

Keane intervenes to secure vital away win

Exeter City 0 Luton Town 1

FTT again player of the season Keith Keane produced a great last-gasp goal-line clearance to help the Hatters claim all three points in Devon on Saturday, writes Mark Wood.

Having recovered from a summer operation, the Irishman has finally fought his way back into Hatters' starting XI and his solid showing, coupled with a single moment of quality from Sam Parkin and captain Kevin Nicholls, ensured Luton's travelling army of supporters went home from St James' Park happy.

On his important late intervention, he said: "I didn't know much about it. If you are a defender and it's coming at you, you have to clear it and luckily I did and it helped us win the game in the end."

"I thought it was an excellent result. I don't think we played too well in the first half, but if you are playing well you don't get beaten."

"Second half we started better and got a goal and ground it out and I think that's what we have got to do away from home."

And Keane admitted the hot weather made it difficult for both teams.

He said: "It felt like 100 degrees. It was horrible. It felt like the first game of the season."

"We've had some great support this season and the lads fully appreciate it. You need a bit of support coming down to Exeter."

However, it has been difficult for Keane to regain his fitness due to a dearth of reserve team matches.

He said: "There haven't been any reserve games. I had only been training two weeks. He (Mick Harford) wanted to get me fit but there weren't any reserve games for the next four weeks."

And he felt his partnership with attacking Frenchman Claude Gnaka was the right worked well, and admitted he feels most comfortable at full-back.

He said: "Claude is a right-back, but he is very good going forward. He is probably better going forward than back. I think the manager noticed that



FANTASTIQUE: Claude Gnaka may have proved unpopular with the St James' Park faithful but he was the standout player on show

so he gave him the licence to go forward and get crosses in.

"Coming up through Luton I played in midfield until I was 16 and then I had the chance to play at right-back for the first team. I think you can say I'm a defender. As long as I'm playing I don't really mind."

On the new signings, he added: "All the lads that came in have settled in really well."

"I think it's got a really good vibe throughout the squad. Everybody talks to each other and that's going to help on the pitch and off the pitch."

Exeter enjoyed much of the early possession without really creating any clear cut chances in what was largely a tame first half.

The game finally burst into life on 25 minutes when Keane's throw found Chris Martin in acres of space on the edge of the area and, although he fluffed his chance, the ball ran to Gnaka, whose low shot rebounded

off the post and out.

And Gnaka went close again seconds later when he burst into the box and thrashed a shot just wide.

Ryan Harley should have given the hosts the lead on 38 minutes though. Adam Stansfield's clever run was too good for George Pilkington and his low cross picked out Harley, who scooped his shot over from the edge of the area when well placed.

After an abysmal first half, it took the Hatters just two second half minutes to take the lead. Gnaka was fouled on the edge of the area and Nicholls picked out Parkin with a beautiful cross, and the big man made no mistake, heading powerfully into the right-hand top corner from the edge of the six yard box.

Lewis Emanuel then fired a venomous effort straight at Paul Jones, while Town were only awarded a corner on 57 minutes when Danny Seaborne appeared to upend the weav-

ing Martin in the box.

Exeter went close again on the hour as the game began to hot up. Dean Brill came for a ball into the box he was never going to get but Pilkington got their just in time to clear Richard Logan's header.

Neither Parkin or Martin could get shots away when a free-kick caused problems in City's box soon after, while Matt Taylor headed powerfully at Dean Brill from point blank range on 64 minutes.

Martin almost set up Parkin with 18 minutes left, before the Norwich City youngster fizzed a 25-yard effort just wide.

Marcus Stewart dragged an effort across the face of goal with 10 minutes left, while Parkin curled a golden opportunity to seal victory just wide with two minutes to go.

Exeter pummelled Luton's goal in the closing seconds, with Keane heading Harley's effort off the line in injury time, but Town clung on for another invaluable victory on the road.

WHAT MICK MADE OF IT

A SMILING Mick Harford was beaming from ear to ear after seeing his team snatch a precious win at St James' Park.

He said: "It's a very difficult place to come with the way they play in a certain way which makes it difficult for you. Our first priority was to keep a clean sheet and with the players we've got we can always get a goal."

"It was very pleasing. We were slightly better in the second half. We didn't pass the ball as well as we can in the first."

On the goal, Harford said: "Sam will gamble on those balls. You can guarantee Kevin Nicholls will, at some point in a game, stick in a ball that's very inviting for the strikers."

"Sam will always get on some of those crosses and he did with a glancing header."

Harford admitted that the heat had made it difficult for his team, but is just pleased that they are picking up points.

He said: "We will keep chipping away and hopefully churn out results like this. There are going to be a lot of games that aren't attractive this season, like this one."

And he admitted he has been puzzled by the way their best results have come on the road this season, rather than at 'fortress' Kenilworth Road.

He added: "I said to the players at the start of the season our home form is paramount. But we've gone away from home the last two away games and won 1-0."

"It's a role reversal really. When we go away from home teams have to come at us and break us down."

Town pushed Exeter too far say Exeter

HATTERS: Exeter City boss Paul Tisdale believes the Hatters pushed the laws of the game to the limit and beyond on Saturday.

The bitter Grecians boss, who felt his side should have had a penalty late on when Craig McAllister was tackled in the area, said: "I think they did everything they could to play just within the laws of the game and just beyond at times."

"Every time we ran into the box there was a tug or a push, you could look at that incident (the McAllister one) but there were umpteen others."

"But I am not going to cry over it, we have to be savvy, we have to be streetwise and we have found a way of going that extra yard."

"They have their brand of football and they are very effective with it."

"We have to make sure we play good football effectively to win games. I'm disappointed with the result, but we have got a lot about us at the moment."

Langley for Rovers?

HATTERS: Released Luton Town midfielder and Jamaican international Richard Langley, 28, is having trials with Bristol Rovers.

Rovers boss Paul Trollope said: "He has proven quality, he's played a lot of international games and he needs a chance somewhere."

There's a long way to go: the 2008/09 season in full

	Opponents	Score	Scorers	Att	Pos		Opponents	Score	Scorers	Att	Pos
AUG						DEC					
Sat 9	PORT VALE	1-3	Parkin 35	7,149	24	Sun 28	LINCOLN CITY				
Tue 12	PLYMOUTH (LGCP)	2-0	Jarvis 15, Plummer 77	2,682	-	JAN					
Sat 16	Gillingham	1-0	Parkin 3	5,339	24	Sat 3	Chester City				
Sat 23	NOTTS COUNTY	1-1	Martin 49	6,085	24	Sat 10	ROTHERHAM				
Tue 26	Reading (LGCP)	1-5	Charles 81	7,498	-	Sat 17	Darlington				
Sat 30	Exeter City	1-0	Parkin 47	5,328	24	Sat 24	BRADFORD CITY				
SEP						Tue 27	Bournemouth				
Sat 6	Macclesfield					Sat 31	BURY				
Sat 13	ALDERSHOT TN					FEB					
Sat 20	Rotherham					Tue 3	GRIMSBY TOWN				
Sat 27	CHESTER CITY					Sat 7	Accrington				
OCT						Sat 14	Dagenham & Red				
Sat 4	Bradford City					Sat 21	SHREWSBURY				
Sat 11	DARLINGTON					Sat 28	Port Vale				
Sat 18	ACCRINGTON					MAR					
Tue 21	Grimsby Town					Tue 3	GILLINGHAM				
Sat 25	Bury					Sat 7	EXETER CITY				
Tues 28	BOURNEMOUTH					Sat 14	Notts County				
NOV						Sat 21	MACCLESFIELD				
Sat 1	Shrewsbury					Sat 28	Morecambe				
Sat 15	DAGENHAM & RED					APR					
Sat 22	Rochdale					Sat 4	WYCOMBE				
Tue 25	BRENTFORD					Sat 11	Lincoln City				
DEC						Mon 13	CHESTERFIELD				
Sat 6	BARNET					Sat 18	Barnet				
Sat 13	Wycombe					Sat 25	ROCHDALE				
Sat 20	MORECAMBE					MAY					
Fri 26	Chesterfield					Sat 2	Brentford				