

Throwaway Town

Luton Town 2 Rotherham United 4

THE Hatters' recent run of good form came to a crashing halt as Rotherham snatched a 4-2 victory last night.

Luton dominated possession, they dominated territory and they had the majority of the chances – but somehow they lost.

How they did will be beyond the Town faithful who were stunned into silence as their team contrived to leak goals despite being put under little in the way of pressure throughout the 90 minutes.

An up-tempo opening saw the Hatters start promisingly as they forced a succession of corners.

With Rotherham employing the same 4-3-3 system that has served the Hatters well in recent weeks, an entertaining game was on the cards.

Chris Martin had the first clear-cut chance in the eighth minute, but his header from a Kevin Nicholls cross was too near Andy Warrington in the visitors goal.

Despite a bright opening, the Hatters went behind on 11 minutes.

Reuben Reid penetrated a somewhat static central home defence and took an extra touch to steady himself before sliding the ball coolly past Dean Brill.

An unnecessarily strong challenge from Martin on Warrington resulted in a coming together of a few irate Rotherham defenders and ended with the striker being shown a yellow card.

Although in its early stages, the goal had enlivened the contest.

A late tackle from Danny Sharps evened up the card count, while Kevin Gallen's subsequent free-kick was deflected just wide.

The corner was then flicked on by Martin, but was well saved by Warrington before the ball was scrambled to safety.

Any concerns about there being a scaling down in Town's commitment ahead of their Wembley date proved to be non-existent as the contest developed a niggly edge.

The balance of play was all in favour of the hosts who continued to pressurise with the experienced Gallen at the heart of their best moves.

However, the Millers were a threat on the break and they came close to taking an undeserved two-goal lead just before the half hour mark when



Reid's shot from the edge of the box skirted past the post.

A Nicholls volley moments later was charged down and Tom Craddock wasted a chance to put in a decent cross after doing well to manufacture some space on the right.

Luton were completely in the ascendancy, but in the 37th minute they, to the astonishment of a shell-shocked Kenilworth Road, went 2-0 behind.

A long throw wasn't cleared and Drewe Broughton, all arms and legs and a persistent annoyance, netted from an acute angle.

The goal Luton so desperately needed arrived three minutes before the break. Craddock's high cross was

by Alec Swann

met by Martin who, despite the hint of a push, hammered a powerful header past Warrington.

It was no more than Luton deserved and ensured that they were still in touch at the interval.

The second half had barely started and the Hatters were back on the attack.

The first five minutes were all Luton, but amazingly, the next goal came from Mark Robins' side.

A corner bounced around the box a bit before Danny Harrison steered a well-directed header past the

despairing Brill.

Unsurprisingly, the raucous atmosphere of the first 45 minutes had given way to a bemused murmur as Luton tried to force their way back into proceedings.

Craddock's weak effort was comfortably dealt with by Warrington on the hour and Gallen had a snap-shot blocked, but the spark that was in evidence earlier was beginning to fade just a little.

It was still Luton who were on top though, and Craddock, who was heavily involved despite being slightly marginalised out wide, saw his effort from the edge of the box cannon of a defender to safety.

Lewis Emanuel then thrashed a

LUTON TOWN



Unused subs: Davis, Henderson, Asatu-Adaye, Jans

ROTHERHAM UNITED



Unused subs: Nicholas, Clarke, Cann

Referee: Darren Deadman (Cambridgeshire)

Attendance: 5,975 (Rotherham 196)

DESPAIR: Another chance goes begging, much to striker Tom Craddock's evident dismay

shot into the away end as the sense of desperation increased.

That desperation went down a notch in the 70th minute when Hall found the far corner with a low shot.

Not to be outdone, Rotherham's Dale Tonge then hit the post with an angled strike as the crowd upped the noise.

Emanuel capitalised on a loose ball, but could only drag a right-footed shot harmlessly wide as the game entered the final 15 minutes. Sam Parkin was then introduced four minutes later as Luton pushed for an equaliser.

With Rotherham now offering next to nothing in attack, the play was confined to the visitors' half, but, not for the first time, that counted for nothing.

And the Millers took full advantage of Town's lack of numbers at the back when Reid fed substitute Mark Hudson, who made no mistake when presented with a gilt-edged chance to seal victory.

A two-goal cushion with four minutes remaining was never likely to cause the visitors any problems and that was it for the Hatters who, along with close to 6,000 others, will wonder just how they left this game with nothing.

Picture by Joanna Cross

STAR HATTER Kevin Gallen. His touch and range of passing were outstanding yet again.