

Up and running

Hatters 2 Plymouth Argyle 0

by Carl Field

RAMPANT Hatters pushed their league troubles aside to send Championship outfit Plymouth Argyle crashing out of the Carling Cup last night.

Luton battered their visitors for the majority of the tie and goals in each half from new boys Rossi, Jarvis and Tristan Plummer raised the roof at Kenilworth Road and sealed their passage into round two.

Mick Harford made just one change to the side that started the 3-1 opening day defeat against Port Vale at the weekend. Young Norwich City loanee Martin Spillane was given the nod at centre-half, with Ian Roper making way.

Just as they did on Saturday, Hatters shot out of the blocks, dominating the midfield early on while looking threatening in the final third of the field.

In the second minute, striker Chris Martin set up Asa Hall, whose shot forced a good save out of Graham Stack in the Plymouth goal.

The opening minutes were all Luton and, moments later, skipper Kevin Nicholls beautifully exchanged passes with Sam Parkin, before firing over a teasing cross on to the head of the unmarked Martin inside the six yard box.

The ball looked destined for the bottom left hand corner, only for Stack to fling himself to his right and fingertip the ball away. From the rebound, Rossi Jarvis should have scored from close range, but fired over.

For all their dominance and slick interchange of passing, it was only going to be a matter of time before Luton opened the scoring and, it duly arrived on 15 minutes when the impressive Martin cut in from the right and laid a perfect ball into the centre, where Jarvis was waiting to slide the ball beyond Stack and into the net.

After the early onslaught, the visitors started to get a foothold in the game and were knocking the ball around nicely.

Striker Jermaine Easter found some space just inside the box on the



Picture by Jane Russell

OFF THE MARK: Sam Parkin congratulates Rossi Jarvis after the youngster had netted his first goal for Luton

half hour mark, but was shrugged off the ball by Spillane, with a tackle that was more reminiscent of a seasoned centre-half rather than a teenage rookie.

Argyle threatened again moments later down the right hand side, with Jason Puncheon's cross just evading the on-rushing Simon Walton at the far post.

Lewis Emanuel was then forced off with what looked like a thigh strain and he was replaced on the left hand side of midfield by another young loanee, Tristan Plummer.

As the first half drew to a close, Hall fired over from a free-kick for Luton, while Steve McLean's low

shot on the turn was comfortably held by goalkeeper Dean Brill.

On 42 minutes, another ball into the box fell at the feet of Parkin, but the space just wouldn't open up for him and his shot was blocked by a wall of Argyle defenders and hacked away to safety.

Two minutes after the break, the visitors threw men forward, with Jim Paterson's left wing cross causing uncertainty in the home defence, which forced centre-back George Pilkington to hack the ball over for a corner.

The visitors continued to threaten, with both substitute Rory Fallon's header and Puncheon's low effort across the face of goal, not far away. At the other end, Plummer's darting run from the right hand touchline towards the penalty area deserved a better end result, but his left footed shot resulted in a comfortable save for Stack.

Luton had a glorious opportunity to double their advantage on 58 minutes, when Nicholls found himself with a clean run on goal but, on his weaker side, he just delayed too long

LUTON TOWN



Unused subs: Roper, Watson, Klein-Davies, Fletcher

PLYMOUTH ARGYLE



Unused subs: Smith, Clark, Doume, Larrieu

Referee: R L Shoebridge

Attendance: 2,682 (Plymouth 340)

getting his shot away and the effort was parried by Stack.

But the danger wasn't clear and Nicholls regained possession and attempted to lay the ball into the path of the onrushing Martin, but the pass was slightly over hit, and the chance was gone.

Plymouth thought they had equalised four minutes later, when Puncheon's corner from the right was flicked on by Fallon, and bundled into the net by MacLean from point blank range. But their celebrations were short lived, after the referee adjudged that there was an infringement in the build up, and the goal was ruled out.

Luton made sure of their place in round two on 78 minutes when another free-flowing attacking move saw Hall capitalise on substitute Jamie Mackie's error and surge towards the box and shoot for goal.

Stack managed to get a hand on the midfielder's shot, but could not prevent it from rolling towards the line, and Plummer made sure by tapping home.

Plymouth almost grabbed a lifeline in the dying moments, when Puncheon's effort rattled back off the crossbar, but Hatters held out and walked off to a marvellous reception from the home faithful.

STAR HATTER

Michael Spillane - mature performance at the back

1400 MINUTES