

Howard haunts Hartlepool as leaders stretch impressive run

Luton Town 3
Hartlepool United 0

By Bill Edgar

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MIKE NEWELL remains on course to secure promotion for Luton Town as they moved ten points clear of the rest in Coca-Cola League One last night with victory over his old club. Aptly it was a former Hartlepool player, Steve Howard, whose goal set the leaders on their way although their unbeaten record was threatened in the first half by the lively visiting team.

Howard's return from suspension to partner Rowan Vine meant that Luton's front pairing comprised the two winners of the division's player of the month award this season, and the latter's

fine early run and pass created a good chance that Steve Robinson wasted. Howard also headed just wide from a corner before the away side took control.

Joel Porter somehow sent a half-volley over for Hartlepool when unmarked at the far post and Eifion Williams drove inches wide after a blunder by Dino Seremet, the Luton goalkeeper.

Adam Boyd and Williams, again, also went close, but against the run of play Howard powered home a header at the far post after Robinson's corner, his sixth league goal of the season and fifth in the past four meetings with his former club.

Gavin Strachan headed a cross by Micky Barron narrowly wide for Hartlepool soon afterwards but Luton held on

until the interval and doubled the lead five minutes into the second half. Jim Provett, the goalkeeper, repelled a fierce drive by Vine with an outstretched arm but Ahmet Brkovic tucked home the rebound. The Croatian's fine cross moments later was headed just over by Howard.

The scoring was completed brilliantly five minutes from time by Gary McSheffrey, a substitute, who nipped past Mark Tinkler and Matt Robson before sidefooting home.

LUTON TOWN (4-4-2): D Seremet — K. Keane, C Coyne, C Davies, S Davis — A. Brkovic (S O'Leary 86min), S Robinson, K Nicholls, P Underwood — R Vine, (sub: G McSheffrey 74) S Howard (E Showunmi 86). **Substitutes not used:** M Leary, R Beckwith. **Booked:** Robinson, Davis.

HARTLEPOOL UNITED (4-4-2): J Provett — M Barron, M Nelson, M Tinkler, M Robson — R Humphreys, A Pouton, G Strachan, E Williams — J Porter, A Boyd. **Substitutes not used:** C Westwood, D Konstantopoulos, D Craddock, J Wilkinson, S Turnbull. **Booked:** Nelson. **Referee:** M Ryan.