

Hatters denied three straight

05/06

CURTIS DAVIES



Luton0
Leeds0

LUTON maintained their impressive unbeaten start to the season but in an even contest at Kenilworth Road neither side could provide the cutting edge.

Both sides had ample opportunity to win the game but were unable to break the deadlock.

Steve Howard fired a close-range shot against the post in the first half as Luton went in search of a third straight win, but Leeds created several openings of their own in their bid to return to winning ways.

Newly-promoted Luton were unchanged for the third successive game, while Leeds boss Kevin Blackwell made two changes to his starting line-up.

Goalkeeper Ian Bennett, a summer signing from Birmingham, made his competitive debut for the visitors due to Neil Sullivan's thigh injury and Michael Ricketts was preferred to David Healy alongside Robbie Blake in attack.

Leeds began in determined mood as they looked to bounce back from their midweek defeat at Cardiff and with Eirik Bakke and Shaun Derry bossing midfield they dominated early possession.

Bakke fired over the crossbar early on and Jermaine Wright headed wide from an Eddie Lewis corner as Leeds pressed, but prompted by Kevin Nicholls in midfield, Luton came back at the Yorkshire side and squandered the game's best chance midway through the first half.

Howard raced unopposed onto Curtis Davies' ball into the penalty area, but with Bennett beaten, saw his close-range shot hit the post.

The bustling Howard created another opening for the home side, Ahmet Brkovic this time blazing a shot wide before Leeds responded via a curling free kick from Lewis that just missed the target, while Ricketts skewed his shot after being played in by Blake.

Bakke came to the fore again after the restart and unleashed a venomous long-range drive that Luton goalkeeper Dean Brill did well to hold.

Warren Feeney failed to connect properly with

Brkovic's cross and Blake dragged his shot across the face of goal as the game flowed from end to end.

Healy replaced Blake in the 66th minute and soon after Frazer Richardson came on for Wright, with the former's extra mobility giving Leeds more options.

But Nicholls threatened for the Hatters, testing Bennett with a fine free kick that the former Birmingham goalkeeper parried for a corner, before Blackwell replaced Ricketts with Norwegian Gylfi Einarsson and Feeney made way for Luton substitute Enoch Showunmi.

Clear-cut chances were few and far between, but both sides went in search of a late winner in the closing stages with Bennett saving well from Kevin Foley and Brill clinging onto another whipped in cross from Lewis on the left.

Newell pays tribute to Davies

MIKE Newell, Luton's manager, said after the stalemate: "We are slightly disappointed that we didn't win the game but that's the measure of the week we've had.

"We set out to surprise people but if we can maintain this then we will end up shocking people."

However, the Luton boss knows he has a battle on his hands to retain defender Curtis Davies after the youngster impressed again.

Newell said: "He just gets stronger and stronger and better and better with every game he plays and he has a desire to make it not just here but at the highest level."

Leeds manager Kevin Blackwell, returning to his home-town club, said: "Luton have already rolled over two big names in Crystal Palace and Southampton and Leeds was the next big name on their list.

"It was a tough game but we showed our battling qualities and you have to have that if you want to win the Championship.

"Looking at our side today, there was half a team that were playing together for only the second or third time and the good thing is they will only get better."