



Luton Town FC

Luton 0 - Leeds 0

TOM LEECH reports
from Kenilworth Road



■ Showumni (left) and Warren Feeney (above) get into the thick of the action



Town fail to break down dour Leeds

LUTON Town rounded off a fantastic first week in the Championship with this hard-earned point against fallen giants Leeds United.

After wins against Crystal Palace and Southampton expectation was high at Kenilworth Road that Hatters would continue their 100 per cent start and go top of the league.

They did that with this point although the game was a million miles away from the thrills of Tuesday night's 3-2 win against the South Coast side.

A dour United came for a draw and got it as Hatters were unable to unlock a stubborn Leeds defence.

Not that manager Mike Newell was complaining. "I'm pleased with the performance but a bit disappointed we didn't nick all three points," he said. "It's a measure of the week we've had that the players are sitting in the dressing room annoyed because we didn't beat Leeds United."

"Our final ball let us down at times, but their defence never buckled. I was pleased to keep a clean sheet. We huffed and puffed at times but never really had a clear chance."

Luton's chances of scoring were greatly reduced by Leeds' decision to deploy as many as three markers on Steve Howard and Newell admitted: "It's something he and we are going to have to combat. He'll get extra attention this season

because teams will have seen his goalscoring record and recognise the threat he poses.

"Seven points out of nine - I'd have taken that at the start of the season. I don't want it to be a flash in the pan, and we've got an awful long way to go."

"We were never afraid of Palace, Southampton and Leeds when we saw the fixture list. I thought 'that's Championship football'. And the results we've got have proved we've got nothing to fear in this division."

There was certainly nothing to be scared of in Leeds United. The club's fall from grace has been well documented. Four years ago United were gearing up to play Lazio in the Champions League while Luton were up against Lincoln.

Chant

The Kenilworth faithful summed it up perfectly with a chant of 'You're not famous anymore' to their counterparts in the Oak Road.

On 26 minutes Howard got as close as anyone to breaking the deadlock when he hit the post from close range.

The striker had Curtis Davies to thank for presenting him with the opportunity as the centre back chased the ball down when Leeds full back Gary Kelly hit the ball against him. Kelly seemed to think the ball had enough speed on it to go out for a goal kick but Davies thought otherwise and not only kept the ball in play but laid the ball across keeper Ian Bennett. Howard slid in, closely followed by his shadow, Paul Butler, but his effort cannoned against the woodwork.

Some improvisation from Ahmet Brkovic ten minutes later deserved to get Luton off the mark. The ball

sat up for the Croatian 30 yards out and he caught his volley perfectly, beating the keeper all ends up, but the shot flashed just over the bar.

Just before the break Leeds had their best chances of the half. First an Eddie Lewis flighted free kick had everyone bar Hatters' goalkeeper Dean Brill nervous as the ball dipped inches over the cross bar then in the last minute Michael Ricketts spurned a United counter attack with a weak side foot effort that dribbled wide from a good position.

The expectant crowd was left wanting however as the promising first half made way to a dire second. Few highlights included Leeds having their ONE effort on target via Erik Bakke's long range strike that went straight at Brill.

Hatters only real effort of note saw them denied by the woodwork yet again on 72 minutes. Kevin Nicholls' curling free kick looked destined for the top corner but the captain's precise shot took the slightest of touches off the wall and the ball hit the angle of the crossbar.

An over reliance on the long ball over the top was blunting Luton's cutting edge over the Yorkshire side. Hatters were having all the play but Leeds were revelling in the role of spoilsports disrupting any pattern of play Newell's men tried to establish by putting bodies behind the ball.

Luton fans had a first look at Carlos Edwards with seven minutes to go when the summer signing came on for Tuesday's matchwinner Dean Morgan. It was a 'last throw of the dice' admitted Newell afterwards as Leeds hung on for a share of the spoils.



■ Paul Underwood keeps a close eye on the ball