

Orient express hits the buffers

Leyton Orient 2 Hatters 1

DOMINANCE does not always equal victory and that was the case at Brisbane Road as Luton Town were beaten 2-1 by promotion-chasing Leyton Orient on Saturday writes Alec Swann.

Mick Harford – back at the club as manager – saw his team outplay the hosts and dominate both possession and territory but Luton's lack of cutting edge up front proved to be costly. Harford said: "Calvin (Andrew) and Drew (Talbot) are good centre-forwards.

"I judge strikers on how many goals they score so the first thing you look at is the goal records.

"To become a very good striker you need to improve on your goal record and that's what we're doing with the strikers here."

The introduction of Paul Furlong on the hour gave the visitors a more threatening look but goals win games and the Hatters need to start both scoring and winning – and quickly.

With David Bell to the fore, Luton looked the more likely to break the deadlock in the first half.

But after a number of half chances, with Matthew Spring seeing two good shots blocked, the home side took the lead when Adam Boyd scored against his former club.

It was Dean Brill's error on the left hand side of the box that cost the Hatters with Charlie Daniels disposing Brill before squaring for Boyd who netted his 12th goal of the season.

Luton were in the ascendancy at the start of the second period but their chances of getting back into the encounter suffered another blow when Andy Barcham twisted and turned before squeezing his shot past Brill, despite the attentions of two Luton defenders.



Picture by Gareth Owen

NEAR MISS: Leyton Orient keeper Stuart Nelson punches clear despite the close attention of Paul Furlong

It was tough on the Hatters who scarcely deserved to be trailing by two goals and their predicament saw Harford replace Steve Robinson and Andrew with Paul Furlong and Dean Morgan on the hour.

Furlong almost made an immediate impact but his shot was straight at Nelson.

The visitors continued to have plenty of good possession with a Morgan cross forcing Stuart Nelson to tip the ball over the crossbar.

The subsequent corner saw Keith Keane halve the deficit as he steered home a half clearance from 10 yards and the goal seemed to lift Luton who visibly raised their game.

An Efe Echanomi effort was then somehow deflected wide by a combination of Hutchison and Keane after Brill had been beaten.

And then Orient wasted another good chance as Boyd's close-range cross from a tight angle was cleared away to safety.

A minute later Spring's 30 yard shot was well saved by Nelson and, after Brill had denied Echanomi, Talbot saw his curling effort palmed away as Luton tried in vain to salvage a point.

The Hatters' performance will have given new boss Harford heart but he admitted that they need to all pull together if they are to escape the drop.

He said: "As a group we've got to stick together until the end of the season.

"We're all in it together and we'll try to get out of this predicament that we're in."

STAR HATTER

David Bell. Caused Orient problems all day