

Luton Town are really 'Up The Junction' after sixth successive home defeat

New chairman watches as Hatters' hopes fade

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ALTHOUGH still mathematically possible to stay up, a sixth successive home defeat virtually condemned Hatters to relegation.

If fellow strugglers Barnsley and Hull had both won yesterday this result would have made sure of Luton's place in League One.

But, while Barnsley and Luton kept their end of the bargain, Hull managed a draw leaving Kevin Blackwell's men clinging onto the Championship by their fingernails.

Not that Luton put up much of a fight against Plymouth who strolled to victory with first-half goals from David Norris and Peter Halmosi.

Luton replied in the second half when substitute Stephen O'Leary scored his first of the season, but that was as bright as it got for the Hatters who were dreadful.

So bad in fact that Blackwell chose not to face the media after the game, sending coach Sam Ellis instead.

"We're very disappointed," said a downbeat Ellis. "You know what you saw and you must know how we feel after that display."

"We were that bad in the first half that we could only improve in the second."

"Maybe some of the players feel it's enough – but it isn't."

"I don't want to slag the players off. We feel they're better than we saw them play today, particularly on the



BACK IN IT: Stephen O'Leary's goal for Luton, but it wasn't enough to prevent another home defeat

training field.

"The main thing is we don't want to hide or make excuses. We'll never give up and I hope the players haven't."

New chairman David Pinkney took his place in the directors' box, but it didn't spark a change in his new club's fortunes. "I think he'll be disappointed after watching that," remarked Ellis.

Hatters made just one change from

the side that lost 3-2 at QPR on Bank Holiday Monday with Leon Barnett replacing Markus Heikkinen who dropped to the bench.

That scoreline in West London all but rubber-stamped Luton's relegation so the decision to play Squeeze's hit 'Up The Junction' before the game seemed like a cruel, if accurate, record selection when true-to-form Hatters

went behind early on.

Four minutes in, Hungarian winger Halmosi delivered a cross into the box for Argyle's David Norris who timed his deep run to perfection, rising unmarked to expertly despatch his header past Dean Brill.

Luton's best chance fell to Steve Robinson 20 minutes later with one of the game's few passing moves. Both

sides were guilty of using the easy long ball but when Chris Coyne's overhead kick played in Robinson, he bypassed the stubborn Plymouth defence and his first touch set up a one-on-one with keeper Luke McCormick.

Frustratingly the Luton midfielder's second touch was too heavy and a relieved McCormick rushed out to gather.

Argyle striker Sylvan Ebanks-Blake flashed a shot inches wide of Brill's goal on the half-hour mark but the visitors doubled their advantage just before half-time.

On 40 minutes Ebanks-Blake and forward partner Barry Hayles' one-two on the edge of the box was halted by Barnett's intervention.

However, the Hatters' defender inadvertently diverted the ball into the path of the lurking Halmosi whose low drive beat Brill.

At the start of the second half Blackwell took Matt Spring off and bought on O'Leary who had an immediate impact.

Six minutes later, Bell's corner was whipped into a busy penalty area and reached Coyne at the far post. The skipper headed goalwards but saw his effort hacked off the line by Gary Sawyer.

The clearance wasn't allowed to escape the box though and O'Leary stabbed the ball past McCormick and several of his green-shirted teammates who were rooted to the line.

It should have sparked a spirited comeback, but the current squad didn't come close to grabbing an equaliser much to the home crowd's frustrations.

Lewis Emanuel's free kick had power but no precision, skimming wide and Calvin Andrew also missed the target late on.

The first of Luton's final three matches is against Derby and live on Sky next Friday.