

Free-kick routine can't save Hatters

Macclesfield 2 Luton Town 1

HATTERS starlet Ryan Charles revealed his late consolation goal at Moss Rose on Saturday was the result of plenty of hard work on the training ground.

Lacklustre Luton limped to a 2-1 defeat at League Two strugglers Macclesfield, who bagged their first points of the season thanks to goals from Simon Yeo and James Jennings.

On his injury time free-kick, Charles said: "The last two Fridays I've been practicing free-kicks and I scored last time and it was in my range. They said take it, so I stepped up and took it."

"I knew which corner I would put it in because I've been practicing."

And the 18-year-old is delighted to be back in contention for a first team spot.

He said: "Obviously it's good to be back with the lads."

"I played against Stevenage (in a friendly last week) and got 45 minutes under my belt and 45 today and I'm getting fitter and stronger and hopefully I can progress from here."

"At 1-0 down I just tried to come on and make a bit of an impact, but it wasn't the best of performances today."

"Hopefully I can make a difference next week."

"I used to play on the wing when I was in the youth team here a couple of seasons ago so I was trying to get used to playing out there and the gaffer wanted me to make an impact on either side."

"I was just trying to keep wide and get on the ball as much as I could."

On forcing his way into the starting XI, he added: "Hopefully I can just keep training hard."

"It's the gaffer's decision at the end of the day. I will just keep training hard to get into the starting XI."

Up-for-it Macclesfield showed far too much passion, energy and urgency as they did for Kevin Nicholls-less Luton.

With Blackburn Rovers manager Paul Ince in the stand, there weren't



TOETOTOE: Rossi Jarvis just beats Jon Brain to the ball, but can only poke it into the keeper's legs

any Hatters who will have impressed as they put in their worst performance of the season.

Dean Brill was forced to deny Gareth Evans as early as the first minute after he got the better of Sol Davis, while Jon Brain did well to hold on to Lewis Emanuel's deflected effort on 10 minutes.

However, the hosts took the lead on 12 minutes when Town's defence went to sleep.

Brain's long clearance found Yeo and, having got in front of Pilkington, the striker looked up and lobbed the ball over the stranded Brill who had strayed off his line.

Brill beat away another instinctive Yeo effort on 17 minutes, while Matthew Flynn headed just wide from the resulting corner with the goal at his mercy.

Chris Martin then rolled a tame

shot straight at Brain, before getting caught just off-side from Kevin Watson's clever through ball on 29 minutes.

Emanuel then spurned a great chance to haul Luton level on 32 minutes when the ball ran to him on the edge of the box, but he could only blaze over when well placed.

And Davis almost laid another goal on a plate for Yeo on 39 minutes.

His awful clearance fell right to the feet of Yeo eight yards out, but he inexplicably dragged his shot wide.

Sam Parkin's clever touch sent Rossi Jarvis clear with two minutes of the half left but, despite beating Brain to the ball, he could only turn his effort straight into the oncoming keeper's legs.

The hosts started the second half better too, despite the introduction of Charles for the lethargic Davis.

On 47 minutes, Thomas was allowed to cut in from the right before crashing a shot at Brill, while Pilkington did well to block Lee Bell's follow-up.

And the Silkmen landed the killer blow on the hour when an impromptu short corner routine found its way to Jennings who lashed his shot home through a crowded box.

Parkin failed to properly test Brain on 67 minutes, while only the linesman's flag denied Yeo a second goal when he looped a fine header past the despairing Brill on 70 minutes.

Substitute Tristan Plummer finally injected some energy into the Hatters when he jinked into the box with eight minutes to go, but Brain just managed to push his shot away.

Charles then curled home an injury time free-kick, but the referee promptly blew for full time from the re-start as the Hatters limped to defeat.

WHAT MICK MADE OF IT

SEETHING
Luton manager Mick Harford refused to blame Town's lacklustre 2-1 defeat at Macclesfield on the absence of skipper Kevin Nicholls.



Harford admitted his side were second best throughout and gave the ball away far too easily.

After the game, he said: "Kevin got injured in training yesterday morning and you know how much of an influence Kevin Nicholls is on the team, but his missing today was nothing to do with the defeat."

"Hopefully he won't be too long. He has got a hamstring strain."

"Kevin is Kevin and he will want to get back on the pitch as soon as possible."

"Today we just didn't seem to be at the races."

"The players were forewarned before the game and in training that Macclesfield had just taken two good hidings and there was going to be some reaction from last week."

"They've probably had a bollocking in the weeks previous about their performances and they came out fighting and did a job on us today."

"They played with a lot of energy and a lot of verve."

"I wouldn't say Macclesfield were great."

"I thought from start to finish we didn't really perform and didn't get started."

"We didn't play in the manner I wanted."

"It's just disappointing the manner we have let both goals in. The short corner we could have defended better. There were a lot of bodies in front of Dean Brill."

"We didn't create a lot today. Lewis (Emanuel) had one chance in the first half."

"We threw everyone forward (in the second half) as we had to try and create something."

On his choice as Kevin Watson as captain, Harford added:

"Kevin is an experienced player, he has been captain of several other clubs before so I felt he was the obvious choice."

STAR HATTER George Pilkington. At fault for goal, but battled away.

Alexander pleased by Hatters victory

HATTERS: Silkmen boss Keith Alexander was a relieved man after seeing his side seal a deserved 2-1 victory against the Hatters.

Macclesfield outplayed their guests throughout and Alexander was pleased with the way his side claimed both their first win and goals of the league season.

He said: "I thought we played very well, especially as there were five players under 20 on the pitch."

"Sometimes you don't know what to expect. It's not been brilliant (so far this season) so it's nice to get a result under our belts and play very well."

"We've won our first game of the season so I'm not going to complain."

Derby day confirmed

HATTERS: Luton Town's Reserves' clash against Watford's second string, which was due to be played on September 8, will now take place on Wednesday, September 24, kick-off 7pm, at Boreham Wood FC.

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

AUG	Opponents	Score	Scorers	Att	Pos	DEC	Opponents	Score	Scorers	Att	Pos
Sat 9	PORT VALE	1-3	Parkin 35	7,149	24	Sun 28	LINCOLN CITY				
Sat 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	2-1	Charles 90	2,349	24	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				
Tue 28	BOURNEMOUTH					Tue 10	Notts County				
NOV						Sat 14	Aldershot Town				
Sat 1	Shrewsbury					Sat 21	MACCLESFIELD				
Sat 15	DAGENHAM & RED					Sat 28	Morecambe				
Sat 22	Rochdale					APR					
Tue 25	BRENTFORD					Sat 4	WYCOMBE				
DEC						Sat 11	Lincoln City				
Sat 6	BARNET					Mon 13	CHESTERFIELD				
Sat 13	Wycombe					Sat 18	Barnet				
Sat 20	MORECAMBE					Sat 25	ROCHDALE				
Tue 26	Chesterfield					MAY					
						Sat 2	Brentford				