

Firing blanks

HATTERS @ CARLISLE 0

Mark Wood reports
from Kenilworth Road

WITHOUT a poacher up front to snatch the goals which they deserved, the Hatters had to settle for a point against table-topping Carlisle last night.

Luton created a whole host of chances and saw David Bell hammer an effort against the bar, but could just not find a way through.

Ever-improving striker Calvin Andrew put in a stoic performance as the lone frontman while Bell dazzled on the wing, but still Town were unable to break through.

With the exception of Darren Jackson coming in at left-back for the suspended Alan Goodall, manager Kevin Blackwell kept faith with the same side that slipped to defeat at Brighton on Saturday.

David Edwards almost seized on a Danny Livesey slip after just two minutes, but the Welshman's effort from outside the area crashed against a defender, while Andrew just could not reach Bell's dangerous cross two minutes later.

Bell was causing plenty of problems down the right and his curling cross on six minutes looked in after the flight had caught out keeper Keiren Westwood, but the ball fizzed inches wide.

And Edwards should have grounded off a sumptuous Hatters move when the game burst into life on 14 minutes.

Bell showed great skill after running on to Andrew flick and spread the ball wide for Currie, who cut a dangerous ball across the face of goal, but Edwards just could not connect and the ball went behind for a corner.

United just managed to clear the first corner and Town were desperately unlucky not to score from the second.

Chris Coyne rose highest at the far post to head Currie's corner through a forest of players and Bell's stabbed effort from point-blank range cannoned off the bar and out.

At the other end Carlisle were looking threatening on the break. Kevin Gall would have been in on 18 minutes if his control had not let him down, while Dean Brill had to be alert to tip Joe Garner's close-range header over the bar two min-

LUTON TOWN



Unused subs: Hutchison, Morgan, O'Leary, Talbot, McVeigh

CARLISLE



Unused subs: Carlton, Amison, Smith, McDermott, Howarth

Referee: G. Ward (ox) Att: x (xx Carlisle)

STAR HATTER: David Bell - silky skills deserved more

utes later.

Luton were playing some lovely stuff at times and missed out on another gilt-edged opportunity to take the lead on 25 minutes. Andrew showed good strength to muscle past his man and, with the keeper committed, the young striker slid the ball across to the onrushing Currie.

With only David Raven between him and the goal the full-back somehow got himself in the way when a goal looked a certainty.

The game lulled for a time before Edwards tried the spectacular on 37 minutes. Running on to Andrew's flick the midfielder let fly from 35 yards and his effort dipped just wide. The Welshman then fired over on the stroke of half-time.

Deep into first half injury-time Brill had to be alert to keep out Danny Graham's curled free-kick as the side went in goalless.

Luton almost got the second half off to a disastrous start when Brill sold Coyne short with his pass. The defender lost out to Garner, who fed Simon Hackney, but the winger's chipped effort was easily saved by Brill.



Picture by Jane Russell

SHORT-LIVED CELEBRATION: Calvin Andrew turns to cheer a first-half Luton goal, only for it to be ruled out by the referee

Bell, back to something like his best, then did superbly to craft himself an opportunity on 57 minutes, but his curler from outside the box was pushed away by Westwood.

And as Luton began to ramp up the pressure Andrew was unlucky not to break the deadlock when he turned his man in the box and his deflected effort, ducking just under the bar was turned over by Westwood.

Then in the space of a minute

there were chances at both ends, Coyne had a header turned over on 68 minutes while Brill did well to beat away a Graham blaster.

Coyne, on the end of so many deep balls, went close again when he met Bell's deep free-kick on 76 minutes, but Danny Livesey this time got back in the nick of time to clear the danger.

And Graham could have stolen the points in the final minute, but his angled drive streaked across the face of goal wide

Sol's still some way off return

HATTERS fans hoping to see the return of Sol Davis to first-team action are in for a wait.

With first-choice left-back Alan Goodall suspended, Lewis Emanuel out on loan at Brentford and Keith Keane still injured, supporters may have thought Davis was in line for a recall against Carlisle last night.

But asked whether Davis had been an option, manager Kevin Blackwell said: "Sol is still not at a level of fitness. It's only his second week of full training. Sol needs six or seven games where he plays continually without picking up an injury. If he can get another couple of games he'll go into the squad."

The manager said that he was unable to recall Emanuel because it was the player's first month of his temporary switch. He explained that Tottenham had been able to curtail Ben Alnwick's stay at Kenilworth Road in the first month as clubs can have a 24-hour emergency recall on a keeper.

On the injury front Paul Peschisolidi completed a light training session on Monday. Blackwell is eyeing the Walsall trip on Saturday week for the striker's comeback. He also sees the Saddlers game as the likely return date for Keith Keane and Paul Furlong.

Board's claims are 'ludicrous'

LUTON fans' group Trust in Luton says blaming supporters for the state of Hatters finances is "ludicrous".

Town's board responded to the Trust's leaflet drop at the Nottingham Forest home game by issuing a lengthy statement last Wednesday which accused "an external faction" for playing a major role in the club's increased losses.

They said fans had been urged not to buy season tickets, to boycott games and mount protests which had hit Town's revenue and driven up the cost of policing and stewarding. Trust chairman Liam Day denied the group had been involved in any such actions. He said: "To blame the fans for the state of the club is yet another ludicrous statement. To blame three months worth of policing/stewarding costs for an additional £1.5million is so silly that it doesn't warrant comment."

Day added that the Trust would be pressing the club further on several issues, including a place on the board and missing details of Hatters' accounts it had been promised.