

Smash and grab

09/10

Stevenage Borough 0

Luton Town 1

Blue Square Premier

DAMION ROBERTS reports

SUBSTITUTE Matthew Barnes-Homer's 54th minute strike sank Stevenage Borough as Luton Town moved within two points of the league leaders on Saturday afternoon.

It was a disappointing result but not a disappointing performance for Boro in front of more than 7,000 fans as Graham Westley's men deserved at least a point but despite having more possession, more shots and more corners in the second half there is only one statistic that counts and Luton edged it.

Westley set up an attacking team with Chris Beardsley recalled to the side alongside Tim Sills and Yemi Odubade up front while there was a place on the bench for the returning Lawrie Wilson after almost eight months out following an ankle injury with Lee Boylan also included in the first team squad.

Too often this season Boro have found themselves on the back foot straight from the kick off and this game was no exception as Luton looked to get on the scoresheet as early as possible.

They almost succeeded when captain George Pilkington's near-post flick-on from Keith Keane's corner was cleared off the line in four minutes.

Luton looked like they meant business in the opening 10 minutes but Boro soon found their way back into the match and dominated long spells of the opening half playing some neat football out on the wings as they looked to avoid the torn up central strip of the Lames Stadium pitch.

Andy Drury and Ronnie Henry combined well on the right as they had done in the first half against Oxford United on Tuesday evening but it was from the left that they had their best chance.

Odubade found some space after a



good run and passed the ball into the box to Sills who slotted the ball into the back of the net but it was ruled out following the wave of an assistant referee's flag much to the disappointment of the home support.

Michael Bostwick, who had an uncharacteristically quiet day, also went close just two minutes before half time with a fine curled effort but Mark Tyler in the Luton goal was equal too in.

Luton made a change at half time as manager Richard Money decided to bring on Liam Hatch up front for the lacklustre Kevin Gallen but it was at the other end where the first sniff of a goal in the second half took place.

Drury was at his creative best when he hit a superb crossfield pass into the path of Beardsley. The striker raced through on goal and hit his shot at goal but Tyler was able to spread himself and turn the ball around the post.

Boro were looking the most likely but when Barnes-Homer replaced Tom Craddock on 54 minutes he turned the game around as within two minutes of his introduction he had put his team ahead.

Just moments before the opener he had flicked the ball past Jon Ashton only for Mark Roberts to do the covering but when Bostwick mis-kicked a ball into the path of the substitute inside the box on 54 minutes the striker made no mistake with a terrific finish.

The goal caught Boro by surprise and they were shaky for the next few minutes as Luton looked to capitalise on their host's loss of concentration, but once the initial shock had subsided Boro went looking for a goal of their own and they did all but score it.

Sills, Roberts and substitute Charlie Griffin all had late chances but the best of the lot fell to Boylan who,

having had a subdued day after coming on for Odubade with 15 minutes remaining, sliced his shot wildly into the air while between two centre backs in the area with just moments to go.

The defeat is Boro's first at the Lames since November 2008 but although Luton close the gap to two points Boro have a game in hand still have their destiny in their own hands.

Boro (4-4-2): Day, Henry, Roberts, Ashton, Laird, Drury, Bridges, Bostwick, Odubade (Luton 76), Sills (Griffin 68), Beardsley (Wilson 65), Sabs, Boyan, Byron.

Luton (4-4-2): Tyler, Anglo, Adjaye, Blackett, Pilkington, Murney, Gonalpa, Heslop, Keane, Howells (Newton 87), Gallen (Hatch 46), Craddock (Barnes-Homer 54), Sabs, Gore, Kovacs.

All 7,024.
Ref: Michael Naylor (Sheffield).