

Brkovic double sinks Seasiders

**Blackpool 1
Luton 3**

TWO goals in two minutes turned the drizzle into dazzle as Luton continued their impressive start to the season.

A brace from Ahmet Brkovic and another from in-form Steve Howard made it five wins from five for Mike Newell's men.

Despite going a goal down in a disappointing first half, Hatters fought back and Newell insists his players unbeaten start is all down to belief.

"We believe in them - they are all very good players. After a poor opening we told them at half time to go out there and show us how good they are.

"Blackpool looked nervous after scoring so early and I believed if we got one we'd get more. We could have had four or five."

Bottom-placed Seasiders took the lead in the fourth minute with the game's first attack.

A free kick was lofted into the box by Paul Edwards aimed at John Murphy. The striker headed it back into the area but his hopeful return ball should've been dealt with by the Hatters defence.

Instead Scott Taylor took advantage of Luton's hesitancy to drill in his first goal of the season from six yards.

It was raining in Hatters fans hearts and almost immediately after Taylor's goal rather heavily on their heads, too.

The away stand at Bloomfield Road has no roof and travelling fans are exposed to the elements. Being Bank Holiday weekend, many hadn't packed their raincoats along with their bucket and spade and were left drenched.

Equally as wet were Luton who didn't seem to click into gear until mid-way through the first half. They were not helped by a poor linesman who gave every decision to the home side and a whistle-happy referee



■ The eyes have it as Coyne and Davis keep a check on the Blackpool attack

who made some truly bizarre calls.

Between them they conspired to deny Luton's equaliser on 39 minutes. Steve Howard and Rowan Vine were coming back from an offside position when Marlon Beresford humped the ball forward.

The pair both then got onside and Howard chased what looked like a lost cause. But opportunistic Howard sneaked in between dithering defenders, leaving him an empty net before he was for reasons unknown called back.

Luton also had two penalty claims turned down in the first half - one handball and a tackle that sent Vine tumbling in the box.

Newell remarked: "I wish the offside rule was down in black and white for everyone to see. It seems it's made up every week."

That injustice was short-lived as Luton came out rejuvenated in the second half.

From the off Hatters were in control and got their deserved equaliser on 57 minutes. A corner found Vine at the far post and he vollied the ball back into the crowd. There to grab his fifth goal in five games was Howard whose diving header squirmed through Jones' legs.

The sun was now making a well-overdue appearance and barely a minute later Luton were bubbling.

Blackpool's defence tried to play Brkovic offside from Beresford's big boot but failed.

The Croatian slipped in and rounded Jones to score his second of the season.

Blackpool were in complete disarray. Their longball tactics were giving Chris Coyne and Curtis Davies headaches from having to head the ball so much but not worrying Newell who could see his table-toppers extending their 100 per cent start.

Blackpool's best chance for an equaliser came from Michael Flynn whose shot was expertly saved by Beresford on 83 minutes. From the edge of the box the midfielder's drive looked destined for the top corner before Befesford's save, described as 'match-winning' by his manager.

As the Seasiders pressed late on, Brkovic made sure of the points in injury time. Yet again Blackpool pushed up to play Luton offside but this time Vine and Brkovic escaped and ran on to Howard's flick.

The on-loan striker had a go first and Jones did well to save the fierce drive but it fell straight at Brkovic's feet who vollied into an empty net.

Newell had words of comfort for his counterpart Colin Hendry - still searching for his first win as a manager. "I feel sorry for Colin. We were team-mates for five years at Blackburn. But the boot could easily be on the other foot. I'm sure he'll become a fine manager."



■ Goal hero Ahmet Brkovic



MATCH FACTS



Luton Town: Beresford; Keane, Coyne, Davies, Davis; Brkovic, Robinson, Nicholls, Underwood; Howard, Vine.
Subs not used: Seremet, Foley, Leary, Mansell, Showunmi

Referee: Alan Kaye (Yorkshire)

GOALSCORERS:
Blackpool: Taylor (4)
Luton: Howard (57), Brkovic (67, 90)

SHOTS ON TARGET
Blackpool: 3
Luton: 12

SHOTS OFF TARGET
Blackpool: 1
Luton: 4

CORNERS
Blackpool: 4
Luton: 7

OFFSIDE
Blackpool: 4
Luton: 6

BOOKINGS
Blackpool: -
Luton: Underwood (34), Howard (67), Brkovic (87)

ATTENDANCE: 5,793

HATTERS STAR MAN:
KEVIN NICHOLLS
Captain's determined performance ignited Luton's second half turnaround



■ Kevin Nicholls goes to ground to win the ball