

Bad to worse

HATTERS 1 HULL CITY 2

Andy MacKenzie reports from Kenilworth Road

LUTON'S season went from bad to worse as Town slumped to a fifth straight defeat against relegation rivals Hull in another miserable night at Kenilworth Road.

Drew Talbot's second-half goal wasn't enough as earlier strikes from David Livermore and Michael Turner gave City the win and left Hatters in the drop zone.

After Saturday's depressing defeat to Leeds, Mike Newell gambled by moving centre-half Leon Barnett up front and dropping skipper Steve Robinson and strikers Bjorn Runstrom and Warren Feeney. In came Kevin Foley, Richard Langley and Drew Talbot while Markus Heikkinen took the captain's armband.

Barnett's presence in the final third prompted Town to start in direct fashion, but when they did get the ball down they created an opening as Keith Keane played a one-two with Foley before hitting a 20-yard volley at Boaz Myhill.

The game meandered on in scrappy fashion until a rare moment of quality produced the opening goal as Tigers right-back Sam Ricketts teased his way to the bye-line in the 22nd minute and produced the perfect cross for Livermore to nod home from eight yards.

Hatters seemed unable to mount any response and instead Hull came forward with substitute Bolton loan-man Ricardo Vaz Te lashing over from 25 yards after a 26th minute Dean Windass knock down, before Turner headed Livermore's corner just wide four minutes later.

Things got even grimmer for Luton in the 34th minute when goalkeeper Marlon Beresford had to be stretched from the field with a head injury after a goalmouth scramble.

After being jeered off at half-time, Town reshuffled for the second period by bringing in Warren Feeney for Langley and moving Barnett into midfield.

It sparked a brief rally as Carlisle and



Referee: Ray Olivier (West Mids)
Attendance: 7,777 (621 from Hull)

Heikkinen both just failed to convert a 49th minute Emanuel free-kick from the right.

But Hatters were stunned just after the hour mark when Turner produced a finish unexpected for a centre-half by volleying Livermore's free-kick into the corner from the edge of the area to make it 2-0.

With Luton reeling, City came again as firstly Windass and then Vaz Te both fired wide from 20-yards.

Hatters were thrown a lifeline in the 71st minute when Carlisle was clattered on the edge of the box and substitute Dean Morgan stepped up to whip in a curling free-kick that was nodded home by Talbot for his third Luton goal.

Gaps developed as Town desperately pushed on for an equaliser and Vaz Te should have wrapped things up for Hull in the 76th minute only to fire past the post.

Feeney's rasping shot on 82 minutes had Hatters fans holding their breath, but Myhill tipped the effort over the bar.



IT'S AGONY! Kevin Foley is clattered to the ground in the early stages of Luton's latest Kenilworth Road calamity

Picture by Jane Russell