

Toffees melt

06/07 (F.C.) EVERTON 4 LUTONTOWN 0

Andy MacKenzie reports from Goodison Park

LUTON'S lack of defensive cover was cruelly exposed as Hatters melted against the Toffees in the third round of the Carling Cup last night.

Strikes from Tim Cahill, James McFadden and Victor Anichebe and an own goal from Keith Keane handed Everton a comfortable win and highlighted the gulf between the top of the Premiership and the top of the Championship.

The scoreline could have been much worse for the Town had it not been for Marlon Beresford who produced a string of super blocks, including a penalty save from Mikel Arteta.

Hatters made just one change to the side that thrashed Leeds 5-1 at the weekend as Markus Heikkinen bowed out with flu meaning teenager Keane came in for his third start of the season, with Chris Coyne and Russ Perrett both unavailable.

Everton, sitting sixth in the Premiership, showed four differences to the team that beat Sheffield United 2-0 on Saturday.

The hosts' in-form Bedford-born striker Andrew Johnson saw the whites of Beresford's eyes early on when he worked space just inside the area in the fifth minute from McFadden's slipped pass, but could only blast straight at the Town stopper.

Hatters' own hot-shot Rowan Vine tried his luck from way out six minutes later after Carlos Edwards' square pass, only for his 30-yarder to be safely gathered by Turner. That effort couldn't disguise the home side's dominance though and Steve Robinson had to be alert to head away from the on-rushing Cahill in the 15th minute from Simon Davies' cross before Davies centred again minutes later for Osman's near post header to draw a smart block from Beresford.

The goal the Toffeemen had been threatening arrived in the 23rd minute when Leon Barnett fouled Johnson 35 yards out and from Arteta's curling delivery into the area, Lescott headed across goal for Cahill to nod home from two yards.

Town finally worked a decent opening when Stubbs miscontrolled Edwards' 28th minute cross allowing Warren Feeney to hit an overhead effort over the bar from six yards. Feeney then headed onto the roof of the net four minutes later before Everton made it 2-0 in the 34th minute.

Johnson created the chance, robbing Keane, racing down the left and then firing in a low cross-shot that appeared to deflect off a combination of Keane and Sol Davis before trickling over the line.



Ref: Steve Tanner (Somerset)
Attendance: 27,149

Beresford moved quickly to save Cahill's 25-yard free-kick two minutes later, before Dean Morgan curled a delightful 25-yard effort on to the roof of the net for Luton a minute later.

Beresford was again at his best to deny Arteta from point-blank range, but Luton countered again a minute later as Davies somehow produced two goal-line blocks from both Morgan and Feeney after Vine had wriggled free down the right.

Keane was being given a torrid time by Johnson and two minutes before the break he conceded a penalty and was booked in the process after hauling down the England international in the box.

Luckily his blushes were saved by Beresford, who saved from Arteta, diving to his right. There was still time in the half for Morgan to hit a blistering 22-yard free-kick that cannoned back off the far post.

The pace of the game didn't relent after half-time as Beresford had to save from McFadden and Arteta in the space of 20 seconds before Morgan cleared Stubbs' thumping header off the line from McFadden's 48th minute corner.

Everton were rampant and made it three five minutes later as McFadden sidefooted home after great interplay from Arteta and Cahill. Johnson should have made it four just before the hour, but Beresford saved superbly at the striker's feet.

Shooting practice then ensued for the hosts as Beresford saved from McFadden and Davies either side of an Arteta drive that smacked against the post.

Substitute Anichebe added a fourth seven minutes from time.



Picture: GARETH OWEN

GIVEN THE RUNAROUND: Carlos Edwards takes on Everton's Leon Osman last night