

Brill penalty save the inspiration for players to lift themselves above the gloom

Gutsy Hatters begin the long haul back

LUTON TOWN FC

LEAGUE ONE
LUTON 1
Andrew 74
SOUTHEND 0

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THE fightback starts here.

Bottom of the league through no fault of their own, Kevin Blackwell's Luton showed the spirit that will get the Hatters through yet another crisis.

Calvin Andrew's second goal of the season finally unlocked a stubborn Southend who had a first half penalty saved by Dean Brill.

The relief at the final whistle was clear for all to see as the Luton squad formed a defiant huddle in the middle of the pitch and were applauded off by the receptive home crowd.

"I'm proud of the players," said the manager. "It's been an unbelievable seven or so days to go from one crisis with the FA to administration but I don't think anyone can say the players didn't show heart, passion and commitment out there."

"I have to thank the fans - I thought they were fantastic today. I'm glad we sent them home, after so much bad news, with good news."

"I came at the back end of last season when we hadn't won a game in God knows how long and we had to try and restructure things."

"One thing that never changed was the commitment of the players."

Blackwell appealed to the supporters who questioned his backing of former chief executive John Mitchell.

"I made one or two comments that the fans didn't like and I got it wrong. But all I want is what's best for Luton Town Football Club."

"I don't blame certain sections of the support for being so vociferous."

"It's a strange place. There is real passion here if we can channel it into the right places. Luton's always had a



BATTLING: Richard Jackson had an eventful few minutes in the first half, laying on a chance and then giving away a penalty

good reputation and it's a club that always hovered around the top two divisions and that's where we've got to be."

In the face of such adversity the home fans showed their support with a rousing cheer as the players came on to the field.

Fresh from winning his first Welsh cap against Germany in midweek, David Edwards almost got proceedings off to a flier 13 minutes in but was denied by a superb save and the woodwork.

Richard Jackson's swirling cross picked out Edwards whose dipping header looked goalbound. Southend's Steve Collis had to be at full stretch to tip on to the crossbar.

Jackson then went from creating that chance to gifting what should

have been the lead moments later when he gave away a soft penalty.

The full back mis-controlled the ball in the box and bundled over Gary Hooper in front of the referee. Matt Harrold stepped up to take the spot kick but Jackson's blushes were spared by Brill's excellent save from low down to his right.

The Luton keeper was called into action again on 21 minutes with an equally impressive instinctive block from Garry Richards' point blank header.

On-loan Portsmouth midfielder Marc Wilson, keen to impress on his home debut, got his header on target from Matthew Spring's free kick on 28 minutes as Hatters started to unlock a tight Southend defence.

By contrast Luton's back-line took a knock just before half time when Jaroslav Fojut limped off injured.

One loanee was replaced for another as the Bolton Wanderers player made way for Chelsea utility man Anthony Grant. He took over at right back and Keith Keane slotted into centre half in a re-jigged back four.

Substitute Darren Currie came on just before the hour and soon got involved. His corner was met at the near post by Keane whose flicked header had to be gathered low down by Collis.

An exciting display from new boy Grant aside, Luton were having all the possession but creating very little. Until the 74th minute.

Spring's determined run reached the bye-line and he lashed the ball across Collis in the Shrimpers' net. Lurking unmarked at the far post was Andrew who couldn't miss from a yard out.

"The Town are staying up" reverberated around Kenilworth Road as the gloom lifted.

He could have had number three for the season when he latched onto a through ball and caught Collis in two minds. The Southend 'keeper was off his line but, rather than shoot first time, Andrew went to dribble around the flailing Collis and fired wide.

Southend's Nick Bailey almost spoiled the afternoon two minutes from time after Lewis Hunt lofted the ball over the top. Winger Bailey had time and space yet screwed his effort to the corner flag.

stats corner

MAN OF THE MATCH



Dean Brill

Vital penalty save lifted Kenilworth Road

THE SQUAD

Brill; Keane, Coyne, Fojut (Grant 43m), Jackson; Bell, Edwards, Spring, Wilson; McVeigh (Currie 58m), Andrew. Subs: Goodall, Hutchison, Currie, Grant, Talbot.

MATCH FACTS

SHOTS ON TARGET

LUTON 5 SOUTHEND 3

SHOTS OFF TARGET

LUTON 3 SOUTHEND 6

CORNERS

LUTON 2 SOUTHEND 5

OFFSIDE

LUTON 1 SOUTHEND 1

BOOKINGS

LUTON

Wilson 4m, McVeigh 57, Grant 72

SOUTHEND

Hooper 36, Hunt 57, Clarke 90

REFEREE

GRAHAM SALISBURY (LANCASHIRE)

ATTENDANCE

6,820

FOOTBALL LEAGUE ONE

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

Playing today
Cheltenham v Leeds

COCA COLA FOOTBALL LEAGUE ONE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Leyton O	17	9	4	4	26	26	31
Nottm Forest	16	8	6	2	27	9	30
Carlisle	16	8	5	3	25	13	29
Swansea	16	8	4	4	26	16	28
Leeds	16	13	2	1	31	12	26..
Doncaster	17	7	5	5	25	19	26
Brighton	17	7	5	5	23	18	26
Southend	17	8	2	7	25	23	26
Tranmere	17	6	6	5	18	14	24
Walsall	17	6	6	5	19	17	24
Swindon	16	6	5	5	24	17	23
Crewe	17	6	5	6	18	22	23
Huddesf'd	17	7	2	8	16	24	23
Yeovil	17	6	4	7	15	19	22
Hartlepool	16	6	3	7	22	21	21
Oldham	16	5	4	7	16	16	19
North'ton	17	5	4	8	19	23	19
Bristol	17	4	7	6	17	22	19
Gillingham	17	5	4	8	17	31	19
Millwall	17	4	4	9	16	26	16
B'mouth	17	3	4	10	16	29	13
Port Vale	17	3	3	11	14	25	12
Cheltenham	16	2	6	8	14	26	12
Luton	17	6	4	7	19	20	12.

* deducted 10 points ** deducted 15 points



BRILLIANT:
Dean Brill's
vital
penalty
save