

defensive display is plus for U's chief

ANOTHER day passed without a home league win, but Colchester United manager Phil Parkinson was delighted with side's effort in shading a goalless draw against table-toppers Luton Town on Saturday.

The U's were a little unlucky not to take all three points against the Hatters, and so post their first home league victory for nearly four months.

"We are scrapping for our lives at the moment, and this was a good display, especially from a defensive point of view," said Parkinson.

"It's just a shame that none of our scoring chances fell to our strikers. It was a very tight game, and yet we created the best two or three chances.

"Their keeper saved well from Neil (Danns) and Kevin (Watson), but we just couldn't quite get the breakthrough.

"I thought that we won our individual battles out there. Pat (Baldwin) did a tremendous job on Rowan Vine. That was a very important battle. Pat was excellent.

"Neil Danns did well against Kevin Nicholls, and Kevin (Watson) just edged it over Steve Robinson. In fact, there were some interesting duels all over the pitch.

'We are scrapping for our lives at the moment' - Parkinson

"That's the second time we have proved ourselves to be better than Luton during the last month. Both matches ended in draws, but we need to work hard for each other in every game. We mustn't let our performances drop.

"We are now all focusing on Walsall on Tuesday. No one is even thinking about the FA Cup match at Blackburn.

"We want to beat Walsall, which will give us four points from a possible six from these two home games. That would be a good haul," added Parkinson.

Baldwin enjoyed a productive afternoon, keeping former U's team-mate Vine very quiet. Vine was eventually substituted in the 74th minute.

Centre-half Baldwin revealed: "We should have won, really. It was a great performance. I thought that I did alright against Rowan (Vine). But he's proved in the past that he is a great player, and I'm sure that he will bounce back.

"We are defending fairly well as a team at the moment, but we aren't taking our chances. That's been the story of our season.

"The Blackburn game is out of our mind. Firstly, we have a massive match against Walsall," added Baldwin.

U's make table-toppers look



ALMOST A SPECTATOR: Above, Colchester United goalkeeper Aidan Davison is called upon to make a rare save during Saturday's League One match against table-topping Luton Town at Layer Road. Below right, U's midfielder Neil Danns (left) shows good chest control under pressure from Luton's Keith Keane

Photographs: CLIFFORD HICKS

Carl Marston
with Colchester United

FOR the second time in under a month, Colchester United made league leaders Luton Town look a very ordinary side.

But, for the second time running, they had to be content with a solitary point. The U's were denied a win at Kenilworth Road on December 28, due to a double blast from former old boy Rowan Vine in a 2-2 draw.

On Saturday, Phil Parkinson's men managed to keep ex-U's star Vine very quiet, thanks to a solid defensive display from his marker Pat Baldwin, and yet they were let down by some poor finishing in a goalless stalemate.

The hosts certainly shaded this latest encounter. In fact, U's keeper Aidan Davison, making his first appearance of 2005 following injury, had only a couple of regulation saves to make all afternoon.

It's rather perplexing, then, to note that 26 points separate top-of-the-table Luton from 17th-placed Colchester. The two clubs were first and second respectively in League One during the first few weeks of the season but, whereas the Hatters have maintained their early impetus, the U's have fallen by the wayside.

The home form has been the big problem. Just one home league win since last August tells a sorry tale.

The U's have not won a league match at Layer Road for nearly four months, since the 2-0 success over Port Vale on October 2. And yet manager Parkinson will certainly accept Saturday's hard-earned point as a big plus, if his side can finally end their Layer Road jitters against visiting their tomorrow night.

Colchester		0	Luton Town		0
1 Davison	6 Substitutes		1 Beresford	7 Substitutes	
25 Stockley	6		2 Foley	7	
5 Brown	7 8 Williams		24 Davis	6 25 Seremet	
12 BALDWIN	7 (not used)		20 Davies	7 (not used)	
14 Hunt	7 11 Cade		12 Coyne	7 (not used)	
3 Keith	7 (not used)		8 NICHOLLS	8 27 Holmes	
Goals		4-4-2Formation4-4-2	Goals		
None		2Corners6	None		
Bookings		6Offsides3	Bookings		
Danns (73, foul)		5Shots on target3	None		
		6Shots off target3			
		11Fouls conceded12			
		0Hit woodwork0			
DATE: Saturday, January 22, 2005		VENUE: Layer Road	REFEREE: Mike Dean (Wirral) 8		
ATTENDANCE: 4,309		PITCH: Excellent	WEATHER: Cold but dry		

The Saddlers are currently one place and three points ahead of United.

From a lower-half-of-the-table point of view, Saturday's round of results were kind to Colchester.

Not only did they rise above Port Vale into 17th slot, but they also extended the gap between themselves and the relegation zone to seven points - only Wrexham won amongst the bottom four clubs.

Davison, preferred in goal to up-and-coming teenager Dean Gerken, safely caught a 25-yard shot from leading scorer Steve Howard, and also gobbled up a tame header from Steve Robinson, both in the first half.

Yet it is difficult to recall the 36-year-old having much else to occupy him, except for a flurry of corners in the second period.

Colchester had more of a cutting edge, though it was their midfielders rather than their strikers who were presented with the best scoring opportunities.

On the half-hour mark, right winger Joe Keith skipped past a couple of challenges before curling a 20-yarder into the arms of Hatters keeper Marlon Beresford. Two minutes later, and Beresford arched back to claw away a cross-cum-shot from Sam Stockley.

There was a worrying moment in the 47th minute when Craig Fagan, already booked nine times this season, shoved Luton centre-half Chris Coyne in the back as the two chased after a through ball. A 10th yellow card for leading scorer Fagan would have meant an automatic suspension, causing him to miss tomorrow night's home clash with Walsall.

Referee Mike Dean seemed poised to reach for his pocket and wield the yellow card. Fagan feared the worst but, by the time that he had ambled over to the referee, there was a change of heart from the



official. Fagan escaped with just a stern lecture.

The U's were agonisingly close to breaking the deadlock, and ending their Layer Road hoodoo, in the 68th minute. Neil Danns benefited from Fagan's delicate flick and drilled goalwards with a shot from eight yards out, which Beresford blocked. It was a good chance.

Ten minutes later and new signing Guylain Ndumbu-Nsungu, the Congolese striker, was introduced as a substitute.

The former Sheffield Wednesday front-runner did not have a clear-cut chance on his rather brief debut, but he could prove to be the long-term answer to Colchester's goal-scoring problem on home turf - the U's have only mustered 14 goals in 13 home league matches, the joint poorest record in the division (with Torquay).

Luton were content to hang on during the closing minutes, and Kevin Watson



MAKING A NAME FOR HIMSELF: Colchester United's latest signing Guylain Ndumbu-Nsungu (left) takes on Luton's Curtis Davies during his brief substitute's appearance on Saturday

New-boy Nsungu bids to earn longer contract

By Carl Marston

GUYLAIN Ndumbu-Nsungu did not make quite the same impact, on his Colchester United debut, as his Congolese compatriot Lomana Lua Lua achieved six years ago, but he is looking forward to making a name for himself at Layer Road.

N d u m b u - N s u n g u appeared as a 78th minute substitute during the goalless draw against league leaders Luton Town on Saturday.

He did not really have the time to make much of an impression, but he has already proved in the past that he has the credentials to be a key player at this level.

Lua Lua crowned his Colchester debut with a goal, at Chesterfield in January, 1999. He too had his first taste of action as a substitute, but, whereas the U's lost 3-1 at Saltergate that day, at least Ndumbu-Nsungu had the satisfaction of an unbeaten start.

"I know Lomana (Lua Lua) very well. He is a good friend. In fact, he is like a big brother to me," enthused 22-year-old Ndumbu-Nsungu.

"We first met on international duty. I was playing for the Congo Under-21s, and he for the senior team. We keep in touch and I speak to him a lot.

"I'm looking forward to

my time with Colchester United. I see it as a very good opportunity for me," added Ndumbu-Nsungu.

It was all going well for Ndumbu-Nsungu at Sheffield Wednesday last season.

In fact, he ended as the leading scorer on 10 goals, and was also voted the Owls player-of-the-season. But it's been all change since then.

"I first came over to France seven years ago, and originally arrived at Sheffield Wednesday on loan," explained Ndumbu-Nsungu, who was previously on the books of French club Amiens.

"But, after a while, I signed a permanent contract with manager Chris Turner. However, it hasn't worked out under the new manager (Paul Sturrock). That happens in football sometimes.

"I signed for Colchester on Thursday, so haven't had much chance to get to know the players.

"I've had a couple of days training, and was pleased to get on today.

"Now I want to work hard and get myself a start in the team, to show what I can do. I want to earn myself a longer contract.

"I thought that the team did well today. It was good to hold the top-of-the-table side to a 0-0 draw," added Ndumbu-Nsungu, who has initially signed a month-deal.



OLD HEAD: U's veteran midfielder Gavin Johnson (left) still has too much spring in his legs for Luton's Curtis Davies