

Blackwell's boys off the bottom thanks to a gift-wrapped goal courtesy of keeper's blunder

Christmas comes early for Luton Town

07/08

LUTON TOWN FC

LUTON TOWN 1
Edwards 70

TRANMERE ROVERS 0

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TRANMERE Rovers' goalkeeper Danny Coyne got into the season of giving, gifting Luton a precious home win.

A dreadful game seemed to be heading for a bore-draw that would have left Hatters bottom of the table at Christmas.

But Coyne's second half goal-keeping gaffe gift-wrapped Dave Edwards a simple tap-in and lifted Kevin Blackwell's side up the table.

The game turned with the introduction of substitute Drew Talbot as Luton ditched their defeatist 4-5-1 formation to have two in attack.

The Kenilworth Road crowd had been calling for the tactical switch but coach John Carver insisted the decision was not based on fan pressure.

"We didn't make the change because the fans called for it, we were discussing the change ten minutes beforehand. We knew that if we put them under pressure at the back it would pay off," he said.

"I felt it was always going to be a mistake that won it, and that's how it turned out. It makes a change for the luck to be on our side."

With both teams deploying just one man up front it made for an uninspiring match but Carver laid the blame at mid-table Tranmere.

"I think they came with a game plan to cancel out our midfield – they've been 4-4-2 all season – and it worked for a large part of the game. There wasn't a great deal between the two sides.

"It was a typically dogged game today. We had to stand up and be counted – we're fighting for our lives. The lads are giving everything for the shirt at the moment.

"We closed the gap today so the games coming up are even more important. We must go to Bristol Rovers and Port Vale over Christmas and get something. We know our away form but all it takes is one win to turn things around."

Anyone given a ticket for yesterday's game as an early Christmas present would have been asking for the receipt after a dire first half.

Veteran striker Paul Furlong was asked to play alone up front but lasted just 17 minutes before he limped off injured.



XMAS JOY: Chris Coyne gets in a clearing header against Tranmere yesterday and (below) David Edwards (right) celebrates his goal

On came rookie Calvin Andrew who Blackwell had previously chosen to rest insisting he didn't want the burden of leading Luton's attack on his young shoulders.

The closest Hatters came to living up as poor a half as you'll see over the holiday season were two long range efforts from Darren Currie.

The winger curled the ball past Danny Coyne in Rovers' goal but inches over the bar on 24 minutes. Ten minutes later he went for power, with a shot Coyne found too hot to handle, spilling his first save before gathering.

Five against five in midfield was killing the game and a chant of '4-4-2' echoed around the ground from the restart but it took until the 67th minute for the crowd to get their wish.

The lively Talbot came on and Luton woke up. Barely two minutes after coming on his running and hold up play created the goal.

He laid the ball off for Matthew Spring who drilled a cross into the

box. Coyne came, dropped it and Edwards swept in to an empty net.

Hatters should have doubled their advantage on 72 minutes when Bell's pinpoint cross picked out the unmarked Edwards.

The midfielder chose to head downwards giving Coyne an easy save.

A win was vitally important as with the January transfer window looming, Blackwell needs to get the most out of this group of players before the inevitable sales. Scouts filled the seats yesterday as the vultures continued to gather.

But they would go back to their clubs reporting on a Luton win, thanks in small part to keeper Dean Brill who was called into action seven minutes from time.

A free kick was whipped into box, and the knock down fell to Gareth Taylor. The striker's snap shot from eight yards was superbly saved low down from Brill who up until then had been a virtual bystander.



stats corner

MAN OF THE MATCH

DREW TALBOT

Substitute's introduction brought the game to life



THE SQUAD

Brill; Perry, Coyne, Fojut, Goodall; Bell, Spring, Robinson, Currie (Talbot 67m); Edwards; Furlong (Andrew 17m). Subs: Keane, Grant, McVeigh

MATCH FACTS

CORNER

LUTON 5 TRANMERE 4

OFFSIDE

LUTON 5 TRANMERE 2

SHOTS ON TARGET

LUTON 4 TRANMERE 3

SHOTS OFF TARGET

LUTON 4 TRANMERE 3

BOOKINGS

LUTON 4

Robinson 82, Fojut 84, Coyne 85, Perry 90

TRANMERE 4

Greenacre 34, Taylor 45, Goodison 85, Taylor 90

REFEREE

TREVOR KETTLE (BERKSHIRE)

ATTENDANCE

6,070

FOOTBALL LEAGUE ONE

Carlisle	P	Swansea	P
Cheltenham	O	Huddersfield	2
Crewe	O	Doncaster	4
Leeds	L	Bristol Rovers	L
Leyton Orient	O	Yeovil	O
Luton	1	Tranmere	O
Nottm Forest	2	Port Vale	O
Southend	O	Oldham	1
Swindon	2	Hartlepool	2
Walsall	3	Millwall	O
Played Friday			
Brighton	P	Gillingham	P
N'hampton	4	Bournemouth	1

FOOTBALL LEAGUE ONE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nott'm Forest	20	10	7	3	33	12	37
Swansea	19	11	4	4	33	16	37
Leeds	21	16	3	2	40	14	36
Carlisle	19	10	6	3	31	15	36
Leyton O	21	10	5	6	28	28	35
Walsall	21	8	8	5	24	18	32
Southend	21	10	2	9	31	29	32
Yeovil	21	9	5	7	22	22	32
D'caster	21	8	7	6	31	22	31
Brighton	20	8	6	6	26	20	30
Huddersf'd	21	9	2	10	21	33	29
Tranmere	21	7	7	7	22	19	28
Hartlepool	21	8	3	10	30	28	27
Oldham	20	7	6	7	22	20	27
Swindon	20	7	5	8	27	26	26
North'ton	21	6	6	9	27	31	24
Crewe	21	6	6	9	20	32	24
Gillingham	20	6	4	10	21	36	22
Bristol Rvrs	19	4	7	8	18	25	19
Millwall	20	5	4	11	19	32	19
Cheltenham	20	4	6	10	16	30	18
Luton	20	7	5	8	21	22	16
Port Vale	21	4	4	13	16	31	16
B'mouth	21	4	4	13	20	38	16