

Winger drops his pregnant wife at hospital on his way to the match

Hatters turn on the style for home win

LUTON TOWN FC

LEAGUE ONE

LUTON 3
Bell '17', Furlong '27', Spring '80' (pen)
GILLINGHAM 1

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Luton Town chalked up their second win of the season with a comfortable victory over Gillingham.

However, there was more than points at stake for one Luton Town player as manager Kevin Blackwell revealed that the wife of winger Darren Currie had gone into labour. The player even dropped her off at the hospital on his way to the game.

On the field, a David Bell wonder strike put Hatters on their way before an unlikely equaliser from Gills' Mark Bentley gave the away side their first goal of the season.

Paul Furlong put away one of many chances to restore Luton's lead before Matt Spring's late penalty made sure of the points.

"It could have, and probably should have been over at half time," said Hatters' manager Blackwell. "The game should have been dead and buried. I told the players we'd have to deal with that in the second half and we did."

"Overall I'm pleased but we could do better. The first half I thought we were superb."

"We've got energy in the midfield, we moved the ball quickly and played well."

"I'm still to decide what team I'd put out every week. We're not the finished article but we look, potentially, a good side."

There were three changes to last weekend's side beaten at Swindon, Talbot for Paul Peschisolido up front, Bell for Steve Robinson in the middle and, due to a knock sustained in training by Dean Brill, Cardiff City goalkeeper David Forde was drafted in on a one month loan and made his debut.

Not that the 27-year-old had much to do at the start of his brief Luton career with his new teammates creating the better chances early on.

Captain Chris Coyne and David Edwards both volleyed wide from good positions as Luton hit the ground running.

No more so than fit again Bell who produced the game's opener out of nothing on 17 minutes.

Just inside the opposition's half the skilful midfielder shrugged off Barry Cogan with a drag back and cut inside Nicky Southall as Gillingham backed off daring him to shoot. He did just that, belting the ball into the bottom of Simon Royce's net from 25 yards and bringing the Kenilworth Road crowd to their feet in admiration.



Above: Chris Coyne challenges for the ball

Main picture, David Bell shoots

The scoreline should have been doubled on 20 minutes when Furlong was presented with an easy chance after Talbot's flick had put David Edwards clear. Edwards squared for Furlong who went through one on one against Royce, but the keeper blocked with ease at the Luton striker's weak shot.

The miss proved even more costly two minutes later when, against the run of play, Gillingham drew level. From a corner Southall picked out midfielder Bentley unmarked at the near post who headed past Forde with ease.

Rather than panic Blackwell's men kept their cool in the heat and some patient play put Hatters back in control on 27 minutes. Luton kept the ball well inside the Gillingham half, trying to carve out an opportunity when the ball came to Darren Currie on the edge of the box.

His shot cannoned into the Gills' defence with the deflection making its way to the byline and becoming a 50/50 ball between Royce and Talbot. The speedy forward won the chase and cut back for Furlong who

was rewarded for his brave low header with his first goal in a Luton shirt.

One in the bag, Furlong had a taste for a second and the spectacular when his overhead kick went inches wide on the half hour mark.

Strike partner Talbot thought he'd got in on the action after 36 minutes but his deft header from Currie's cross was turned around the post by the over-worked Royce.

Luton should have been further ahead at half time, but came out for the second half more cautious. Hatters' attack may have dried up, but the visitors posed little threat only a half-hearted shout for a penalty when Matt Spring slid in on Delroy Facey an hour in.

The draining heat took its toll but Luton finally put the game to bed ten minutes from time with a Spring penalty. Right back Richard Jackson put the ball over the top for substitute Paul McVeigh to chase, but as the Northern Ireland international met the pass he was bundled over in the area by Bentley's late clattering challenge.

Designated penalty taker Spring had to wrestle the ball off McVeigh for the spot kick, but was spared the wrath of his teammate, placing his shot into the top corner.

McVeigh almost got his desired goal in the final minute when Bell picked him out at the far post but, with Royce scrambling to cover, the Ulsterman kicked thin air.

With the heat off (not literally) and a break in play Currie wandered over to the crowd and had a sip from a supporter's bottle of coke.

He may be celebrating with something stronger tonight as Blackwell revealed at the final whistle the winger's wife went into labour just before kick off!

"Currie had to race home at the end," said his boss. "He dropped her off at the hospital then came here. He said to me 'I'd rather be at Kenilworth Road than waiting in the labour ward.'"

■ Visit www.lutononsunday.com for an on the whistle match report when Luton take on Premiership side Sunderland in the Carling Cup Second Round on Tuesday night.

stats corner

MAN OF THE MATCH



David Edwards

Brilliant goal, brilliant performance. Luton must keep hold of him

THE SQUAD

Forde; Jackson, Perry, Coyne, Goodall; Currie, Bell, Spring, Edwards (Hutchison '86'); Furlong (Andrew '81), Talbot (McVeigh '64'). Subs: Keane, Robinson.

MATCH FACTS

CORNERS

LUTON 9 GILLINGHAM 2

OFFSIDE

LUTON 2 GILLINGHAM 4

SHOTS ON TARGET

LUTON 7 GILLINGHAM 3

SHOTS OFF TARGET

LUTON 6 GILLINGHAM 3

BOOKINGS

LUTON 0

GILLINGHAM 3

Cogan 31, Armstrong 83, Bentley 90

REFEREE

ANDY PENN, WEST MIDLANDS

FOOTBALL LEAGUE ONE

Cheltenham	1	Swindon	1
Crewe	0	Leyton Orient	2
Doncaster	1	Bournemouth	2
Huddersfield	0	Carlisle	2
Luton	3	Gillingham	1
Northampton	1	Yeovil	2
Nottm Forest	1	Leeds	2
Oldham	0	Bristol Rovers	1
Port Vale	0	Hartlepool	2
Southend	1	Millwall	0
Tranmere	2	Brighton	0
Walsall	1	Swansea	3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Leyton O	3	3	0	0	5	1	9
Carlisle	3	2	1	0	4	1	7
Tranmere	3	2	0	1	5	2	6
Luton	3	2	0	1	6	4	6
Hartlepool	3	2	0	1	5	3	6
Yeovil	3	2	0	1	3	2	6
Huddersf'd	3	2	0	1	2	2	6
Swindon	3	1	2	0	4	3	5
Bristol Rvrs	3	1	2	0	3	2	5
Swansea	3	1	1	1	4	3	4
B'mouth	3	1	1	1	2	2	4
Cheltenham	3	1	1	1	2	2	4
Millwall	3	1	1	1	1	1	4
Crewe	3	1	1	1	3	4	4
Oldham	3	1	0	2	2	3	3
Brighton	3	1	0	2	3	5	3
Southend	3	1	0	2	3	6	3
Nott'm Forest	3	0	2	1	1	2	2
North'ton	3	0	1	2	3	5	1
D'caster	3	0	1	2	2	4	1
Walsall	3	0	1	2	2	5	1
Port Vale	3	0	1	2	1	4	1
G'illingham	3	0	0	3	1	6	0
Leeds	3	3	0	0	8	3	-6