

Brkovic times it right for delighted Newell

04/05

LUTON

Brkovic (89)

1

HULL CITY

0

By Graham Williams

AHMET BRKOVIC has been dubbed 'the Croatian sensation' by his adoring army of Luton fans and the midfielder lived up to his nickname as he plundered an 89th-minute winner for his side in this top-of-the-table clash.

Leaders Luton pounded second-placed Hull for the entire first half, yet looked to be settling for just a point. But Brkovic came up with the goods, sneaking in at the near post to nod Steve Robinson's cross past Hull goalkeeper Boaz Myhill.

Luton manager Mike Newell said: 'We could not have got the goal at a better time. We're delighted with this win — especially after conceding a goal three minutes into stoppage time at Huddersfield last week which cost us two points.

'We were the only team in it in the first half and we fully deserved our victory. There is a bit of daylight now between us and the teams below. That makes it 11 games unbeaten for us, but we are not getting carried away just yet.'

Both teams had taken their foot off the pedal of late. Luton had drawn their past three games before this showdown while Hull had earned only three points from their last four games.

It was also a clash in which the protagonists had to do without their leading scorers.

Hull's 21-goal hitman Stuart Elliott is still nursing a fractured cheekbone and Luton were missing 18-goal marksman Steven Howard, who was suspended after picking up a 10th caution of the season in last week's encounter at Huddersfield.

But midfielder Brkovic, who was recruited from Leyton Orient three seasons ago, was happy to try his luck in front of goal.

He signalled his intentions as early as the sixth minute when he let fly with a 15-yard shot that shaved the woodwork.

Moments later he lost his marker to get to a Kevin Foley cross only to steer his header over the crossbar.

Luton were convinced referee Matt Messias had robbed them of two penalty awards when strikers Enoch Showunmi and Rowan Vine were sent sprawling from

Top of Table							
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Luton	31	18	9	4	54	30	63
Hull	31	18	5	8	57	39	59
Tranmere	32	16	10	6	52	39	58
Sheff Wed	32	14	10	8	55	38	52
Hartlepool	29	16	4	9	50	39	52
Brentford	30	15	5	10	36	38	50
Swindon	32	14	6	12	52	45	48

challenges by Leon Cort and Ian Ashbee respectively.

Hull did not threaten Luton's goal until Stuart Green's 40th minute shot cannoned off the body of goalkeeper Marlon Beresford.

But two chances went begging for midfielder Junior Lewis in the final quarter of the game.

The best opportunity was on 80 minutes when a Robbie Stockdale cross picked him out but Lewis somehow toe-poked the ball over



BARGING IN: Luton goalkeeper Marlon Beresford snuffs out another attack as he clatters into striker Aaron Wilbraham

Picture: DAVID MUNDEN

the crossbar from six yards out. Hull boss Peter Taylor said: 'We were unfortunate to lose the match.

'The game lasts 90 minutes. It's no good being a good player for 85 minutes if you don't do your job in the last five.

'It's very frustrating. Luton got the three points but there are still 15 matches left.

'If Luton had scored late on in the first half they'd have deserved it because they were the sharper team then.

'But my players picked up their performance after the break. They knew they could do better and in the second half they did.'

LUTON (4-4-2): Beresford; Neilson, Coyne, Davies, Davis; Foley, Nicholls, Robinson, Brkovic (O'Leary 90min); Vine, Showunmi (Andrew 79). **Subs** (not used): Perrett, Keane, Seremet. **Booked:** Davies, Vine, Davis.

HULL (4-4-2): Myhill; Stockdale, Cort, Delaney, Edge; Green, Ashbee, Hessionthaler (Price 90), Lewis; Barmby, Wilbraham (Facey 45). **Subs** (not used): Dawson, Duke, Hinds. **Booked:** Ashbee.

Referee: M Messias (Yorkshire).