

Beavan happy that Town are in the hat

Luton Town 0 Altrincham 0

REJUVENATED defender George Beavan says he was just pleased to be in the hat for the next round after the Hatters' goalless home draw against Altrincham in the FA Cup first round on Saturday, writes Carl Field.

Town were left frustrated against the non-league part-timers, but Beavan admitted that it was always going to be a difficult task to break down a side that were intent on defending for their lives.

He said: "Our main aim before the game was to make sure that we were in the hat for the next round. It's a bit disappointing that we didn't get the job done today but we're still in it and that's the main thing.

"We were saying in the dressing room afterwards that teams come here and know we're a good passing team, know we're going to come forward and they just sit and put 11 men behind the ball and it's hard for us to break down. But we still know we've got the quality in the squad to do that."

Beavan's performance from left-back was one of the bright spots for Luton and he also said afterwards that he was desperate to return to the club after his recent loan spell at Blue Square Premier outfit Salisbury City.

He said: "I went to Salisbury and got some match fitness and I feel a lot fitter and sharper. Hopefully I can keep my spot in the team and get as many games under my belt as possible. It was the decision of both the club and myself to come back. I just wanted to come back and fight for my place at Luton."

After starting the last two games on the left side of the Hatters' defence, Beavan, 18, who can also operate at centre-half, said he doesn't mind what position he plays in, adding: "As long as I'm on the pitch, I don't mind what position I'm playing."

"I just defend first and when I get the ball hopefully create chances for



ROUGH AND TUMBLE: Claude Gnaka challenges Altrincham keeper Andy Ralph during Saturday's 0-0 stalemate

other players on the pitch."

The return of skipper Kevin Nicholls, who played the opening 45 minutes, was a massive boost for Town, while striker Drew Talbot was given a warm reception as he made his comeback as a late substitute.

Luton, without loan striker Tom Craddock due to Middlesbrough's refusal to let him play, dominated possession but were lacking in the final third and Altrincham, to their credit,

could have been in front at half time.

The home side got a real let off on 22 minutes when Keith Keane's poor back pass almost gifted Chris Senior the opener, while centre-half Greg Young then blazed a glorious opportunity over the bar from the edge of the box shortly afterwards.

The home side's only real effort on target during the entire match came in first half stoppage time, but Chris Martin's header from Claude

Gnaka's right-wing cross failed to really trouble goalkeeper Andy Ralph.

Altrincham continued to frustrate the Hatters after the break, with Gnaka's finest shot wide on 57 minutes the closest Luton came to breaking the deadlock.

With eight minutes remaining, Keane had to produce a fierce last-ditch tackle to prevent substitute Lee Elam from getting a clear run on Conrad Logan's goal, which ensured the two sides would have to do it all over again in the replay at Moss Lane.

WHAT MICK MADE OF IT



TOWN manager Mick Harford wasn't too downbeat after his side were held to a goalless draw by the part-timers of Altrincham in their FA Cup first round tie at Kenilworth Road on Saturday.

He said: "We were the best team by a mile."

"I thought it was a good performance today, we controlled the game from start to finish, had the majority of possession but in the last third, we weren't great and didn't create a lot."

"Defensively we looked solid, it's just in that final third where we need to discover that bit of craft as well as having the belief to open a team up."

"I asked the players to give me two things."

"One was keep a clean sheet, which we did, and the other was to be in the hat when the draw for the next round is made, which we are."

"We limited them to a few breakaways, corners and set pieces and we should have won the game comfortably."

"Their team was always going to come here and try to get bodies behind the ball like they did today, but we weren't able to break them down. I'm disappointed with the result but not the performance."

Harford also said he was pleased that a few of his senior players were able to get some minutes' under their belts after injury.

He said: "We had three of four lads who played part of the game, like Kevin Nicholls, Kevin Watson, Gareth O'Connor and George Beavan, who haven't played a lot of football and are trying to get themselves back to fitness, so there are positives to take from it."

On the return of captain Nicholls, who played 45 minutes after missing Town's last 12 games with a hamstring injury, Harford said: "It was just a matter of getting him through the 45 minutes."

"It's his first outing for nearly nine weeks."

"We didn't want to do it but we've assessed him, he's fine and came through it."

"He'll now get a hard week of training under his belt and be ready for the next game."

Also making his comeback after eight months out with a knee injury was striker Drew Talbot, and Harford admitted that he was forced to rush him back due to the current injury crisis.

He said: "Drew was ahead of schedule really. If there would have been five subs today then he wouldn't have been on the bench."

"It was a case of needs must because we haven't got enough players."

"But it was a little bonus for him to get on the pitch and get some minutes under his belt."

STAR HATTER Jake Howells. Energetic performance down the left.

All over by Christmas? The 2008/09 season so far...

AUG	Opponents	Score	Scorers	Att	Pos
Sat 9	PORT VALE	1-3	Parkin 35	7,149	24
Tue 12	PLYMOUTH (LGCP)	2-0	Jarvis 15, Plummer 77	2,682	-
Sat 16	Gillingham	1-0	Parkin 3	5,339	24
Sat 23	NOTTS COUNTY	1-1	Martin 49	6,085	24
Tue 26	Reading (LGCP)	1-5	Charles 81	7,498	-
Sat 30	Exeter City	1-0	Parkin 47	5,328	24
SEP					
Sat 6	Macclesfield	1-2	Charles 90	2,349	24
Sat 13	ALDRSHOT TN	3-1	Spillane 17, Hall 89, Martin 90	6,462	24
Sat 20	Rotherham	0-1		4,095	24
Sat 27	CHESTER CITY	1-1	Hall 41	5,791	24
OCT					
Sat 4	Bradford City	1-1	Spillane 86	13,083	24
Tues 7	BRENTFORD (JP2)	2-2	Martin 39, 55 (won 4-3 on pens)	2,029	-
Sat 11	DARLINGTON	1-2	Gnaka 31	5,560	24
Sat 18	ACCRINGTON	1-2	Hall 34	5,492	24
Tue 21	Grimsby Town	2-2	Craddock 24, 90	4,021	24
Sat 25	Bury	2-1	Craddock 35, Roper 44	3,052	24
Tues 28	BOURNEMOUTH		ABANDONED DUE TO SNOW		
NOV					
Sat 1	Shrewsbury	0-3		6,188	24
Tue 4	Walsall (JP3)	1-0	Jarvis 90	1,844	-
Sat 8	ALTRINCHAM (FA1)	0-0		3,200	-
Sat 15	DAGENHAM & RED				
Tue 18	Altrincham (FA1R)				
Sat 22	Rochdale				
Tue 25	BRENTFORD				
DEC					
Sat 6	BARNET				
Sat 13	Wycombe				

DEC	Opponents	Score	Scorers	Att	Pos
Tue 16	COLCHESTER (JP4)				
Sat 20	MORECAMBE				
Fri 26	Chesterfield				
Sun 28	LINCOLN CITY				
JAN					
Sat 3	Chester City				
Sat 10	ROTHERHAM				
Sat 17	Darlington				
Sat 24	BRADFORD CITY				
Tue 27	Bournemouth				
Sat 31	BURY				
FEB					
Tue 3	GRIMSBY TOWN				
Sat 7	Accrington				
Sat 14	Dagenham & Red				
Sat 21	SHREWSBURY				
Sat 28	Port Vale				
MAR					
Tue 3	GILLINGHAM				
Sat 7	EXETER CITY				
Tue 10	Notts County				
Sat 14	Aldershot Town				
Sat 21	MACCLESFIELD				
Sat 28	Morecambe				
APR					
Sat 4	WYCOMBE				
Sat 11	Lincoln City				
Mon 13	CHESTERFIELD				
Sat 18	Barnet				
Sat 25	ROCHDALE				