

Leaders show survival instincts

04/05

Luton 3
Swindon 1

LUTON continued its march at the top of the table — but had to work hard to overcome a determined Swindon side 3-1.

After surviving early pressure Luton opened the scoring from the penalty spot after Ahmet Brkovic had gone down under Matthew Heywood's muscular challenge.

Skipper Kevin Nicholls converted his 11th goal of the season from the spot.

The home side doubled their lead midway through the first half when Rowan Vine teed up Brkovic, who rifled home his 15th goal of the season.

Swindon deservedly narrowed the gap through Michael Proctor, who stabbed home Grant Smith's corner at the near post.

Swindon's Sean O'Hanlon saw his

goalbound header tipped over by Luton keeper Marlon Beresford and Luton's Paul Underwood hit the crossbar.

Swindon substitute Christian Roberts then wasted a gilt-edged chance, before Peter Holmes made sure for Luton, tapping into an empty net after Swindon keeper Rhys Evans had fumbled Kevin Foley's cross.

Luton assistant boss Brian Stein told his players not to expect to play "champagne football" every week.

Town were relieved to hear the final whistle of this game on what was a jittery showing that was a far cry from the previous week's slick 5-0 win over Bristol City.

"The lads are disappointed that they didn't put on a show like they did the week before," said Stein, who recently signed a new two-year deal at Kenilworth Road along with manager Mike Newell.

"But we've told them that they can't play champagne football every week. Teams will come here to make things hard for us and will force us to battle, and that was a battling performance from us out there."

Former Luton boss Mick Harford, who left the Hatters for Nottingham Forest in November last year, before joining up with Andy King at Swindon three weeks ago, thanked the Hatters fans for making him welcome.

Harford said: "It was a great reception from the Luton fans and I thank them for that. But the gloss was taken off it by us losing the match.

"Possession-wise and football-wise, we were much better than Luton, but we ended up losing, and that's the bottom line.

"There were some outstanding performances and we'll keep chasing the play-off places."