

# Looks grim

## COVENTRY CITY 1 HATTERS 0

Andy MacKenzie reports from the Ricoh Arena

LUTON'S relegation worries intensified after a morale-shattering defeat at fellow Championship strugglers Coventry last night.

Substitute Leon McKenzie's deflected 76th minute winner gave the Sky Blues a first victory in 10 and left Town deep in the mire at the wrong end of the table.

Dean Brill's point-blank save from Marcus Hall late on prevented the scoreline from being even worse while Lewis Emanuel also limped out of the game, adding to Hatters' list of absentees.

Luton went into the game having signed Fulham striker Bjorn Runstrom on a month's loan, but the 23-year-old Swede was not available for the clash at the Ricoh.

Instead injury-hit Luton handed a second debut to ex-Watford man Matthew Spring, who recovered from the calf problem sustained before the Blackburn game to replace Richard Langley.

The other changes to the 4-0 weekend whitewash included Brill coming in for Marlon Beresford in goal, Keith Keane deputising for Chris Coyne as an emergency centre-half and Dean Morgan taking the place of Adam Boyd up front.

Coventry, also troubled with injury and unavailability, made four changes to the side that lost 3-2 to Plymouth. The threadbare nature of both squads was shown by the fact that just eight players remained from the 22 that started the last meeting between the clubs in December.

Last season's fixture between the sides saw Town bring more than 3,000 supporters to the game, but the latest meeting saw just 591 Luton followers.

Hatters started swiftly and almost scored within 45 seconds as Morgan flashed an angled shot just wide from 10-yards after Sol Davis' deep free-kick.

But they were then forced on to the back foot by the hosts as Keane stopped David McNamee's 30-yard run in the 13th minute and Brill had to be alert to clear after being sold short by Spring three minutes later.

That was as interesting as a pitiful first-half got and as passes went astray and balls flew into touch the best piece of skill came in the 29th minute when Coventry caretaker boss Adrian Heath expertly brought down a Davis 50-yard punt with one touch in his technical area.

The only other action of note saw Brill bravely claim the ball ahead of muscular home forward Dele Adebola twice in the space of a minute shortly before the break.

The second period continued in familiar sedate fashion as Perrett blocked an



**Ref: Mark Clattenburg (Tyne & Wear)**  
**Attendance: 18,781 (591 Luton fans)**

attempt from Chris Birchall on the right hand corner of the Town penalty area two minutes in before Talbot took Morgan's lay-off a minute later at the other end before firing high and wide from 20 yards.

Talbot almost got in behind the Sky Blues' defence just before the hour when he ran on to Perrett's clearance down the right channel, but he got his cross-shot all wrong and the ball ran out for a throw-in.

Coventry's Maltese striker fired in an off target 20-yarder moments later before the home side changed things around with a double substitution as one-time Luton target Kevin Kyle and ex-Norwich man McKenzie entered the fray.

The pair immediately linked up in the 65th minute as McKenzie laid off for Kyle to drag a 15-yard shot wide with his left foot as the goal opened up ahead of him.

Lanky forward Kyle made his presence felt again four minutes later as he struck a half-hit effort at Brill from eight yards after Jay Tabb's deep cross from the left.

With the game finally opening up, Luton then got forward in the 72nd minute and Spring headed Lewis Emanuel's hanging cross just over from 14 yards.

As the game became stretched Coventry struck a devastating blow to Hatters 14 minutes from time when another substitute, Kevin Thornton, held off Spring's challenge to play in McKenzie, who cut inside before firing a left-footed, eight yard effort that bounced over the unfortunate Brill off Perrett and into the net.

Luton produced a late rally and Talbot had a header cleared off the line.



Picture: GARETH OWEN

**ACTION STATIONS: Luton's Dean Morgan and Andrew Whing battle at the Ricoh Arena**