

Derby add to Newell misery

06/07

Luton 0 Derby 2

Brian Doogan at Kenilworth Road

Mike Newell's persecution continued with a sixth successive defeat for his team, which was sealed by the cold finish of Steve Howard, who Luton sold to Derby for £1m this summer.

"It's the worst run we've had in over three years here and the worst I've experienced in 20 years as a player and manager," said Newell. Derby's delight at their fourth straight victory and their sixth from 10 matches on the road was in sharp contrast to his miserable mood.

The best way for Newell to put behind him the controversy caused by his recent sexist remarks, as well as criticism of his chairman, Bill Tomlins, would have been a return to winning ways, but Luton's players have lost confidence.

Carlos Edwards, the Trinidad and Tobago international, epitomised their determination but, apart from a period of 15 minutes at the end of the first half, the Hatters were clearly second best. They defended poorly and Howard and Jonathan Stead made them pay.

Stead, the former England Under-21 international, had a decisive influence. He created the opening goal out of nothing and his penetration in the second half changed the course of the game.

The England Under-19 international Giles Barnes, who showed flashes of precocious talent, was an able accomplice, and overall Derby were much the better team. "This was a fantastic result for us and thoroughly deserved," said their assistant manager, John Darby.

The three saves made in rapid succession by Stephen Bywater, the Derby goalkeeper, towards the end of the first half proved to be crucial factors in their domination of the second half.

Luton lost heart, then lost their way. Barnes got the better of two players early in the second half near the corner flag to thread a pass to Paul Boertien, whose whipped cross was headed just wide by Seth Johnson.

The Rams carried all the threat and Luton's fate looked ominous when Stead unleashed a shot from outside the penalty area which rebounded off a post.

The home side's defence were woefully negligent in failing to close Stead down, however, as he moved in from the left with 18 minutes remaining. From the edge of the penalty area, he drilled a low shot inside the right post to give Derby the lead.

Within four minutes Howard had made it two — the 19th goal

Luton have conceded in six games — when a cleverly worked free-kick presented Morten Bisgaard with a chance which he backheeled against a post. The big striker was first to the rebound to score his eighth goal in 13 games.

Edwards tried to launch a comeback with a rasping shot

from 20 yards which Bywater parried, and the substitute Warren Feeney had a header cleared off the line. "I was asked this week if I was looking for a way out. The answer to that is an emphatic no," Newell said. But he needs to find a way to reverse Luton's decline, and fast.

Star Man: Jonathan Stead (Derby)

Player Ratings. Luton: Beresford 5, Foley 6, Barnett 6, Perrett 6, Emanuel 6, Edwards 7, Robinson 6 (Bell 86min, 5), Heikkinen 6, Brkovic 6 (Morgan 72min, 5), Vine 6 (Feeney 73min, 6), Boyd 7.

Derby: Bywater 7, Edworthy 6, Moore 7, Leacock 6, Boertien 6, Bisgaard 7 (Smith 87min, 5), Barnes 6, Johnson 7 (Jones 80min, 5), Oakley 7, Stead 8 (Lupoli 90min, 5), Howard 7.

Scorers: Derby: Stead 72, Howard 76

Referee: S Tanner

Attendance: 9,708



Happy return: Steve Howard, who scored Derby's second goal against Luton, challenges his former teammate Russell Perrett