

Robins raid Town

Swindon pick ragged Luton apart as Town are booed from the field

by Alec Swann

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HATTERS' place in League One is looking increasingly precarious following a 1-0 defeat to Swindon Town at Kenilworth Road last night.

In a scrappy encounter, Mick Harford's side produced a poor performance that culminated in boos from the home faithful and never promised to result in a much needed victory.

Swindon had the first chance when a hopeful ball forward found Moses Ashikodi, but his weak effort was deflected behind for a corner which came to nothing.

With Luton trying to find their feet, Swindon then had a free-kick that was glanced wide as the visitors enjoyed the better of the early exchanges.

The Hatters, with Drew Talbot employed as a makeshift right midfielder, struggled to get a foothold in the encounter with their midfield being continually bypassed.

It took 11 minutes for the hosts to register an effort.

Darren Currie found some room after some nimble footwork in the middle of the field, but he pulled his shot wide from just outside the area.

Three minutes later Luton had a goal disallowed when Currie's long range shot was parried into the path of Talbot, but the assistant referee ruled it out for off-side.

Swindon seemed happy to try and hit the Hatters on the break and full backs Alan Goodall and Richard Jackson were subjected to a string of balls played behind them into the corners.

At the other end Calvin Andrew missed a free header from a Currie corner as the Hatters began to take control.

A sloppy piece of play from David Bell gifted Swindon a dangerous



STRUGGLE: Captain Chris Perry tries to get to grips with Swindon's on loan Watford striker Moses Ashikodi

looking free-kick 30 yards out, but from the resulting corner Ashikodi could only blaze a wild shot well over with just Dean Brill to beat.

The game entered a lull with neither side able to gain the ascendancy, although Swindon's fairly basic tactics looked threatening on occasions.

Exciting it was not, but just after the half hour mark Bell's dangerous cross found Talbot, but he could only skew his shot wide under the challenge of his marker.

Swindon striker Barry Corr cleared the bar from 20 yards after being the recipient of a poor clearance, while Currie scuffed a shot straight at Peter Brezovan and Goodall sliced a speculative free-kick wide as the half limped to a conclusion.

If ever a game needed a goal, this

was it, but the opening 45 minutes ended as it always looked likely to, with the scoreboard operator yet to be called into action.

Harford replaced Currie with Dean Morgan and Andrew with Sam Parkin at the break in a bid to shake things up, but it was Swindon who had the first opportunity of the second half.

However, some excellent defending by Chris Perry cleared the danger.

The home side's half time team talk had obviously had some effect as they looked a rejuvenated outfit, yet it was Swindon who broke the deadlock on 50 minutes.

Christian Roberts made the most of a bad mistake by Goodall, beating the left back, before twisting past Perry and stroking confidently past

Brill.

The Robins continued to press with Corr turning a right wing cross behind and Lee Peacock wasting a header from six yards out.

Luton were living dangerously as Swindon threatened a second goal. Corr struck a 25 yard free-kick harmlessly over the bar, while Brill nearly made a hash of a Keith Keane back pass just short of the hour as the home side's play became increasingly ragged in front of a restless crowd.

The visitors were a different side to the one in the first half and they made their first change on 62 minutes when Sofienne Zaaboub replaced Anthony McNamee. At the

>> Star Hatter: Chris Perry. Reliable performance from the old stager on a poor night at Kenilworth Road

LUTON TOWN



Unused subs: Hutchison, Beresford

SWINDON TOWN



Unused subs: Smith, Pook

Referee: Carl Boyeson (East Yorkshire)

Attendance: 5,738

same time Harford sent on Stephen O'Leary in place of the ineffective Talbot and Bell switched to the right flank.

With Paul Furlong off the pace, Luton struggled to find any fluency and ended up playing far too many long balls downfield.

The game grew scrappy and, with six minutes left, Blair Sturrock received the first caution of the night when he put the ball in the net after fouling Perry.

The Hatters were getting desperate and a second delay, this time for a head injury to Patrick Kanyuka, merely added to the hosts' frustration.

The announcement that seven minutes of injury time would be played raised Luton's spirits, but Currie could only shoot high and handsome as the final minutes passed quietly.

Swindon were allowed to close the game out in relative comfort and there was to be no repeat of Saturday's last-gasp drama.

For all their huff and puff Luton were comfortably second best and lacking in inspiration and, if they are to escape the drop, they will have to perform better than this.

Picture by Jane Russell