

Saddlers sunk

by Carl Field

Patched up Luton put their league worries aside for 90 minutes as they dumped League One Walsall out of the Johnstone's Paint Trophy at the Bank's Stadium last night.

Mick Harford's gutsy side dominated the hosts of most of the match and sealed their passage into the area semi-finals when Rossi Jarvis struck home the winner two minutes from time.

Hatters never looked in danger of losing in what a relatively low-key encounter and also hit the bar in the first half through Chris Martin.

There was one change from the side that were beaten 3-0 at Shrewsbury Town on Saturday, with George Beavan coming in at centre-half in place of Harry Worley.

Despite being decimated by injuries, plus the fact their opponents ply their trade in a higher division, Luton tore up the form book early on and completely bossed the first half hour of this encounter.

Paul McVeigh fired a left-footed shot narrowly wide of the target on nine minutes while a minute later, Chris Martin was unlucky not to score after a move that started with Jake Howells brilliantly winning back possession on the half way line.

From the resultant corner, Claude Gnaka's header forced a good save out of Clayton Ince at point blank range and the rebound was cleared away to safety.

On the quarter hour mark, McVeigh sprayed a decent cross field ball that reached the feet of Martin, who then teed up Rossi Jarvis for a shot on goal but unfortunately, his effort caught a deflection and was dealt with by Ince.



Picture by Gareth Owen

MY BALL: Keith Keane is challenged by Walsall's Troy Deeney during the Hatters' 1-0 win on Tuesday night

Walsall 0 Luton Town 1

Two minutes later, Craddock did well to beat the offside trap but his low shot from an acute angle was blocked by the Saddlers stopper.

Dominant Hatters were cutting through the home side with consummate ease and Craddock in particular was having a lot of success getting in behind the Saddlers' defence.

On 23 minutes, another McVeigh pass found the on-loan Middlesbrough man in acres of space on the left-hand edge of the box and, after he cut the ball back, Martin's curl-

ing shot agonisingly bounced off the crossbar.

Walsall were struggling to get a foothold in the game and their first effort on goal came on 32 minutes when Michael Ricketts headed a cross inches wide of the post.

And four minutes later, Michael Spillane's slip almost gave Ricketts a clear run in on goal but luckily for the young defender, 'keeper Conrad Logan had come off his line to hammer the ball out of danger.

Striker Jabo Ibehre's surging run into the box was thwarted three minutes into the second period, while Logan also had to be on his

guard to prevent Troy Deeney's deflected shot from bobbling up and over him seconds later.

At the other end, Craddock found himself unmarked inside the box, but his header from a left wing cross lacked any conviction and was straight at Ince.

In complete contrast to the first period, it was the home side who were looking the more threatening and only a flying fingertip save from Logan prevented Ricketts from heading his side in front on 55 minutes.

Deeney thought he had scored for Walsall on 67 minutes, but his header from



Unused subs: Gilmartin, Smith, Bradley



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Referee: D Deadman

Attendance: 1,844 (153 Luton)

Anthony Gerrard's cross flew just over the crossbar while moments later, Craddock flicked a cross towards goal but was just unable to find thenet.

In the closing stages, Martin was well tackled while bearing down on goal on 84 minutes, while substitute Garreth O'Connor tried his luck with a 25-yard shot that brought a good save out of Ince, who had to fling himself to his left in order to keep it out.

But on 88 minutes, Luton finally got the reward that their excellent display deserved as they snatched victory in dramatic fashion. The move for the goal started when a Walsall corner was cleared as the visitors quickly turned defence into attack.

Martin collected the ball and flew down the left flank and, after neatly coming inside and firing a shot straight at Ince, Jarvis was on hand to slot home the rebound into an empty net.

STAR HATTER

Paul McVeigh. The best performer on the pitch