

DREAM OVER

LUTON TOWN 0



09/10
By Sam Elliott

THE HATTERS lost their goal-den touch on the day Stevenage consigned them to the play-offs.

Boro's win at Kidderminster means there is no way back for Luton, who now must turn their attentions to a Wembley return.

Boss Richard Money isn't concerned that the goals dried up after scoring 32 times in their previous seven matches.

The stalemate against Alty won't have Oxford, Rushden or York running scared after an off day for the Town attack.

But Money said: "When a team plays as defensively as they did today you need to be able to pass the ball quickly and move it quickly, and we couldn't on that pitch."

"I thought the players made a really good fist of it. I don't think we could have done too much more to win the game than we did. We created chances but didn't get the bounce where we needed it. The pitch was very bumpy and we couldn't get our connection right at times but I'm not concerned by the dropped points."

"We want to go into the play-offs in good form but our performance was decent."

Many had come expecting another goal feast after witnessing the ball hit the opponents' net 27 times on the fans' last five visits to Kenilworth Road. Those that came wanting more of the same left disappointed as Conference old-pros Alty soaked up the pressure.

First to test Stuart Coburn's alertness was Asa Hall. The midfielder,

MATCH STATS
LUTON v ALTRINCHAM

7 SHOTS ON TARGET	1
8 SHOTS OFF TARGET	3
4 CORNERS	3
4 OFFSIDE	3
9 FOULS CONCEDED	8
3 YELLOW CARDS	0
0 RED CARDS	0

STAR MAN: Ryan Brown (Altrincham)
ATE: 7/374
ENTERTAINMENT: ★★★★★
REF RATING: James Adcock 7/10

LUTON: 4-4-2: Tyler 6, Asa-Ajayi 7 (Barnes-Homer 83, 7), Pilkington 7, Blackett 6, Murray 6 (Hutch 64, 5), Hall 6, Newton 6, Gallen 6. Subs not used: Kovacs, Jarvis, Maitliffe.
ALTRINCHAM: 3-2-4-1: Coburn 8, Smith 7, Young 7, Brown 6, Williams 7, Densmore 7, Lawton 7, Danylyk 7, Doran 6 (Garden 80, 6), Cole 7 (Little 74, 6), Senior 6 (Barnham 58, 6). Subs not used: Saunders, Welch.

FULL STRETCH: Altrincham keeper Stuart Coburn beats Shane Blackett to the ball

PICTURES: Gareth Owen

ALTRINCHAM 0

AS HATTERS FIRE BLANKS

Luton settle for play-offs



FULL-BLOODED: Luton's Adam Newton, right, and Altrincham's Shaun Densmore contest a 50-50 ball

drafted into the starting line-up after Keith Keane tweaked his knee in the warm-up, forced the Hatters first shot on target on 12 minutes with a low drive.

Luton took an age to really get going and a goal looked on after 36 minutes once Tom Craddock finally got some change out of Greg Young.

He turned inside the defender but Coburn kept out the shot. Adam Newton unlucky the follow up didn't fall kinder. It was a rare moment of first half quality, with the news of Stevenage's early goal at Aggborough seemingly filtering through.

A second moment of class arrived a

minute from the interval as Simon Heslop controlled and shot well. Alty's stopper was again equal to it.

With over an hour played and little happening, manager Money made a double substitution in an attempt to energise sluggish Luton with strike duo Matthew Barnes-Homer and Liam Hatch introduced.

But still the home side failed to lift themselves for another ten minutes. Barnes-Homer came close to breaking the deadlock, on the rare occasion one of the Town strikers got in behind the sturdy visitors' back three - his low drive ricocheting off Robbie Williams for a corner as the

frustration grew.

Williams was out-stripped by Barnes-Homer with eight minutes to go but after the sub did so well, Kevin Gallen couldn't finish a great move with Coburn again robust.

Gallen, with his back to goal, almost won it in time added on after wriggling free of Williams but his attempt was tame.

Alty striker Chris Senior said: "We've seen their recent results at home and we really didn't want to be on the wrong end of one of their thrashings. So to keep a clean sheet and play well is very pleasing as they are on fire."

THE VERDICT

SO now we know - it's the end of season lottery for Luton but didn't they give it a good go.

Just a few months back they looked down and on their ropery home form suggested they may even have their work cut out to secure a top-five finish.

But, despite firing blanks against stubborn Alty, they are the team neither Chris Wilder, Justin Edinburgh or Martin Foyle want to take on in the play-offs.

Luton manager Richard Money said Stevenage were worthy winners of the Blue Square Premier title.

And now he wants to join them in the Football League next month.

He said: "I think we've made a fantastic effort to catch the team above us."

"Let's be honest, they've been up there all year and they've got some good players. They play more football than people give them credit for."

"Even though we have pushed them they have shown no signs of faltering. So fair play to them. In the back of our minds we always thought it was a bridge too far to catch Stevenage but at least we got into the play-offs in good form."