

Town topple the Spireites

CHESTERFIELD 0 HATTERS 1

LUTON proved they could cope without their trio of suspended Powerade Player of the Month award winners as they ended Chesterfield's unbeaten home run on Boxing Day.

Rowan Vine, Curtis Davies and leading goalscorer Steve Howard were all missing for the Saltergate trip, but Hatters showed their strength to kill off the Spireites with an Enoch Showunmi header three minutes from time.

Boss Mike Newell said: "I had the chance to bring in players on loan because without Howie and Vine we were looking quite lightweight up front.

"Calvin Andrew was also ill with the flu so I didn't know if we'd have enough to get through the Christmas period, but it's only fair to give our lads the chance.

"We've had players who have been waiting patiently for their opportunity and that was only the second league start for Calvin, Enoch and Holmesy and the first start of the season for Russ Perrett and they all did well.

"With Russ, he's missed a large part of last season and this season. It's tough for him, but he competed well and we all know what he's capable of here.

"Holmesy also did well. He makes forward runs and gets into the box. He's a fit lad who has worked hard this season and waited patiently for his chance.

"I'm not one who believes in making changes for the sake of it all over the place, but it's nice to be able to give these players a game."

The starting line-up at Chesterfield showed just two changes to the 11 that won 2-1 at Bristol City nine days earlier.

Teenager Andrew came in for Vine while 31-year-old Russ Perrett replaced Davies at centre-half. Chesterfield had won seven and drawn four of their 11

Luton breach Chesterfield's unbeaten run

previous home games before the visit of Luton and the hosts showed why by starting the game the stronger.

Derek Niven robbed Kevin Nicholls and fed Mark Innes for the first shot of the game but the home midfielder's effort flew well over from 25 yards.

Town found their feet and Sol Davis dispossessed Alex Bailey in the 17th minute and crossed for the ball to bounce down to Holmes who fired straight at Carl Muggleton from 15 yards.

Marlon Beresford smartly held a 22 yard Sammy Clingan free-kick in the 24th minute before Luton were somehow denied three times in a frantic goal-mouth scramble in the 33rd minute.

Nicholls saw his 20 yard effort palmed away by Muggleton and from the rebound Showunmi rounded the prone keeper but saw his shot cleared off the line by Ian Evatt. Brkovic was first to the loose ball, but again saw his left-footed effort blocked in the box.

Holmes went close either side of the break before Niven hit a low 54th minute drive wide and Adam Smith ended a 40 yard run by firing past the post.

But Luton finished the game much the stronger and Andrew went close with two headers and Showunmi saw a 15-yard shot tipped over before Kevin Foley crossed for Holmes to mis-hit a volley that fell perfectly for Showunmi to nod home from six yards.



BATTLE: Enoch Showunmi holds off Chesterfield skipper Ian Evatt.

MIKE NEWELL'S VERDICT



"WE would have taken a point I think as, just like at Bristol City last week, it's a very difficult place to come and get a result at as their results so far have shown.

"They hadn't lost a home game all season before we played them so we're delighted with the points. We said to the lads that if you want to achieve things in the league you have to come

to places like this and get a result.

"You have to play against different types of football in this league and we had to compete before we could start playing football, but we did play some football in the end.

"I probably wouldn't have expected to be in this position at the start of the season, but we'll certainly take it!"

STAR HATTER

PETER HOLMES: Holmes put in an all-action display in only his second league start of the season for the Hatters.

The 24-year-old worked hard with skipper Kevin Nicholls to control the midfield and he also showed a good engine to pop up in advanced positions and on the wing on regular occasions.

Holmes' drive kept Luton looking forward and his mis-hit shot led to Showunmi's winner.



Concern for Hughes

DOCTORS are struggling to pinpoint the exact diagnosis of a long-term illness to Luton Town midfielder Paul Hughes.

After recovering from injury in the summer, Hughes has only pulled on a Hatters shirt once this season, for the 2-0 LDV loss at Swansea in September.

And the 28-year-old, pictured right,

has not trained for the last seven weeks due to his ill health.

Luton boss Mike Newell said of the former Chelsea man: "He's got some sort of viral infection that has left his blood levels low and he's struggling to get them back up again.

"It's not like he's on his death bed or anything, but it is concerning as it doesn't seem to be going away."

