

NEWELL IS NOT TAKING HAT OFF TO HIS STARS

05/06 Cardiff 1 Luton 2

By **KEN GORMAN**

HE WASN'T exactly a mad Hatter – but Mike Newell, as befits a man from the North, remained a dour flat cap as his Luton side continued their astonishing assault on the Championship.

“I wasn't ecstatic at the performance – and I don't know if we can maintain our start to the season,” was the verdict from their manager.

Luton, written off as fodder when the campaign began, are sitting pretty in third place.

But you'll struggle to raise a smile from their boss. “It's other people's expectations that have been lifted in the last six or seven weeks,” he said.

“The plan for us is to carry on as we have been doing. I feel we can do better than this.

“We almost gave the game away at the end. And that would have been more than frustrating.”

Cardiff had been unbeaten in their eight previous games, but Newell said: “Cardiff struggled. I was expecting a more difficult game,



NEWELL: Realistic

without being disrespectful. I really thought we'd be up against it.”

Cardiff manager Dave Jones clearly saw things a little differently. “We missed chances to bury the game after we got the early goal,” he said.

“We let them off the hook. And they are an effective side when they are allowed to get going. But we also missed so many chances in the last 10 minutes I don't know how we haven't got something out of it.”

Michael Ricketts struck Cardiff's ninth-minute goal – the third in five games for the one-time England striker who is clearly savouring his rehab in South Wales.

But Dean Morgan celebrated his 22nd birthday two days early by rifling Luton's equaliser on the half-hour.

And Peter Holmes scrambled in his first goal of the season after 58 minutes to seal a thoroughly-deserved win.

Jones admitted: “Nobody here has got carried away with our recent run. I've been trying to keep people's feet on the ground.

“I want my players to show we have the right character to get over this and put it right.”