

Battle of the bankrupt clubs is no contest as Cherries win it at a canter

Makeshift Town look doomed for the drop

07/08

LUTON TOWN FC

LEAGUE ONE
LUTON TOWN 1
Emanuel 50
BOURNEMOUTH 4
Vokes 13, Kuffour 14, 84, Gradel 45.

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LUTON look destined for the drop as three goals in the first half saw fellow administration suffering Bournemouth breeze to an easy win.

This game, barring a great escape, virtually consigned the Hatters to League Two football next season.

Of course it is not beyond mathematics that survival is still achievable but not on the back of this performance.

Hartlepool last week was the lowest point of the season but this was yet another new low.

This was so bad that when you look under the words 'woeful' and 'inept' in the dictionary you'll see the words Luton Town (February 9, 2008).

There's very little that Hatters boss Mick Harford can do. He inherited a team and it's been a case of make do and mend since but there was little Blitz spirit here and he bemoaned the lack of defensive cover.

"It was a very disappointing performance and I think that must go down in history as the first time a team's been put out with no centre halves," he said. "It's a difficult time for us."

"We're not the biggest back four and teams come at us with a game plan, and at times we struggle to deal with it."

"Today was a small part of the jigsaw that goes with Luton Town. It's a long, hard road ahead."

"I believe I'm the right man to turn this club around. It's a long term effort and everyone involved in the club is going to have to work hard to turn it around and it's a challenge I look forward to."

Six changes were made from the team that lost to Hartlepool and Luton, with only 16 outfield players fit, were really down to the bare bones.

Three left-backs and a teenage debutant. That was the sum of Luton's depleted defence.

Harford's selection was further hampered by Richard Jackson, Chris Perry, the only recognised central defender, Paul Furlong and Don Hutchison all out injured.

Drew Talbot, without a goal since the Hatters' Carling Cup win against Charlton in September, was on bench-warming duties.

Keith Keane limped off after nine minutes following a strong challenge flooring him that made way for 17-year-old George Beavan to



MID-AIR DUEL: Drew Talbot in action yesterday that left the Hatters staring at relegation

make his debut at the back. Four minutes in the Hatters were down.

An innocuous tackle in the middle of the park from Sam Parkin on Lee Bradbury saw the ball deflect forwards into the path of top scorer Sam Vokes who rounded Dean Brill and slid into an empty net.

It got worse on 14 minutes when schoolboy defending saw Alan Goodall miss a long ball which bounced over tiny Lewis Emanuel for Jo Kuffour to steal in a flick over Brill.

Long, hopeful balls were Luton's only creative idea going forward. But for the final quarter of an hour of the half it stopped the constant wave of Cherries' attacks.

Any relief that gave the home side was spectacularly destroyed when one minute from the break Max Gradel thumped a 30-yard strike into the top corner, leaving Brill grasping at thin air and Kenilworth Road stunned.

Just as another 45 minutes of football seemed the most torturous

thing imaginable Lewis Emanuel took it upon himself to try and resuscitate Luton four minutes in. From 35 yards out he fizzed a daisy-cutter goalwards, on any other day a meat and drink save for a keeper, but Gareth Stewart produced a calamity of David James proportions to let the ball roll under his body.

It sparked an improvement of sorts for Harford's men, but it couldn't have got any worse.

Dean Morgan, who seemed interested in being flashy but not doing the dog work, found Stewart in more solid form three minutes later with a free-kick from the edge of the penalty area that burst through a crowd of defenders only to be firmly beaten away.

And save for a Sam Parkin header, which he could only force wide on 70 minutes, Luton struggled for inspiration in the final third, a fact bore out by the calls of shoot from the fans every time Emanuel had possession in the Bournemouth

half. The introduction of Calvin Andrew at half-time and Drew Talbot on the hour had failed to fashion any threat.

All the more frustrating as the Cherries seemed content to sit back and bask in the hard work they'd put in the first half.

These days they call that 'managing the game' but however you dress it up it still meant Luton were giving the visitors an easy time of it.

It was they who came closest to another goal. They'd been tourists in Luton's final third since the restart but on one rare foray in the 80th minute Kuffour sent a shot on the turn crashing off the crossbar.

The woodwork was probably still wobbling two minutes later as the forward bullied his way into the box, hit the post and was quickest to react, collecting the rebound and firing in his second.

The only positive is that Millwall and Crewe, above them, lost but Luton need to find some fight to leapfrog them.

stats corner

MAN OF THE MATCH



GEORGE BEAVAN

Cannot be blamed for the current problems

THE SQUAD

Brill, Goodall, Morgan, Bell, Parkin, Currie (Andrew, 45), Robinson (Talbot, 60), Emanuel, Keane (Beavan 9), Spring, Davis
SUBS - O'Leary, Beresford

MATCH FACTS

SHOTS ON TARGET
LUTON 6 BOURNEMOUTH 4

SHOTS OFF TARGET
LUTON 4 BOURNEMOUTH 7

CORNERS
LUTON 6 BOURNEMOUTH 3

OFFSIDE
LUTON 5 BOURNEMOUTH 3

BOOKINGS
LUTON
Spring 87
BOURNEMOUTH
Bradbury 39, Bartley 68, Hollands 90

REFEREE
MIKE THORPE (SUFFOLK)

ATTENDANCE
5,897

FOOTBALL LEAGUE ONE

Cheltenham	2	Brighton	1
Crewe	2	Swansea	2
Doncaster	2	Bristol Rovers	0
Huddersfield	1	Swindon	0
Luton	1	Bournemouth	4
Northampton	1	Leeds	1
Nottm Forest	2	Millwall	0
Oldham	2	Gillingham	1
Port Vale	1	Carlisle	1
Southend	2	Hartlepool	1
Tranmere	1	Leyton Orient	1
Walsall	2	Yeovil	0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Swansea	29	18	7	4	56	25	61
D'caster	30	15	8	7	46	28	53
Nott'm Forest	29	13	10	6	44	22	49
Carlisle	29	14	7	8	42	30	49
Walsall	31	12	13	6	38	26	49
Tranmere	31	13	8	10	36	30	47
Leyton O	31	12	10	9	38	42	46
Leeds	31	18	6	7	50	27	45
Southend	30	13	5	12	46	43	44
Oldham	29	10	10	9	31	27	40
Swindon	29	10	10	9	37	34	40
North'ton	31	10	10	11	37	41	40
Huddersf'd	29	12	4	13	30	42	40
Brighton	28	10	8	10	36	32	38
Yeovil	31	10	8	13	28	36	38
Bristol Rvrs	28	9	10	9	32	32	37
Hartlepool	30	10	6	14	44	44	36
Cheltenham	30	9	7	14	24	39	34
G'illingham	30	8	8	14	30	45	32
Crewe	31	7	10	14	29	48	31
Millwall	29	8	6	15	29	44	30
Luton	30	9	7	14	32	43	24
B'mouth	31	9	5	17	41	55	22
Port Vale	31	5	7	19	29	50	22