

Hatters run out of chances

Derby 1
Luton 0

LUTON'S relegation was confirmed at Pride Park where promotion-chasing Derby secured a 1-0 win thanks to Lewin Nyatanga scoring the only goal of the game.

The Hatters had gone into the game knowing any result other than victory would see them doomed and the visitors were liveliest early on, though it was the Rams who went close to opening the scoring in the eighth minute when Gary Teale nodded David Jones' free kick wide.

Matt Oakley rattled the Luton crossbar from the left channel following a free kick routine 25-yards out, before Matt Spring was allowed time and space on the edge of the Derby penalty area only to curl his effort high and wide.

Then, in a see-saw first half, play swung again to the Luton penalty area where, in the 26th minute, Teale

forced a save from Dean Brill following a one-two with Oakley.

Darren Currie — the winger on loan from Ipswich — stood the ball up from the by-line and Hatters skipper Chris Coyne was required to clear former Luton striker Steve Howard's header off the line.

Dean Leacock headed a Jones corner over as Derby threatened again but the deadlock was broken in the 37th minute when another Jones flag kick was met again by Leacock and spectacularly saved on the line by Brill.

Nyatanga, who was recalled from a loan at Barnsley earlier in the week, was on hand to force home the rebound and net the first Derby goal of his season, the third of his career and his first at Pride Park.

The Rams started the second half seeking to turn the screw through Jones, though the £1million January buy from Manchester United dragged his 18-yard effort wide in the 50th minute.

And the Rams went close again when Leacock met Jones' free kick

from the right, before Howard saw his follow-up ricochet onto the bar and then pounced on the rebound, only to see his next effort somehow diverted away from goal.

Jones saw a dipping effort land on the top of the Town net in the 71st minute, before substitute Arturo Lupoli, on for Currie, saw his shot

06/07
saved by Brill's outstretched boot and Howard blazed the rebound over.

Giles Barnes limped out of the action in the 80th minute when he was replaced by Craig Fagan ahead of Luton's Besian Idrizaj, who had replaced Drew Talbot, testing Rams goalkeeper Stephen Bywater moments later.

Blackwell trying to remain positive

RELEGATED Luton manager Kevin Blackwell has been assured he will be granted the funds needed to stage a promotion push out of League One next season.

Blackwell said: "Was it an impossible job when I took over? Let us say I am just 26 days into the job and it has been interesting.

"I know coming straight back up after relegation will be difficult for us because it is not the norm for teams to bounce straight back and we will be seen as a scalp in League One next season.

"The new chairman wants a new

stadium, a new training ground and has given me the opportunity to rebuild the club from top to bottom, but we will also need funds to strengthen and he has assured me those funds will be made available."

Wales international Lewin Nyatanga netted in his comeback game for Derby after having been recalled from loan at Barnsley.

And Rams boss Billy Davies said: "It was not a tactical masterstroke to bring him back — it was a case of needs must because we had lost Darren Moore to suspension and Michael Johnson to injury."