

Matchaction

Elvin King reports on Ipswich Town



ON ME HEAD: Alan Lee was in the thick of the action at Luton today and he is seen here heading goalwards

Forget relegation as Town ease through

IPSWICH Town guaranteed themselves another season of Championship football with their fifth away victory of the season at Kenilworth Road this afternoon.

They deserved to beat a dreadful Luton side, who look on their way to League One.

Demonstrations followed Town's second goal with fans furious with the Luton board following the dismissal of Mike Newell as manager this week.

Alan Lee ensured that Ipswich did not go goalless on their travels yet again, with a goal poacher's finish in the 39th minute, heading home after Owen Garvan had struck the bar.

Matt Richards came off the bench to replace the injured Sylvain

Legwinski, and he scored a second goal in the 62nd minute following a superb Fabian Wilnis cross.

Luton were there to be beaten on a dreadful pitch, and Town did their job. Barring a run of amazing results Town can now relax and look to build for another Championship campaign.

Town made four changes from the side that lost 1-0 at Preston on Tuesday. Fabian Wilnis replaced Dan Harding who is fit but was at the birth of a baby daughter; Gavin Williams started his first match since Stoke in January - out went Matt Richards - Owen Garvan took over from George O'Callaghan and striker Alan Lee returned after suspension to take the place of Danny Haynes.

The pitch looked bare and was

Luton 0
Ipswich . . . 2

being watered as the players came out to warm-up in bright sunshine.

Town had not scored in eight of their previous 10 games, and needed the points to go into a two-week break free from any relegation concerns.

Ipswich have won twice on nine previous visits to Kenilworth Road - losing six times.

The Hatters parted company with manager Mike Newell on Thursday with Brian Stein taking over as caretaker manager.

They included 19-year-old Austrian striker Besian Idrizaj who was signed on loan from Liverpool yesterday.

Marlon Beresford was able to take his place in goal after suffering a head knock in Tuesday's home defeat by Hull City.

Ex-Town striker Sam Parkin is injured along with Ahmet Brkovic and Paul Underwood.

Stein was given a good reception when he took his place in the dug-out, while Essex referee D'Urso was roundly booed when announced over the public address system by both sets of supporters.

Williams was playing on the right of midfield for Ipswich on a pitch that had quickly cut up.

Beresford caught an early Town free-kick, and then right-back Keane

cleared a Walters cross for a corner when facing his own goal.

A bumpy pitch led to Price misdirecting a Wilnis back pass high into the stands. Town were trying to play football on the ground, but it was not easy although the Hatters defence looked nervy and Barnet gave away a corner when under no pressure.

Idrizaj got beyond Wright in the ninth minute, but De Vos was across to snuff out the trouble, and Ipswich, playing in their regulation blue and white strip were soon back on the offensive.

Talbot won a corner off Bruce with some neat play that livened up the home fans. Bell's kick was half cleared, but a slack pass by Garvan



ON HIS HANDS AND LEES: Alan Lee stoops to put Town ahead at Luton today

Photos: WARREN PAGE

gave Carlisle the chance to volley left-footed from 16-yards in the 12th minute.

Price distinguished himself with a brilliant right-handed tip-over.

Luton were now calling the shots with Town struggling to put two decent passes together as the sun continued to shine causing those on the visiting bench to shield their eyes.

It was a scrappy start with the conditions playing their part, but neither team able to get up a head of steam.

De Vos required lengthy treatment for a facial injury and had to be helped back to the dressing holding a towel around his mouth.

Garvan went into the back four beside Bruce, with Beresford kicking the ball against Walters. Luckily for the keeper the ball rebounded to the keeper.

A statement in the Luton programme by the chairman and board - referring to the departure of Newell - said 'At no time has the board instructed the manager to sell a player. Equally, we have never refused the manager when it came to buying players.'

This was in response to Newell's statement that he wondered were £9million had gone following the sale of five of last season's successful side.

Lee had yet to touch the ball for Ipswich, who were still playing with ten men. Bruce charged

touchline. Roberts took an inswinging kick that was acrobatically sent goalwards by Garvan. Beresford was beaten and could only watch as the ball rebounded off the bar. LEE was lurking with intent and he was free to head the rebound high into then net from six-yards.

It was Lee's 15th goal of the season equalling his highest seasonal total obtained while playing for Rotherham. He had scored a hat-trick in the home game against Luton

Newcomer Idrizaj was partnered up front by Talbot with Foley, Robinson, Heikkinen and Bell making up the Luton midfield.

But apart from a spell when De Vos was off the field, the Hatters had looked a side devoid of confidence and shaky at the back

Town broke from a Luton corner in the two minutes of stoppage time, and Richards should have done better when fed by Walters - failing to put Roberts clear against a near non-existent defence. Half-time:

Luton Town 0 Ipswich Town 1

There were two changes at the interval with Coyne and Feeney coming on to try and liven up Luton. They replaced Emanuel and Idrizaj.

Lee played Walters to the by-line in the 48th minute, and his shot-cum-cross flew low across the six-yard box with no Town player able to add a touch.

De Vos headed a Luton free-kick clear, with Walters booting the ball upfield - the best policy in this contest being played on a pitch that resembles a ploughed field.

Feeney, a relation of former Town defender Jim Feeney, had the ball in the net in the 53rd minute, but the whistle had gone earlier for a foul on keeper Price as the Town man attempted to collect a free-kick.

Williams received treatment after taking a blow, with Town fans taking the opportunity to chant 'Super Jim' in recognition of their manager Magilton.

Foley popped the ball into the Town net in the 57th minute, but this was ruled out for off-side as Town began to live dangerously.

Wright was playing at left back to show his versatility - having already played at right back and central defence since his arrival from Wigan Athletic. Roberts had now moved to the right of midfield with Williams in the middle and Richards on the left.

Legwinski signed autographs and was applauded as he limped badly in front of Town fans to take his place back on the bench across the field from the changing rooms.

Ipswich were -as usual - well supported with the fans taking up the stand behind one of the goals in this out of date stadium that does Luton no favours in its quest to compete at this level of football.

Town fans had plenty to cheer in the 62nd minute when substitute RICHARDS scored a second goal for the visitors. Wilnis went haring down the right wing and provided a superb cross from near the corner flag.

Walters competed with Beresford and when

the ball dropped in front of goal, Richards sent a left-foot side-foot high into the net.

This goal caused all sorts of commotion in the stands with home fans on their feet and directing their fury at the Luton board.

'Where has the money gone?', 'We want our money back' and 'Sack the board' chants were ringing out around the ground with what was happening on the pitch proving secondary.

If Mr Sheepshanks thinks he has problems it is nothing compared to the Luton chairman.

There had earlier been little sign of any demonstrations. This had been muted yesterday, but the Hatters faithful had shown few signs of dissatisfaction until the Richards' third goal of the season.

Bruce cleared with a great tackle when Luton pushed forward, with Wilnis clearing the tiny stand that runs along one side of the round with one clearance.

Luton, to their credit, were still trying to play football, but at the end of a neat move Feeney crossed weakly into the crowd.

Haynes come on for Lee after 73 minutes with the goalscorer having a highly effective game after a slow start.

Haynes' pace soon caused Luton problems, and when he got to the by-line his cross was played back by Richards and scuffed by Walters.

Runstrom came on for Foley after 78 minutes just after Haynes jumped among Town after just failing to keep a long ball in play.

De Vos and Bruce were in control at the back for Ipswich, with Luton having to resort to a 30-yard shot from Keane that bobbled yards wide.

Haynes almost caught a Richards pass in the 83rd minute with Town working hard to claim their fifth away win. Bell tried a shot after gritty approach work, but it was from 20-yards and saved by a diving Price.

Clarke came on for the hard-working Walters after 85 minutes, with Feeney heading a free-kick over the bar soon afterwards.

Luton were pretty woeful and on this form have to be relegated, while Town had done enough to deserve the points.

A shot deflected by Wilnis caused Price to change his footing and collect - with little seen of Town in attack as the clock ticked down.

Carlisle headed over in stoppage time but Town were going to keep a rare clean sheet and give themselves a stress-free two-week break caused by Euro-2008 qualifiers. Result:

Luton Town 0 Ipswich Town 2

Attendance: 8,880
Luton man of the match: Carlisle.
Ipswich man of the match: De Vos.

Teams

Luton Town: **Beresford, Foley, Robinson, Emanuel, Keane, Idrizaj, Barnett, Heikkinen, Bell, Talbot, Carlisle.** Subs: Brill, Runstrom, Feeney, O'Leary, Coyne.

Ipswich Town: **Price; Wilnis, Bruce, De Vos, Wright; Williams, Legwinski, Garvan, Roberts; Lee, Walters.** Subs: Supple, Richards, O'Callaghan, Haynes, Clarke.

Referee: **Mr A D'Urso (Billericay)**

Will Bent get on?

STRIKER Darren Bent has been named in the England squad for the Euro 2008 qualifiers against Israel and Andorra. Ipswich Town will receive £200,000 from Charlton for each of Bent's first two competitive international games following his transfer from Portman Road to The Valley for £2,500,000 in June 2005. England face Israel in Tel Aviv next Saturday and Andorra in Barcelona on Wednesday March 28.

down a Heikkinen drive after a weak Garvan clearance with Town under pressure.

Ipswich were reduced to nine men for a while after Legwinski left the field following the effects of a hard half-way line challenge. He had limped off and was replaced by Richards after 26 minutes.

This was certainly not going to be classic - but the points were going to be vital with Luton looking the more likely at this stage to score.

Lee was getting back into midfield with Walters fighting a lone battle up front. De Vos returned looking none the worse for wear in the 32nd minute, and Town were at last back to their full compliment.

Beresford let slip a Bruce free-kick as Luton continued to look shaky at the back, but De Vos appeared to impede Roberts as the Town wide man went to shoot.

Town broke the ice in the 39th minute after Wilnis has been sent sprawling by the right