicks
Offside	Offside	Goals Scored	6			Peterborough	2	0	0				Conceded from Free Kicks
Offside	Offside	Goals conceded	3			Chris Coyne	2	0	0				Conceded from Free Kicks
Offside	Offside	Points won	3			Matthew Judge	2	0	0				Conceded from Free Kicks
Offside	Offside	Points lost	3			Alan Neilson	2	0	0				Conceded from Free Kicks
Offside	Offside	Points total	6			Paul Hughes	2	0	0				Conceded from Free Kicks
Offside	Offside	Points per game	2			Michael Leary	2	0	0				Conceded from Free Kicks
Offside	Offside	Points per game	2			Matthew Spring	2	0	0				Conceded from Free Kicks
Offside	Offside	Points per game	2			Adrian Forbes	2	0	0				Conceded from Free Kicks