

Howard heads Hatters home

Luton1
Ipswich0

A LATE headed goal from top scorer Steve Howard saw Luton leapfrog Ipswich into 10th place after a dreary encounter between two sides with remote play-off aspirations at Kenilworth Road.

The Hatters made a bright start and were the first to threaten after eight minutes when Dean Morgan met a cross from Carlos Edwards, but sent his effort past Shane Supple's post from 20-yards.

Ipswich were soon into the game, though, with Owen Garvan and Darren Currie dominating the midfield.

Despite they were unable to muster any worthwhile attempts on goal in the opening quarter of the game — a punch by Marlon Beresford from a 21st minute corner the Luton keeper's only contribution.

Luton almost made their opponents pay for that lack of cutting edge in the 28th minute, when Steve Robinson's lobbed

effort was parried by the outstanding 18-year-old Supple.

A minute later, Edwards fired just wide from 20-yards as the Hatters made the most of their scant possession.

Top scorer Howard then forced yet another save from man-of-the-match Supple with a curling 25-yarder 10 minutes before the break.

Ipswich eventually registered a goal attempt in the 39th minute — their only one of the first period — but Jimmy Juan's scuffed effort from 12-yards was typical of their goalscoring profligacy this term.

Luton emerged from the dressing room with all guns blazing, as efforts from Morgan and Rowan Vine missed the target in the first five minutes of the second half. Three minutes later, Edwards' shot was caught by Supple.

Ipswich threw on Dean Bowditch, recently returned from a loan spell at Wycombe, as they desperately tried to turn things their way.

A Juan 25-yarder flew past the post on 57 minutes as Ipswich suddenly got back into a game

which seemed to be slipping away from them. Strike partner Alan Lee forced Beresford into action a minute later.

The match became progressively more scrappy, with chances at a premium until Lee fired over the bar from the edge of the box in the 74th minute.

Luton finally broke the deadlock through hit man Howard from substitute Ahmet Brkovic's 81st minute cross and then comfortably saw out the remaining minutes.

Royle angry at ref's penalty reverse

IPSWICH boss Joe Royle was left fuming by a bizarre change of mind from referee Lee Mason which denied the Tractor boys a clear-cut penalty at Luton.

Even Hatters' manager Mike Newell admitted that Markus Heikkinen's 39th minute challenge on Jimmy Juan in the

box was a definite spot-kick.

Royle said: "The referee gave it, but then changed his mind — he must have been the only one in the ground who didn't think it was a penalty.

"He's an excellent official normally, but he made a mistake and he struggled to keep hold of the game after that.

"Mind you, that doesn't disguise the fact that in the first half we were very poor.

"It's an atrocious pitch here. It's atrocious for both sides, but it probably suited Luton more with their direct style."

Newell was delighted with the win, although he was honest enough to admit his side had been lucky with the controversial penalty call.

He said: "They had a bit of pressure at times and had a penalty that wasn't given, but these things happen to you on occasions and we had the same thing at Leeds the other week.

"But we created chances and could have had more goals. I know the supporters would like to see more goals — but it's difficult sometimes."