

Town feel the chill as Pool run amok

Skipper subbed as Hatters sink to heavy defeat

Hartlepool United 4 Hatters 0

SKIPPER Chris Perry was hauled off the field as Hatters slumped to a depressing defeat at Hartlepool, carries Carl Field.

Despite being uninjured and despite being the only centre half in Town's squad, manager Mick Harford replaced the former Spurs defender soon after his side fell 3-0 behind.

After a hasty lunge led to Hartlepool's opener from the spot, Perry then conceded the free kick which doubled Pools' advantage.

He was replaced by Alan Goodall who was asked to fill in as a makeshift centre half as he did at Liverpool.

The change couldn't prevent Town conceding a fourth goal.

After the game, Harford confirmed Perry had not picked up a knock, simply saying "it just wasn't working so I needed to change it around".

He added: "It's very difficult when you've got one centre half in the squad and it's a major problem for us which we can't resolve."

The defeat means it's now eight games without a clean sheet for Hatters, who have desperately missed Chris Coyne since the administrators allowed him to leave for Colchester.

The only bright spot was the return of fit again left back Sol Davis, who was handed his first start of the season. Meanwhile, Don Hutchison was drafted in as a holding midfielder in Luton's defensively minded 4-5-1 starting formation.

It was the Hatters who had the first chance of note when Paul Furlong screwed a shot wide on 11 minutes



Pictures: Gareth Owen

RARE ATTACK: Calvin Andrew battles against the Pools defence

from a decent position after good work down the left involving Matthew Spring, David Bell and Davis.

Luton goalkeeper Dean Brill then had to pull off three fine saves to keep the scores level. First he denied Luton's Sweeney on 19 minutes, before palming away Alan Thompson's free-kick four minutes later. The Hatters' stopper then brilliantly denied Richie Barker's close range header on 27 minutes.

But despite Brill's best efforts, it seemed only a matter of time before the home side broke the deadlock and, sure enough, the breakthrough arrived on the half hour mark via the

penalty spot. Skipper Chris Perry was adjudged to have hauled Joel Porter down in the box after the Hartlepool man had played a neat one-two with Willie Bolland, and the referee had no option but to point to the spot. Barker stepped up and coolly sent Brill the wrong way.

The visitors were handed another blow just minutes after falling behind when veteran Hutchison was forced off with a knee injury and was replaced by Stephen O'Leary.

Luton did at least try and start to second period in a more positive vein as Drew Talbot, who once again looked isolated out on the right flank, was



HELPLESS: Mick Harford looks on as Town fall apart

pushed up front to support Furlong.

But it mattered little as they failed to pose any sort of real threat towards the home goal.

On 61 minutes, Hartlepool doubled their advantage when Thompson's delightful 30 yard free-kick nestled in the top right-hand corner past the despairing dive of Brill.

Porter made it 3-0 two minutes later when he converted substitute David Foley's centre, before Barker completed the rout on 73 minutes when he capitalised on some woeful Hatters defending before diverting the ball past a wrong-footed Brill.

This result leaves the Hatters in dire straits at the bottom as they prepare for Saturday's home six-pointer against Bournemouth.

STAR HATTER Sol Davis: Did well after long spell on sidelines