

Leeds do not let Kelly down

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By **ROSS HEPENSTALL**

GARY Kelly celebrated his 500th appearance for Leeds in style as his side overcame Luton to keep their hopes of automatic promotion alive.

More than 14 years on from making his debut as a 17-year-old in December, 1991, and despite the most turbulent period in the club's history, Kelly is still holding down the right back spot.

The appearance allowed the loyal Irishman to become only the 10th Leeds player in history to reach the landmark of 500 appearances for the club.

Mike Newell's play-off hopefuls arrived at Elland Road in buoyant mood, having ended Reading's 33-match unbeaten run with a superb 3-2 victory in their last outing.

But after Dean Morgan and Chris Coyne had shots cleared during the opening exchanges, Leeds gradually stamped their authority on proceedings.

After 25 minutes, the Elland Road club engineered the first clear sight of goal following good work from the impressive Jonathon Douglas.

The on loan Blackburn midfielder seized possession 30-yards from goal and spotted Eddie Lewis bursting clear into the visitors' penalty box, before slipping the United States winger in with a perfect pass.

Lewis looked to have done everything right with a powerful strike, but could only watch in frustration as Luton goalkeeper Marlon Beresford produced an excellent low save.

However, there remained a nagging suspicion that Luton could pilfer a goal on the counter-attack.

And it almost happened shortly after the half-hour mark when Rowan Vine's clever footwork took him past Paul Butler, before he delivered an inch-perfect cross into the box. Hatters defender Kevin Foley arrived to connect but he could only send his header over the bar from just six-yards.

It was a dreadful miss but, although Leeds came close at the other end through Robbie Blake, Luton again served notice of their attacking threat moments later, when Ahmet Brkovic fired inches wide from 18-yards.

Leeds' profligacy came to the fore again shortly after the restart when Blake headed wastefully wide from Kelly's cross.

But midfielder Douglas displayed a clinical streak after 49 minutes to hand Leeds the all-important breakthrough.

He drove forward into the visitors' penalty box and collected possession, before firing a superb shot past Beresford to break Luton's spirited resistance.

It was 2-0 four minutes later as Kelly's long ball down the right flank was collected by Rob Hulse. He fired the ball across the face of goal to give Lewis the simplest of tasks to bundle the ball over the line.

Luton's response was impressive and a sustained period of pressure paid dividends seven minutes from time when Steve Howard headed powerfully home from Paul Underwood's cross.

The Hatters continued to ask questions of the Leeds defence but could not fashion an equaliser, despite incessant late pressure, while Sol Davis' dismissal late on capped a miserable day for the visitors.