

Sloppy start destroys Blues' FA Cup dream

04/05 (CAC)

STATS...

TEAMSHEET

● Southend United

(4-4-2): Griemink 5, Jupp 6, Prior 6 (Edwards 83,6), Barrett 6, Wilson 6, Pettefer 6 (Bentley 73,6), MAHER 7, Hunt 6, Gower 6 (Bramble 80,6) Gray 6, Eastwood 6. Subs not used: Morgan & Dudfield

● Luton Town

(4-4-2) Seremet 6, Foley 7, Davis 7, DAVIES 9, Coyne 7, Underwood 6, O'Leary 6, Robinson 7 (Bayliss 72,6), Brkovic 7, Howard 8, Vine 7 (Showunmi 88,6) Subs not used: Beckwith, Leary, Keane

Shrimpers star man

KEVIN MAHER

★ Steady display from the Southend skipper.



MATCH STATS

● Southend United

Shots on target: 6

Corners: 8

● Luton Town

Shots on target: 5

Corners: 2

● Referee

Richard Beeby (Northampton) 7/10

● Attendance

6, 683

IN THE BOOK

● Southend United

Booked: None.

● Luton Town

Booked: Coyne 73mins (foul) and O'Leary 86mins (foul).

NEXT UP

● League Two

Yeovil Town (A) Saturday, 3pm



■ Race for the ball — Southend winger Mark Gower launches forward to skip past Luton Town defender Kevin Foley 68GNR37

SOUTHEND United crashed out of the FA Cup at the first hurdle on Friday evening, as Luton Town recorded a comfortable and convincing 3-0 triumph at Roots Hall.

A brace from the Hatters' top scorer Steve Howard, plus a well taken effort from Ahmet Brkovic, inside the opening 33 minutes, saw the League One leaders progress to the next round with relative ease against a sloppy Shrimpers side.

Despite the eventual score-line, it was the Seasiders who started the brighter of the two sides — enjoying long spells of possession without creating any clear-cut chances.

In stark contrast, the visitors soon hit back and began to carve open the home-side's rearguard.

As a result, Sol Davis fired a 25 yard effort over the South Stand cross bar in the eighth minute, before a well struck Chris Coyne shot was diverted to safety by Shrimpers centre back Spencer Prior.

With 12 minutes gone, Mike Newell's men opened the scoring in bizarre fashion as a Brkovic shot looped high up into the air off a brave Adam Barrett.

Blues goalkeeper Bart Griemink bizarrely opted to stay on his goal-line and that enabled the grateful Howard to stab home a five yard shot which the Dutchman could only parry into his own net.

Town doubled their advantage within three minutes as Rowan Vine sped past the hesitant Prior and Duncan Jupp on the left wing to slide the ball into the path of Brkovic.

The former Leyton Orient midfielder then fed Howard with a fine square ball which the on-rushing striker fired into the bottom left hand corner of the net from 18 yards.

Luton continued to pile the pressure on the shell-shocked Shrimpers with Paul Underwood sending a 14 yard shot off target and Stephen O'Leary seeing a deflected, long range effort dip only inches over the Southend goal.

Blues hit back with Davis coolly chesting down a goal-bound volley from Kevin Maher after a poor clearance from Hatters keeper Dino Seremet had dropped invitingly into his path.

Having survived their scare, Luton soon converted their third goal of the night as Brkovic, played onside by Jupp, raced on to Vine's through ball to round Griemink and finish from close range.

The stunned Shrimpers immediately forced play back towards the other end of the field, with Fredy Eastwood firing a low shot straight at Seremet.

Seconds later, the former Grays forward was at it again as he forced the

FA CUP ROUND 1

Southend United.....0

Luton Town.....3

(Howard 12, 15, Brkovic 33)

■ By CHRIS PHILLIPS

Slovakian keeper into action with a driven effort from 14 yards.

The game was then comically held up for a few seconds as eight footballs were thrown on to the pitch from behind the South Stand.

After the laughter died down, Mark Gower cut in from the left flank to fire a well struck shot into the gloves of Seremet before a Wayne Gray centre fizzed across the face of goal before the interval.

Blues tried work their way back into the game after the break. In the 65th minute, a shot from Barrett was scrambled off the goal-line by Chris Coyne after Seremet had flapped at another right wing corner from Maher.

A long range effort from Gower then flew wide of the left upright before a well struck shot from Eastwood swerved over the cross bar.

With nine minutes left, Barrett headed a Maher corner straight at Seremet and substitute Tes Bramble sent an injury time 30 yard free kick off target in the final action of a miserable night for Blues who suffered their first defeat at this stage of the competition since 1999.

BLUES VIEWS

We want to hear your views on Southend United:

● BY FAX:

01268 469281 or 01268 469284

● BY POST:

Echosport, Evening Echo, Newspaper House, Chester Hall Lane, Basildon, Essex, SS14 3BL.

● BY EMAIL:

sports.echo@notes.newsquest.co.uk

TEAM NEWS

Steve Tilson selected an unchanged starting line up with goalkeeper Bart Griemink again named between the sticks.

Duncan Jupp, Adam Barrett, Spencer Prior and Che Wilson again made up the Blues back four with Carl Pettefer, Kevin Maher, Lewis Hunt and Mark Gower in midfield. Up front Wayne Gray partnered Fredy Eastwood, with Tes Bramble on the bench.



■ Shooting for goal — two Luton Town defenders close down Southend United frontman Fredy Eastwood as he lets fly at goal during Friday night's FA Cup clash Pictures: ANNA LUKALA 68GNR56