

Just not enough

08/09

by Mark Wood

WITH both penalised teams desperately needing victory to boost their bids against drop, this relegation dogfight somewhat unsurprisingly ended all square.

Dogged Town put in a battling performance and almost won it at the death when Kevin Gallen's low effort was cleared off the line.

But sadly it was not to be for the Hatters, as the visitors had to settle for a point after Danny Hollands atoned for his bizarre early own goal with the equaliser midway through the first half.

With Chris Martin suspended for the game following his red card against Bradford City on Saturday, the Hatters made three changes to their starting 11.

Sam Parkin started up front alongside Kevin Gallen and Sunday Waisu, with Ian Henderson dropping to the bench.

New loan signing Mark Bower started in the heart of Hatters' defence, with Sol Davis named among the substitutes, and captain Kevin Nicholls returned to the Luton midfield.

The hosts enjoyed most of the early pressure with Brett Pitman being caught offside on three minutes before winning a free-kick moments later that was blasted into Luton's defensive wall.

And Luton got a huge slice of luck to take the lead on 11 minutes.

A deep cross into the box was headed back across goal by Sam Parkin and, in no apparent danger, Danny Hollands bizarrely diverted the ball past his own keeper and into the back of the net.

Apart from the goal it was a largely cagey opening from both teams, with the Hatters happy to eat up time wherever possible.

Nicholls announced his return to first team duties when he was somewhat harshly booked for persistent fouling on 27 minutes, and out of the blue Bournemouth equalised two minutes later.

Pitman did well to burst past past Ed Asaf-Adjaye on the right and his dangerous cross had Town's defence at sixes and sevens.

The ball almost fell to crowd favourite Steve Fletcher from Michael Spillane's attempted clearance and Conrad Logan could only scramble it away to Hollands on the



Picture by Gareth Owen

edge of the area where he atoned for his earlier howler by powering past the helpless keeper.

Luton made a sluggish start to the second half as Bournemouth looked the hungrier for victory.

And the Cherries should have taken the lead when Sol Davis' mistake put Jake Thomson in on the edge of Luton's area.

Thomson roled the ball to Fletcher, but he could only spoon the ball over the bar when well placed.

Bournemouth 1 Luton Town 1

Town were riding their luck as the Cherries put a number of dangerous balls into their box that they struggled to defend.

But the visitors had a decent chance to take the lead on 67 when Waisu set up Gallen on the edge of the area, after a good flick on by

Parkin, but the veteran hitman could only fire down into the ground and wide.

Waisu then did well to swivel on to Davis' throw on 73 minutes, but could only blaze over from the edge of the box.

Ragged passing from the Hatters severely limited their chances in the second half and going into the closing stages it was the Cherries who looked most likely to snatch victory, before Town took control as

STAR HATTER Mark Bower. Debutant defender hardly put a foot wrong all night

CHERRIES



Unused subs: Jalal, Garry

HATTERS



Unused subs: Brill, Gnaka

Referee: Steve Bennett (Kent)

Attendance: 5,230 (Luton 609)

CLOSE CONTROL: Hatters striker Sam Parkin shields the ball from Bournemouth captain Shaun Cooper during the 1-1 draw in League Two last night

the final whistle drew close.

A forceful run by Rossi Jarvis earned Luton a free-kick in a good position with nine minutes left, but a clumsy challenge from Parkin brought a premature end to Town's goal threat.

With just three minutes left, Town twice went close to snatching a winner. First Jake Howells' corner caused all kinds of problems in the Cherries defence and, after Hall had had his close range effort blocked, the ball ran loose to Gallen on the edge of the box.

His low drive eluded everyone except substitute Alan Connell who somehow got back to hack the ball off the line.

Parkin and Waisu then combined in the box seconds later, but Parkin could only curl his effort just over the bar.

In an end-to-end finale, Logan almost fly-hacked Bower's backpass into his own net, while only some desperate defending kept out Jeff Gouldin as the match ended all square.