

Quick-fire Howard proves way too classy

Southend United 0

Luton Town 3

By Bill Edgar

LUTON TOWN have lost to Swansea City and Boston United this season but a third cup defeat by opposition from a division below was out of the question from the moment the League One leaders took a two-goal lead after a quarter of an hour. Luton, FA Cup semi-finalists ten years ago, took it easy after the interval but, on their first-half showing, they may yet provide a stiff test for a Premiership side in this competition.

Freddy Eastwood, a recent acquisition from Grays Athletic, produced some delightful early touches for the home side but they were quickly on the back foot against a team who had scored nine goals in their previous two matches.

In the twelfth minute, Steve Robinson darted into the penalty area and his cross from the left was sent goalwards by Ahmet Brkovic. The shot was blocked but Steve Howard squeezed in the rebound, and the same player scored his tenth goal of the season for Luton three minutes later when he converted Rowan Vine's left-wing centre. Vine, on loan from Portsmouth, also created the third by splitting the defence to send Brkovic clear to round Bart Griemink, the Southend goalkeeper, and sidefoot home.

With the tension removed from the game, Southend had a spell of dominance around the hour mark. Chris Coyne made a last-ditch tackle to prevent Lewis Hunt scoring from six yards and then cleared a prod by Adam Barrett off the line.

SOUTHEND UNITED (4-4-2): B Griemink — D Jupp, S Prior, A Barrett, C Wilson — C Pettefer (sub: M Bentley, 74min), L Hunt, K Maher, M Gower (sub: T Bramble, 80) — W Gray, F Eastwood. **Substitutes not used:** A Edwards, L Dudfield, N Morgan.

LUTON TOWN (4-4-2) D Semeret — K Foley, C Davies, C Coyne, S Davis — A Brkovic, S Robinson (sub: M Leary, 72), S O'Leary, P Underwood — S Howard, R Vine (sub: E Showunmi, 87). **Substitutes not used:** R Beckwith, D Bayliss, K Keane. **Booked:** Coyne, O'Leary.

Referee: R Beeby.