

Tyler preserves a vital Town victory

by Mark Wood

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Blue Square Premier

Luton Town 1 (1)

Grimsby Town 0 (0)

A STRING of fantastic saves from Mark Tyler helped the Hatters to grind out a 1-0 win over dangerous Grimsby in front of the Premier Sports cameras at Kenilworth Road last night.

Frenchman Claude Gnaka netted the decisive goal for Town on a night that saw Alex Lawless shine and Andy Drury admit at the death it was probably his last game for the Hatters.

But Town thoroughly deserved their victory and closed the gap at the top of the division as AFC Wimbledon surrendered a 2-0 lead to draw 2-2 at Bath City.

Luton made two changes from the side that were held to a 2-2 home draw by Gateshead on Saturday.

Fit-again duo Drury and Dan Gleeson came into the starting XI with Ed Asafu-Adjaye and Danny Crow dropping to the bench.

After a slow start at a sparsely populated Kenilworth Road the Hatters almost took the lead with a sweeping move as Matthew Barnes-Homer's brilliant raking pass set Lawless free but he could only fire left-footed into the side netting.

Town were playing all the football in the early stages and went ahead on 24 minutes thanks to the linesman's flag.



STRICTLY COME DANCING: Claude Gnaka slides in to score and then celebrates with some fancy footwork, inset



Barnes-Homer's perfectly-timed pass released Lawless on the left and his square ball was forced past Kenny Arthur by Gnaka.

Although Bradley Wood tried to clear off the line, the linesman signalled for a goal.

Drury and Barnes-Homer then teed Lawless up in the box again but he could only side-foot just wide.

Some magic by the impressive Lawless on the right saw Lloyd Owusu flash a header inches over.

Robert Eagle forced Tyler into his first save of the game with a scintillating 25-yarder that the Luton keeper did well to beat away, while at the other end the lively Barnes-Homer turned his man inside out before delivering a majestic cross towards Owusu who

seemed to be impeded but nothing was given.

After the break, Serge Makoko went close when he seized on a long ball and beat George Pilkington and Jake Howells but Tyler saved with his legs.

Barnes-Homer slipped Owusu through on 64 minutes but the lumbering striker could only drive into the side netting after taking the ball too wide.

Grimsby were looking more dangerous in the second half and Eagle had an effort blocked by the massed ranks of Luton bodies in the six yard box as they clung on to their slender advantage.

Another dangerous Drury free-kick was flicked just wide by Zdenek Kroca on 69 minutes but it was a nervy second period.

The tireless Keith Keane picked out substitute Jason Walker with 11 minutes left, but he could only drive straight at Arthur.

Gnaka deftly sidestepped Wood three minutes later but could only wastefully blast wide before the Mariners almost snatched an equaliser on 86 minutes.

Top scorer Alan Connell found some space on the edge of the box and his curler clipped the bar on its way over.

A brilliant surging run from Drury in the 89th-minute ended in him sending a drive inches wide.

There was almost a late twist when Eagle's drive took a slight deflection and seemed destined for the bottom corner before Tyler flung himself to his left to turn it round the post