

Andrews has Blues

07/08

Brill-iant keeper delights Blackwell

LUTON Town manager Kevin Blackwell believes his side were worthy winners on Saturday.

The Hatters were forced to rely on some fine goalkeeping from Dean Brill during the first half.

But they piled on the pressure after the break to pick up the points.

"I think Steve Tilson will admit that we deserved to win the game for the way we played in the second half," said Blackwell.

"We were on top and the goal was real quality."

And Blackwell also heaped praise on his goalkeeper Brill, who saved a first half penalty from Matt Harrold.

"We spoke with Dean before the game about Southend's penalty-taker and where he liked to put them," said the former Leeds boss.

"I thought the decision to award it in the first place was harsh, but it was great to see Dean carrying out what we told him and keeping it out."

YOUR SHOUT

We want to hear your views on the Blues. Let us know what you think about how the season is going via the following:

● BY FAX:

08444 774286

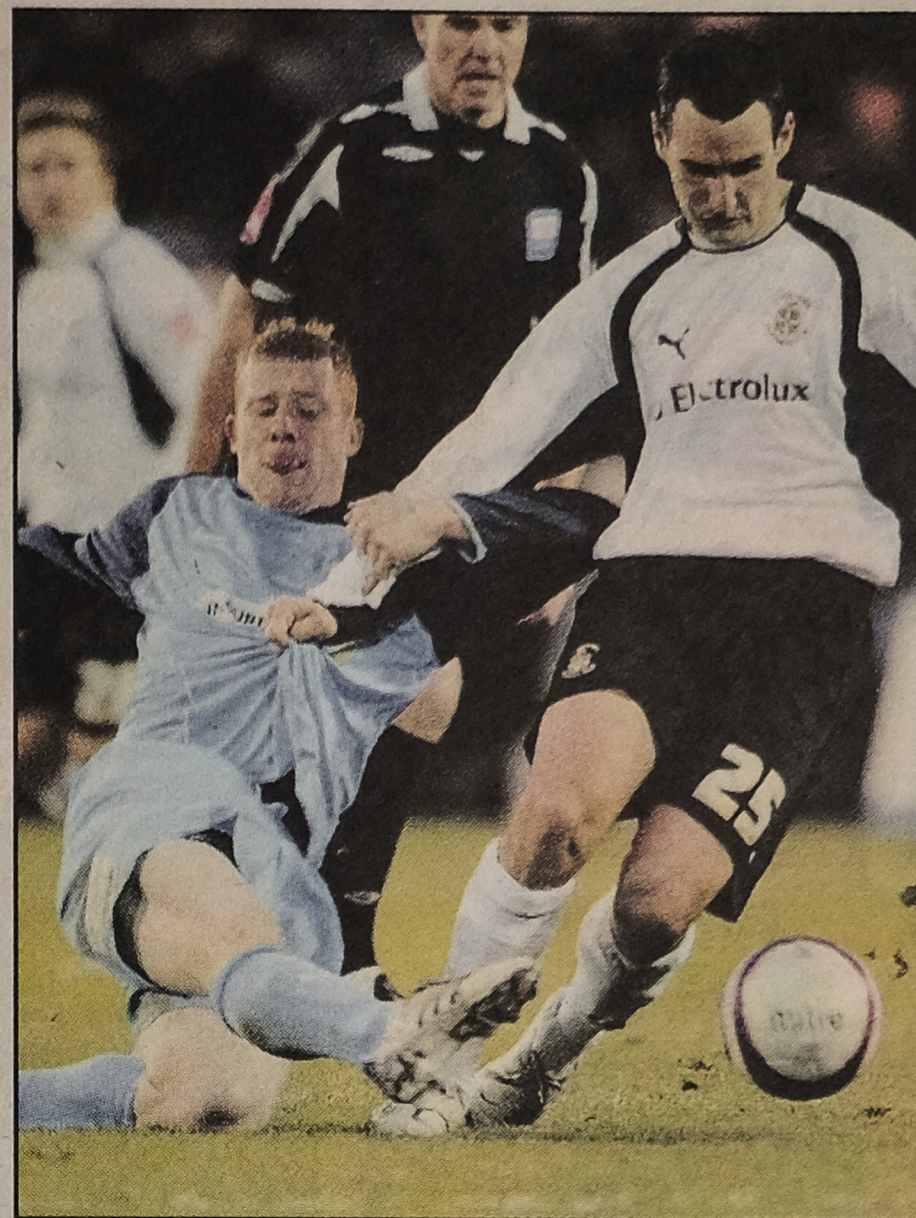
● BY EMAIL:

sports.echo@nqe.com



■ Eyes down looking — Matt Harrold takes his penalty, which was saved by Dean Brill

Pictures: GALVINEYES



■ Full stretch — Southend's Nicky Bailey tackles Matthew Spring



■ Going up — Matt Harrold jumps with Luton's Chris Coyne in a bid to win possession

LEAGUE ONE

Luton Town.....1
(Andrew 74)

Southend United.....0

■ By CHRIS PHILLIPS

CRISIS club Luton Town bounced back from immense adversity to brush aside Southend United on Saturday.

The Hatters went into the clash at Kenilworth Road bottom of the League One standings after being deducted 10 points for entering administration.

Adding to that the club have also been hit by more than 50 charges from the Football Association relating to player transfers and contract renegotiations.

But Kevin Blackwell's troubled troops temporarily lifted the gathering doom and gloom as Calvin Andrew headed home the only goal of a disappointing and uneventful encounter which also saw Shrimpers striker Matt Harrold miss an early penalty.

Southend, who have now lost two of their last three league games, fielded a depleted line-up and they almost went behind with just 12 minutes on the clock when a back-peddalling Steve Collis impressively tipped David Edwards' header from Richard Jackson's left wing centre onto the crossbar.

Blues immediately replied and just four minutes later they wasted what proved to be their best chance to hit the back of the net as referee Graham Salisbury pointed to the penalty spot after Gary Hooper had been brought down inside the area by Richard Jackson.

It was the third time in six starts that the former Grays Athletic forward had won a penalty, but his strike partner Harrold was unable to capitalise as his effort was smartly smothered by Town keeper Dean Brill, who dived to his right to gather the ball.

It was the second successive missed spot kick from Harrold, who also failed to convert against Rochdale a fortnight ago in the FA Cup.

But following the latest wasted opportunity the visitors continued to enjoy more of the ball and, in the 21st minute, Adam

out of sorts

07/08



■ Spot-kick time — Richard Jackson brings down Blues' Gary Hooper for the penalty

Barrett's low left wing cross was scrambled for a corner by Karoslav Fojut.

The subsequent Kevin Maher corner saw Brill impressively tip a Garry Richards header over the crossbar, but Luton hit back with Marc Wilson escaping the attentions of Steve Hammell to head Matthew Spring's deep free-kick straight at Collis from 16 yards.

Chances continued to arrive from set piece situations and it was soon Southend's turn once again as Barrett headed Hammell's fine free-kick wide of the left post when he should have done better.

That proved to be the final opportunity of the opening half and the game restarted sluggishly after the break with both sides, who were relegated alongside each other from the Championship last season, failing to main-

tain possession.

But in a rare moment of excitement, a Barrett volley from a curling Hammell corner was deflected wide by former Southend loanee Chris Coyne and, in the 56th minute, Nicky Bailey blasted over from the edge of the area with a well-struck left foot shot after being picked out by Hooper.

In reply, Keith Keane then forced Collis into action with a strong header from Darren Currie's left wing corner and, with 74 minutes on the clock, the Hatters hit home the only goal of the game following a well worked move down their left hand side instigated by Jackson.

He picked out Spring with a fine pass before the winger delivered a deep left wing cross which fizzed across goal before being headed home at the back post by Andrew, who beat Peter Clarke to the ball.

Andrew then came close to immediately doubling his side's lead when he raced through and rounded a hesitant Collis 20 yards from goal.

But after delaying his shot and enabling several Southend defenders to race back, the youngster could only fire wide of the right post.

That kept Blues in the game, but they were unable to conjure up a late equaliser, with Hammell curling a long range free-kick into the gloves of Brill before Bailey wasted an excellent opportunity just three minutes from time as he raced onto Kevin Maher's deep ball into the box.

But with just Brill to beat the midfielder lashed a left foot shot well wide of the target, meaning Southend United have still not won at Kenilworth Road since 1964.

Gower and strikers missed

WITH both Leon Clarke and Dean Morgan already sidelined, Southend United suffered another massive blow just before kick off at Kenilworth Road on Saturday when influential winger Mark Gower declared himself unfit.

The former Tottenham Hotspur trainee has been back to his best in recent weeks, scoring two goals in his last three games, and without him the Shrimpers were always going to struggle to create chances.

And that is how it proved as, although Steve Tilson's side were territorially on top during the opening half of a desperately drab encounter, their opportunities all came from set piece situations, with Adam Barrett and Garry Richards both going close with headers.

Matt Harrold also again failed



Blues analysis by
CHRIS PHILLIPS

to convert from the penalty spot as his miserable run in front of goal continued.

He has now not netted in the league for more than a year and, with Gary Hooper also struggling, there are serious concerns about the attacking aspects at the club.

For while the displays of Messers Clarke and Morgan may temporarily paper over the cracks, they are still only on loan and should they depart then serious question marks remain over

the other forwards on Blues' books.

It is not a coincidence that the Seasiders' surged up the League One standings as soon as Clarke arrived from Sheffield Wednesday and it is also not a coincidence that they have struggled during his suspension.

It is therefore imperative that his loan switch becomes permanent if the Shrimpers are to secure more success this season.

Saturday's defeat — which saw at least four players forced to play out of position — did not help the push for promotion.

Yet in a league which, in truth, is lacking in real quality, Southend have more than enough to finish in the top six.

But for that to happen the striking situation must be sorted before it's too late.

STATS...

TEAM NEWS

STEVE Tilson made three changes to his starting line-up as a late withdrawal from winger Mark Gower led to a defensive reshuffle which saw Steve Hammell pushed further forward onto the left flank. That meant Adam Barrett moved to left back with Garry Richards coming into the side in the middle of the defence. Nicky Bailey also returned from suspension to replace Franck Moussa as Alan McCormack switched to the right hand side of midfield. The final alteration came in attack where Gary Hooper was picked in place of the unavailable Dean Morgan.

TEAMSHEET

● Southend United (4-4-2)



STEVE COLLIS

Did well to push Edwards' header onto the crossbar but had a couple of shaky moments.

6



LEWIS HUNT

not really involved that often. Booking means he is one yellow card away from a one-match ban.

6



PETER CLARKE

Made several interceptions and dealt with most things that came his way

6



GARRY RICHARDS

Strong display in his first start for eight games. Almost opened the scoring with a header.

6



ADAM BARRETT

Steady again at left back. Will be disappointed not to have scored in the first half.

6



ALAN MCCORMACK

Not his usual dominance force in the midfield and gave the ball too easily at times.

6



KEVIN MAHER

Made some fine passes and could certainly not be faulted for effort.

6



NICKY BAILEY

Lively in the centre of the park, but wasted a great chance to score a last-gasp leveller.

6



STEVE HAMMELL

Delivered some dangerous set pieces, but looked uncomfortable in an unfamiliar left wing role.

6



GARY HOOPER

Won the penalty early on, but did little else and was often easily brushed off the ball.

5



MATT HARROLD

Endured another miserable afternoon in attack, missing a penalty.

5

SUBSTITUTES

Francis 6- replaced Hooper in the 75th minute as an emergency striker but could not help conjure up an equaliser for his side.

Not used: Flahavan, Moussa, Gilbert and Lokando.

● Luton Town (4-4-2)

Brill 7, Keane 6, Coyne 6, Fojut 6 (Grant 43, 5), Jackson 7, Bell 7, Edwards 6, Spring 7, Wilson 6, McVeigh 5 (Currie 59, 6), Andrew 6.

Subs not used: Goodall, Hutchison and Talbot.

MATCH STATS

● Southend United

Shots on target: 2. Corners: 5

● Luton Town

Shots on target: 6. Corners: 2

● Referee

Graham Salisbury (Lancs) 6/10

● Attendance

6,820

IN THE BOOK

● Southend United

Booked: Hooper (36, foul), Hunt (57, foul) and Clarke (90, foul).

● Luton Town

Booked: Wilson (4, foul), McVeigh (57, ungentlemanly conduct) and Grant (71, foul).

NEXT UP

● FA Cup 2nd round

Oxford United (A), Saturday, 3pm