

WE'RE BACK

Happy Hatters are fit and ready



WINGING IT: Luton's Robbie Wilmott celebrates his brace at Kidderminster
PICTURE: Gareth Owen



By Stuart Hammonds

THE rest of the Blue Square Bet Premier be warned: Luton's cavalry is coming back and are ready to start living up to their tag as pre-season title favourites.

Winger Robbie Wilmott scored twice to see Gary Brabin's side jump above Kidderminster and back into the play-off places, a fortnight after falling from the top of the table with a poor performance at York followed by a home defeat to Cambridge three days later.

Brabin hasn't used it as an excuse, but at times in this season's opening quarter he has been missing almost a whole team through injury and suspension - especially in defence.

The Hatters' treatment room is clearing, however, and he was able to name inspirational captain George Pilkington and left-back Shane Blackett alongside each other in the back four for the first time.

And how they stood up to the test as Kiddy themselves hampered by the long-term absence of keeper Danny Lewis and first-half injuries to defenders Luke Jones and Mike Williams, went in search of an equaliser after Tom Sharpe's 87th-minute goal.

Although disappointed to concede and see midfielder Keith Keane pick up his fifth yellow card to earn a suspension, Brabin - still missing full-backs Dan Gleeson, Fred Murray and Jake Howells, who was on international duty - was delighted to build on last week's 5-1 home demolition of Barrow.

He said: "We've really missed the skipper and it's been nearly a year since Shane played. They've had a lot of training and both felt good."

"We've had some behind-closed-doors games for them and certainly with the left-back situation, we felt we'd be bold and throw Shane straight back in."

"I spoke to him at length the other day to see how he was doing, then again last night and this morning - I think he's sick of me phoning him! But I wanted to make sure he was all right about it and not feel any pressure. I thought he was brilliant today."

"George was outstanding, too. He's his own worst critic, having a go at himself saying 'My timing's out, I've missed that'. But

IN BUSINESS

to launch a push for the title

I thought he was immense today.

"It was brilliant to have them on the teamsheet and, for the first time, I had two fit players sitting in the stand. It's difficult to tell them they're not involved, but it can only be a positive."

Brabin's side took the lead after breaking from a Harriers free-kick pumped into their box.

Left-back Williams hesitated midway inside his own half and allowed man-of-the-match Anwar Morgan-Smith to seize the ball. The former Ekeston forward left the Kiddy captain for dead, then usefully squared past crushing keeper Dean Lyness for Wilmott to sidestep into an empty net.

It was a lead Luton thoroughly deserved with the influential Keane and Morgan-Smith testing Lyness, who then had to keep out O'Connor before

Sharpe headed a James Dance job clear as half-time approached.

Kiddy threatened just after the hour when Nick Wright headed Lee Vaughan's right-wing cross wide.

Then a penalty appeal was turned down by referee Darren Hendley when Pilkington appeared to handle sub Marc Williams' cross.

But Morgan-Smith and Wilmott were looking a constant menace and, after Lyness had denied Wilmott with a fine save on 70 minutes, the keeper could do nothing about the winger finding the top corner 12 minutes later for his fifth goal of the season, and fourth in two games. Morgan-Smith tricked his way past

Wright on the right before delivering an inviting cross to the far post for Wilmott to head home.

Sharpe retired from almost on the goal-line after good work from Williams, but it wasn't enough to stop Luton, maintaining their unbeaten record in four visits to Aggborough, nor Harriers tumbling to eighth.

"We just ran out of time today," said boss Steve Burr. "It was pleasing to get a goal and give ourselves chance to get something out of the game. I can't fault the effort in the second half."

"But you could just see today that extra bit it takes if you are going to get out of this division. Perhaps Luton had that today and we didn't."

STAR MAN: Anwar Morgan-Smith (Luton)

ENTERTAINMENT: *****

REF RATING: Darren Hendley 7/10



"You could just see today that extra bit it takes to get out of this division. Perhaps Luton had that and we didn't."

STEVE BURR, Kidderminster manager

"It was great to have George and Shane back on the teamsheet. I had two fit players in the stands, it can only be a positive."

GARY BRABIN, Luton manager



FLYING HIGH: Robbie Wilmott heads Luton's winner

MATCH STATS

KIDDERMINSTER v LUTON

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

KIDDERMINSTER: 4-3-3: Lyness 37, Vaughan 7, Jones 6, Williams 37, 46, Sharpe 6, Mike Williams 5, (Hewitt 43, 60, Stone 7, Vincent 6, Gillingham 6, Maddy 6, Marc Williams 68, 69, Matt, Vargis, Subs not used: Wright, Gunn, LUTON: 4-3-3: Taylor 6, Dance 6, Keane 7, G Pilkington 7, Blackett 7, Ward 6, Kasser 7, Dance 7, (Dow 75, 76, O'Connor 7, (Fletcher 64, 65, Wilmott 7, Morgan-Smith 6, Subs not used: Anwar, Williams, R. Pilkington)