

Town sea off Blackpool...

HATTERS 1 BLACKPOOL 0

IT MAY not have been pretty, but Town fans will settle for five more displays like this if they bring five more Luton wins between now and the end of the season.

Steve Howard's 21st goal of the season – a thumping 15 minute header from Peter Holmes' corner – looked to have given Hatters the platform to wash the Seaside's aside at Kenilworth Road.

But despite a bright opening half-an-hour, Luton ultimately failed to make Blackpool rock and in the end it was the visitors who mounted their own waves of attack after the break as Town hung on.

Supporters were left biting their nails as Luton struggled to find their usual fluency in the second period and boss Mike Newell admitted: "There was nervousness in the crowd and I think that spread to the players. I sensed it at Torquay when we went a goal down there, but I think it's only to be expected at this stage.

"I don't mind a bit of nervousness as it can get players going, but at the end of the day it's all about getting over the finishing line, not trying to impress people.

"If people want to be impressed they should just look at what we've done here all season already."

Hatters fielded the same starting 11 that beat the Gulls 4-1 on Easter Monday while Chris Coyne returned to the bench after serving his one match suspension for his red card against Barnsley and new signing Warren Feeney also took his place among the substitutes.

Luton had put in a dynamic attacking display against Torquay just five days before the visit of Blackpool and it looked like they were set to continue in the same vein against the Seaside's.

Howard and Holmes both twice went close before Holmes' corner saw Howard

But Hatters are made to work hard for points

send a bullet header flying past visiting keeper Lee Jones from six yards.

Kevin Foley had a cross-shot saved and Howard then headed over and had an effort blocked as Luton continued to press. But Blackpool finally settled and threatened when John Murphy was put off by a flick from teammate Rob Edwards when presented with a clear header in front of goal in the 35th minute.

That set up the visitors for a much improved second-half show and things could have been very different for Luton if Sol Davis had seen red for hauling back Keigan Parker after half-time, when all he received was a yellow card.

Instead Luton hung on thanks to some wayward shooting from Blackpool – the closest they came was a Parker shot that flashed wide in the 63rd minute after a neat pass from Martin Bullock.

The sluggish show from Luton prompted Newell to bring on Feeney for Rowan Vine and Enoch Showunmi for Paul Underwood and the two substitutes combined in the 83rd minute when Showunmi hit a 40-yard pass into the path of Feeney who shot past the post.

Newell added: "Unders was feeling his hamstring again, but I felt we needed a spark. Warren hasn't trained much lately and to expect him to turn the game in 20 minutes is probably asking too much.

"But if the spark came from anyone I think it came from Enoch."



BATTLE: Ahmet Brkovic takes on Danny Cold as Kevin Nicholls watches.

MIKE NEWELL'S VERDICT



"WE weren't at our best particularly in the second-half, but it's all about results at this stage of the season.

"Blackpool are on a decent run and you can see why they've been picking up points in recent weeks.

"We looked a bit tired and leggy and gave the ball away too often and didn't get it down and pass it around.

"The lads have played three games in a week and after the season they've had it might be catching up with them a little bit.

"I didn't feel we got a great deal of good deliveries into the box throughout the game.

"The only one we did get in was for Howie's goal and we know he can do that if he gets the right sort of service."

STAR HATTER



KEVIN FOLEY: Luton's overlapping full-back again showed his ability to combine an attacking display on the right with a solid defensive showing.

The 20-year-old linked up with Ahmet Brkovic before firing a low cross-shot at visiting keeper Lee Jones in the 22nd minute.

But as well as going forwards in the first-half, Foley defended stoutly in the second as Blackpool came back into the game.

Foster at presentation night

FORMER Hatters skipper Steve Foster will be the special guest speaker at Luton Town's end of season presentation night at Vauxhall Recreation Club's Riverside Suite on Sunday, May 1.

Headband wearing defender Foster, now 47, made more than 200 appearances for the club in

the 1980s including leading Hatters to League Cup glory against Arsenal in 1988.

Ticket details for the awards night are to be released soon.

●Town on Tour buses leave for Bournemouth on Saturday from Bletchley bus station at 8.45am, Safeways Leighton Buzzard at 9am, Total Garage Houghton Regis at 9.45am and

Maple Road, Luton at 10am.

Prices are £15 adults, £13 concessions and £17 non-members.

Call 07960 567 465 to book.

Bobbers coaches leave Cranfield at 9am and pass pick-up points before leaving Kenilworth Road, Luton at 10am.

Cost is £13 adults and £10.50 concessions. Call 01234 750996 for more information.