

Parkin banishes Cup blues

STRIKER'S HEADER GIVES HATTERS A SECOND SUCCESSIVE AWAY WIN TO SIGNAL A NEW STEEL FROM HARFORD'S HATTERS

LUTON TOWN FC

LEAGUE TWO
EXETER 0

LUTON TOWN 1 08/09
Parkin, 47

TOM LEECH
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ONE moment of quality in an otherwise dreadful game gave Hatters back-to-back away league wins for the first time in three years.

After a forgettable first 45 minutes Luton continued to make a dent on their points deduction thanks to Sam Parkin's lethal header from a perfectly flighted Kevin Nicholls free kick two minutes into the second half.

Luton showed their resilience as Exeter piled on the pressure late on but Mick Harford's men held firm and unlike the recent campaigns are looking a tough outfit to beat on the road.

Willed on by a strong away support Luton were keen to banish memories of their midweek Carling Cup drubbing at the hands of Reading.

But in the blazing south west sun both teams appeared to be enjoying the weather too much to be bothered with the small matter of a football match.

Newly-promoted Exeter had slightly the better of a deadly dull first half that could be summarised by two moments that relieved the tedium.

From a Keith Keane long throw 25 minutes in Luton hit the woodwork through Claude Gnakpa.

The throw reached Chris Martin whose scuffed shot turned into a pass to the Frenchman. Six yards out the right back turned right winger to accommodate the inclusion of Keane, prodded a shot that smacked the bottom of the post and bounced to safety.

The onus was on the home side to spark the game into life and the closest they came was just before half time. Exeter's Adam Stansfield broke free of the off-side trap, cut the ball back for Ryan Harley who scooped it inches over Dean Brill's cross-bar.

Whatever Harford said at half time worked as Luton put The Grecians to the sword two minutes after the restart.

It came from the lively Gnakpa who was bought down on the edge of the box. From the resulting free kick Nicholls, who looked out of sorts for the majority of the game, delivered an inch-perfect ball for Parkin whose powerful header flew past

ul Jones.

moments later Jones was called action again to beat away a ing Lewis Emanuel drive as ers began to set the pace.

hour in and a penalty call against Luton when Chris



ON THE BALL: Hatters' loan midfielder man Rossi Jarvis in the action at Exeter, which brought a welcome 1-0 win

Martin appeared to be bundled over and at the other end Richard Logan's header beat a stranded Brill and was heading in.

However it lacked the pace to make it over the line and George Pilkington was ideally placed to clear.

Exeter defender Matt Taylor thought he'd got his side back on level terms when he rose unchallenged to head Rob Edwards' cross. With the goal gaping he chose to head straight at Brill who was alert enough to gather.

With ten minutes to go Harford introduced rookie striker Ryan Charles but it was Exeter's veteran Marcus Stewart who looked more likely to score when he flashed a volley just wide.

Luton's nerves could have been settled two minutes from time when Parkin had a clear sight of goal from Charles' pass. Parkin's composed shot curled around Jones but went the wrong side of the post.

Those nerves were jangling even more when deep into

injury time a cross reached Harley at the far post.

The winger's rising shot beat

Brill but not Keane on the line whose header ensured another happy away day for the Hatters.

The stats

FOOTBALL LEAGUE TWO

Aldershot	3	Bradford	2
Brentford	0	Rotherham	0
Chester	5	Barnet	1
Chesterfield	0	Wycombe	1
Exeter	0	Luton	1
Gillingham	1	Acc'ton St'ley	0
Lincoln City	1	Grimsby	1
Macclesfield	0	Darlington	6
Morecambe	1	Dag & Red	2
Notts County	2	Shrewsbury	2
Port Vale	3	Bournem'th	1
Rochdale	1	Bury	1

THE SQUAD

Luton: Brill; Keane, Pilkington, Spillane, Davis; Gnakpa, Nicholls, Jarvis, Emanuel; Martin (Charles '80), Parkin. Logan, Roper, Hall, Watson.

Post match...

LUTON Town boss Mick Harford knows if his side can translate their away form to Kenilworth Road, Hatters will be out of minus points in no time.

So far Luton have just one point from home and Harford admitted: "It's almost role reversal in a way.

"Our home form is paramount but we've come away and won two in a row. When we come away from home we are a tough side to break down."

On Exeter City Harford said: "It's a very tricky place to come. Our main objective was to keep a clean sheet so to come away with the win is pleasing. We were better in the second half against a decent side."

Sam Parkin's third goal of the season was all that separated the teams and Harford was quick to applaud his side's efficiency from set-plays.

"Sam took a gamble on where the ball would go but with Nicholls on the pitch you can guarantee he'll whip a cross into a dangerous area at some point.

"A lot of games will be settled on set pieces. It wasn't the most attractive game but that was down to the heat. It made it very difficult to play."

A view echoed by Keith Keane who said: "It felt like 100 degrees out there!

"I don't think we played too well in the first half but we started the better in the second and ground a result out."

Last season's skipper also thanked Luton's vocal away following adding: "We fully appreciate the support. The players know Exeter's a long way to travel and they lift us on the pitch, there's no doubt."

After playing in midfield, right wing and central defence in recent campaigns, Keane is currently right back and said he'd play anywhere for his home-town club.

"Coming up through the ranks at Luton I was always in midfield. But since I've broken into the first team I've been in defence. I don't mind where I play as long as I'm playing.

"There's no reserve games for four weeks so I've had to get match fitness in actual games."

Keane was on hand to block Ryan Harley's drive on the line and said: "I didn't know much about it but in the end it was the difference between winning and drawing."

MAN OF THE MATCH



CLAUDE GNAKPA

The more the crowd booed the better he got

MATCH FACTS

SHOTS ON TARGET

EXETER 4 LUTON 2

SHOTS OFF TARGET

EXETER 7 LUTON 5

BOOKINGS

EXETER -

LUTON -

REFEREE: Oliver Langford (West Mids)

ATTENDANCE: 5,328

LEAGUE TWO TABLE

TEAM	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
1 DAG & RED	4	1	1	0	7	1	2	0	0	5	2	9	10
2 SHREWSBURY	4	2	0	0	5	0	1	1	0	3	2	6	10
3 BURY	4	2	0	0	3	1	1	1	0	4	2	4	10
4 WYCOMBE	4	1	1	0	2	1	2	0	0	3	0	4	10
5 BRADFORD	4	2	0	0	4	1	1	0	1	4	3	4	9
6 BRENTFORD	4	1	1	0	4	0	1	0	1	1	1	4	7
7 PORT VALE	4	1	0	1	3	3	1	1	0	4	2	2	7
8 ALDERSHOT	4	1	1	0	4	3	1	0	1	1	1	1	7
9 GILLINGHAM	4	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	3	2	1	7
10 ACC STANLEY	4	1	0	1	2	1	1	0	1	2	1	2	6
11 CHESTERFIELD	4	0	0	2	1	4	2	0	0	4	1	0	6
12 DARLINGTON	4	0	1	1	2	3	1	1	0	6	0	5	5
13 ROCSDALE	4	1	1	0	4	2	0	1	1	0	2	0	5
14 EXETER	4	0	0	2	0	2	1	1	0	2	1	-1	4
15 NOTTS COUNTY	4	0	2	0	2	2	0	1	1	2	3	-1	3
16 CHESTER	4	1	0	1	5	3	0	0	2	1	9	-6	3
17 GRIMSBY	4	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	5	-5	2
18 MORECAMBE	4	0	0	2	2	5	0	1	1	2	3	-4	1
19 LINCOLN CITY	4	0	1	1	2	4	0	0	2	0	2	-4	1
20 BARNET	4	0	0	2	1	4	0	0	2	2	8	-9	0
21 MACCLESFIELD	4	0	0	2	0	8	0	0	2	0	6	-14	0
22 ROTHERHAM	4	2	0	0	4	1	1	1	0	3	1	5	-7
23 BOURNEM'TH	4	0	1	1	1	2	0	1	1	2	4	-3	-15
24 LUTON	4	0	1	1	2	4	2	0	0	2	0	0	-23