

Nyatanga on hand to keep promotion hopes alive

Derby
Luton

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Derby County, watched by round-the-world yachtswoman Ellen MacArthur, were grateful to an ill-wind generated by injuries and suspensions last night that kept them on course for the Barclays Premiership.

The absence of several key defenders had prompted Billy Davies, the manager, to recall Lewin Nyatanga, 18, from his loan spell with Barnsley. And, as is often the way, the youngster responded in what was his first start since September by heading the goal that returned Derby to second place.

The Wales international also ensured that one issue in the Coca-Cola Championship was resolved: Kevin Blackwell's attempts to keep Luton Town afloat after taking over recently proved futile and his side were relegated.

Luton, seemingly resigned to their fate, played with a composure that was at odds with a

Derby County (4-4-2): S Bywater — M Edworthy, D Leacock, L Nyatanga, J McEveley — G Teale (sub: S Pearson, 73min), M Oakley, D Jones, D Currie (sub: A Lupoli, 65) — S Howard, G Barnes. **Substitutes not used:** L Grant, C Fagan, T Mears.

Luton Town (4-4-2): D Brill — K Foley, L Barnett, C Coyne, L Emanuel — S O'Leary (sub: R Langley, 73), M Heikkinen, M Spring, D Bell — D Talbot (sub: B Idrizaj, 66), C Andrew.

Substitutes not used: R Perrett, A Boyd, K Keane. **Booked:** Idrizaj.

Referee: R Beeby.

team in freefall. Indeed, had David Bell's low cross that skidded across Derby's six-yard box been given a friendly nudge, they would have taken the lead. Derby's nerves, by contrast, were betrayed by a willingness to part with the ball as quickly as possible, usually in the direction of Steve Howard, the former Luton striker.

David Jones, the Derby central midfield player, did try to inject some finesse, not least with a crossfield pass to Darren Currie that resulted in his team's one chance of note that came from open play.

Currie responded with a cross that set up Howard for a goalbound header cleared off the line by Chris Coyne. However, Derby posed most threat from Jones's set-piece deliveries. Matt Oakley, set up by Jones taking a short free kick 30 yards out, rattled the Luton bar. And an inswinging corner from Jones resulted in Derby going ahead. Dean Leacock met the ball first, his header rebounding for Nyatanga to fire home from six yards.

A follow-up proved elusive. Among numerous forays, Leacock had a header deflected on to the bar and another goalline clearance prevented Howard from exploiting the rebound.