

Youngsters help Luton purr along

By Oliver Brown

05/06

LUTON TOWN

0

LEEDS UNITED

0

SURELY it is a strange inversion of football's natural order when Leeds manager Kevin Blackwell admits that his team are on "Luton's hit list".

But it reflects how, even after just three games, Luton have not surged to first place in the Championship by accident.

This was an effective, not always pretty, containment of more exalted opposition, lacking only the flourishes that humbled Crystal Palace and Southampton. All at Kenilworth Road are starting to exude optimism – it could well become a fortress this season.

"We were more comfortable, even though we didn't play so well," said midfielder Ahmet Brkovic. "With the youngsters developing here, there's a real sense that we are capable of reaching the Premiership."

Manager Mike Newell has so far been cautious to discuss Premiership potential, but did reveal the quiet confidence spreading through the club. "We are seeking to surprise," he said.

The team's positive approach owes much to the blossoming of their younger members, such as Curtis Davies and Kevin Foley.

Davies, a centre-back with ambitions of joining England's Under-21 side, said he was not surprised by their recent rise to prominence.

The dilemma for Luton is that, ultimately, they may not be quite prominent enough to keep him. Asked about his long-term future, he said: "I'm obviously attracting more attention, and I'd be happy to use my experience here as a career stepping-stone."

Luton (4-4-2): Brill; Foley, Davies, Heikkinen, Underwood; Brkovic, Robinson, Nicholls, Morgan (Edwards 84); Howard, Feeney (Showunmi 77). **Subs:** Perrett, Seremet, Holmes. **Booked:** Howard.

Leeds Utd (4-4-2): Bennett; Kelly, Butler, Grogan, Harding; Wright (Richardson 71), Bakke, Derry, Lewis; Blake (Healy 66), Ricketts (Einarsson 77). **Subs:** Spring, Kilgallon. **Booked:** Harding.

Referee: A Leake (Lancashire).