



Luton Town FC

Luton 1 - Wolves 1
TOM LEECH reports
from Kenilworth Road



■ Enoch Showunmi battles for possession



Subs: Showunmi (Feeney 69), Perrett (Heikkinen 86) Subs not used: Brill, Morgan, Holmes

MAN OF THE MATCH

SOL DAVIS

Intelligent defending and exciting runs gave Luton the edge

Landmark game a thriller for fans

NOT even the weather could spoil Luton Town's celebrations as the Hatters marked 100 years at Kenilworth Road with a high octane performance.

Glenn Hoddle's Wolves side came to rain on Hatters parade and were leading through Carl Cort against the run of play after 25 minutes.

But Kenilworth Road found its voice and roared the Hatters on in the second half. The old stadium's foundations rocked as Kevin Nicholls grabbed the deserved equaliser 11 minutes from time to send the sell-out crowd into raptures.

"Over the 90 minutes we were the better side," said Newell. "We had the upper hand most of the game so we're delighted because Wolves are a lot of people's favourites to win this league."

"We had chances, certainly more clearcut ones than them. They're a decent side and we've given them a severe test today."

"We kept plugging away until we got the goal and never let our heads drop. The crowd really lifted us in the second half."

It was standing room only as the Kenilworth faithful cheered on a collection of former star players before the kick-off.

Only the incessant downpour marred the fabulous reception as familiar faces such as Billy Bingham, John Moore and Kingsley Black came to honour the ground which has provided so many fantastic memories for Lutonians.

Both sides started brightly in the glum weather conditions. Warren Feeney felt hard done by nine minutes in when he was bundled over by Wolves goalkeeper Michael Oakes.

The striker had latched on to Kevin Nicholls' pass and beat Oakes to the ball. His protests fell on deaf ears as referee Lee

Probert gave the benefit of the doubt to the Wolverhampton shot stopper.

But there was no doubting Oakes' superb one-handed save on 18 minutes which kept out Ahmet Brkovic's header from Sol Davis' cross.

At the other end Kenny Miller's curling effort from a short corner was palmed by Marlon Beresford and hooked to safety by Paul Underwood.

Wolves went ahead, against the run of play, seven minutes later. Mark Kennedy reached the by-line and drove his pass across Beresford's goal for the sliding Cort who couldn't miss – the opportunity or the goalpost.

The ex-Newcastle striker recovered but Luton felt the goal shouldn't have stood after Steve Howard had been tripped on the halfway line by his marker Gabor Gyepes.

Luton went on to control the rest of the half but couldn't get level before the break.

First up Chris Coyne had a goal-bound header that looked to be heading in only for Rohan Ricketts to clear off the line.

Then from Brkovic's ball in, Steve Robinson risked personal injury when he met the ball at the far post turning it goalwards. But the header cannoned off Oakes' crossbar and the Ulsterman crashed into the advertising boardings.

Mike Newell took his seat with the visiting dignitaries in the main stand for the second half after a mix-up with referee Probert at half time.

Newell explained: "I passed the ball back to him as the officials are supposed to have the ball at the end of the half and pointed to where Carlos Edwards had been fouled moments earlier."

"He sent me to the stands for passing the ball back in an 'aggressive manner'. The less said the better. I don't want to talk about the ref – that's what he's after."

While Newell might have wished the ref's actions wouldn't dominate the second half

but there was little else to write about as Wolves defended in numbers – frustrating Luton at every turn.

Enoch Showunmi was brought on with 20 minutes to go to get on the end of the numerous crosses into the box that were being repelled by Wolves.

Hatters were becoming desperate for a goal on the ground Joe Payne famously scored ten on back in 1936.

Just one would have been sufficient and deserved as the Hatters were dominating the visitors – and it finally came on 79 minutes.

Edwards beat his marker down the right flank and cut inside. Howard's dummy allowed Edward's pass to reach Nicholls and give his captain a clear sight of goal and he made no mistake powering a side-foot drive past the despairing Oakes.

Justice was nearly undone a minute from time when Wolves threatened to steal all three points.

Substitute Seyi George Olofinjana hit a stinging volley that Beresford did well to turn round the post and keep Hatters unbeaten home start to the season.



■ Skipper Kevin Nicholls checks how long to go and (below) celebrates his equalising goal

