



Heading for trouble: Luton defender Sol Davis, centre, wins a challenge against Blackburn duo Francis Jeffers, left, and midfielder Aaron Mokoena, but could do nothing to prevent the Championship side being well beaten by their Premiership visitors

Luton punished by Derbyshire

We pay very dearly, and travel great distances for a sight of the dream quality of the ancient FA Cup. But, although there was clearly nothing for Luton Town on their home pitch yesterday, and nothing was anticipated by the fans because only 5,887 turned up, there was real magic in the air.

One young man of Blackburn, christened Matt Derbyshire, just 20 years of age, is becoming an overnight star for his hometown team – and a star among players who have arrived in Lancashire from the Congo, from the USA, from Australia and heaven knows where else. He, scoring twice and bravely making a goal for South Africa's Benni McCarthy, was clearly the starlet of yesterday's early kick off.

But there was another story buried in this apparent romp by Blackburn, the return after nine months out with a broken leg of central defender Ryan Nelsen. And to top that, if you are one of the 723 Rovers fans who made this journey, you will have seen one of the sweetest goals, rolled off the outside of the left foot of Morten Gamst Pedersen. Some of us are still trying to fathom how this laid back Norwegian can see an opportunity from the edge of the penalty area, can lean almost lazily into the shot, and stroke the ball so that it curves apparently under his remote guidance in such a delicate arch inside the far post. A marvellous, memorable strike.

Luton 0 Blackburn 4

Rob Hughes at Kenilworth Road



Scorers: Blackburn: Derbyshire 10, 56, McCarthy 37, Pedersen 74

Match stats

Luton	Blackburn
3	7
1	3
0	0
4	0
14	17
3	7
0	1
0	0
44%	56%

Star Man: Matt Derbyshire (Blackburn)
Player ratings: Luton: Beresford 5, Foley 5, Perrett 5, Coyne 5 (Keane 20min, 4), Davis 5, Bell 5 (Morgan 50min, 6), Langley 6, Robinson 6, Emanuel 4, Boyd 5, Talbot 5 (O'Leary 60min, 5)
Blackburn: Friedel 5, Khazashvili 6, Hanchaz 7, Nelsen 6 (Samba 60min, 5), Warnock 7, Emerton 6, Bentley 6, Mokoena 6, Pedersen 7, Derbyshire 8, McCarthy 7 (Jeffers 60min, 5)
Scorers: Blackburn: Derbyshire 10, 56, McCarthy 37, Pedersen 74
Referee: S. Bennett Attendance: 5,887

But alas, poor Luton. The fact that their fans have suffered, along with their fine young manager Mike Newell, who has had to sell half the team he brought up to the Championship, and this season has lost the spine of the rest of them to continuing injuries, is exacerbated by the simple

reality of economics. This was Luton's third home game in a week, following defeat to Barnsley and a win against QPR, and we could see that from the way the pitch, heavy with mud, also suffered. But as both managers pointed out with the match shown live on lunchtime television, with

fans having to prioritise just how much they can pay, the FA Cup is the victim.

So, clearly, are Luton. To add to their considerable woes, the captain Chris Coyne is having to soldier on from match to match, trying to disguise a persistent knee injury. He injured it further in collision with Stephen Warnock early in the game, that contributed to his laboured inability to defend the opening goal, and from then Luton were leaderless and lost.

After just nine minutes Coyne gave the ball away, he was completely unable to raise a sprint and get back, and from McCarthy's rolled pass, Derbyshire was in the clear behind Coyne. He still had to show his composure ability to beat goalkeeper Marlon Beresford, but he did it to near perfection. The goalkeeper came to the near post, Derbyshire shot across him and into the far netting.

It was his fourth goal already this season. And already this young man has made quite a journey: he was purchased for less than £20,000 by Blackburn from Great Harwood Town, but to accelerate his education, he was loaned out to Plymouth Argyle. A change of manager in Devon cast him aside, he took a second loan to Wrexham, the goals then flowed and Mark Hughes, the Blackburn manager, summoned him back to Ewood Park.

Newell, a former Blackburn goalscorer himself, had spotted the potential and tried more than once to hire Derbyshire on loan. But by then Hughes was having problems with injuries in his own attack, and he said

yesterday: "He's come in and had an impact every time I've picked him. He enthuses the team with his energy and positive play, and when a young man comes in and makes a statement by scoring goals you have to consider him, even ahead of the senior players. Maybe the step-up has come sooner than we expected but he's taken his chance."

Obviously Newell opined that the boy has pace, willingness, and he can finish; he can only get better. "He's got pace and scores goals. What more can you ask from a striker?" Newell said.

Derbyshire will get better, and quickly so. After 35 minutes, when Blackburn attacked from their own goalmouth and hit Luton with a quick move Derbyshire was a key element again. It was his bravery in reaching the ball with his head to Pedersen's cross that simply begged his strike partner McCarthy to score with side-foot ease. And, especially after Drew Talbot, a willing debutant for Luton, had failed to hit the target with a header.

The one-sided nature of this contest was emphasised with two further goals. Derbyshire rose to make it 3-0 after 56 minutes after a free kick from Pedersen was then driven into the six-yard box by midfielder Brett Emerton. And then, to cap it all in terms of quality, came that sublime final goal from the left foot of Pedersen.

There is nowhere to go for Newell but to plunder the free transfer market for further players before the window closes this

Fifth-round draw



Great Britain athletes Darren Campbell and Roger Black will pick out the teams tomorrow at 1.30pm, live on **Sky Sports News, BBC 2 and Radio 5 Live**

week. "It wasn't a massive shock that we lost like this in these circumstances," said the home manager. "But you don't expect me to pack it all in, surely? I'm not like that."

The kindest thing we might observe about Luton is that even under these circumstances they tried to play decent, passing football. What they lacked was devilment, what the team and the crowd lacked was belief, and the tempo was never enough to ruffle a Premiership side. Meanwhile Hughes, after his team have now scored four times at Everton and at Luton in successive rounds of the cup is an FA Cup dreamer – he's thinking that things might open up for him to lead out the team at Wembley.

"Give us one goal!" chorused the Luton fans. Those fans who turned up in support were denied even a hint of that.