

Grimsby hoodoo ends

by Mike Simmonds

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Blue Square Bet Premier

Grimsby Town 0 Luton Town 1

TOWN defender Janos Kovacs was delighted his side ended their miserable run at Blundell Park with a 1-0 victory on Friday night.

Hatters hadn't tasted success in Grimsby since 1998 when Rory Allen netted in a 1-0 win, their only triumph in 12 attempts.

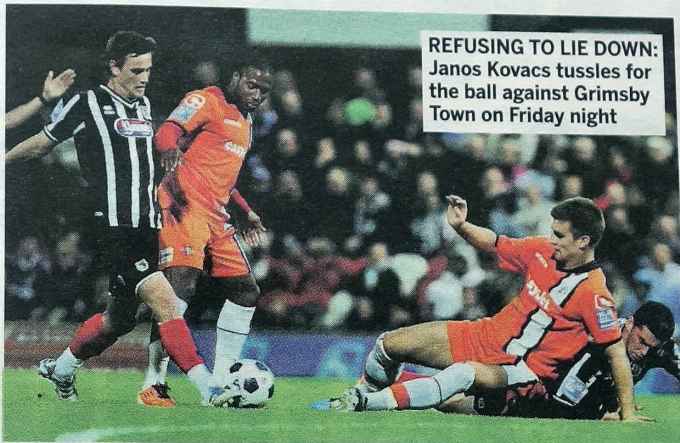
But Tommy Wright's 73rd-minute strike was enough to bag all three points and, with Wrexham dropping points against Newport County over the weekend, it meant the gap at the top was reduced to six points.

Kovacs said: "I saw something about this (the poor record). Stats are always like that. If it's going into your head it can cause problems. If you're not focusing on it you can just go on to the match and do what you can and we did that."

"It was a very hard game. I don't know how it looked on the side but I felt on the inside it looked a bit more physical, especially in the first half and away from home you need to expect this."

"At home as well, just look at the Wrexham game, I thought it was similar. Every game in this division is tight but we worked hard and got the win, very happy with that."

"It's always very disappointing to lose a game against the biggest rivals in the table and on Tuesday, it was a wind-up for this game."



REFUSING TO LIE DOWN:
Janos Kovacs tussles for
the ball against Grimsby
Town on Friday night

"The most important thing is stay touch tight with them, in a long season like in English football, everyone can win five or six in a row, so we hope for that, do our hard work on the training ground and see where we are around Christmas time."

Before the match, Hatters boss Gary Brabin had spoken about winning ugly and Town certainly did that on a windy evening in Cleethorpes, in front of the TV cameras.

Although the match was never a class affair, Luton always had the better quality on the night against a workmanlike home side, with Adam Watkins in particular pulling the strings in midfield and Kovacs immense at the back.

The manager made three changes to his side with Keith Keane absent due to an ankle injury, while Aaron O'Connor dropped to the bench and Shane Blackett missed out.

In came Wright for his full debut, partnering Stuart Fleetwood up front in a 4-4-2 formation, while the recalled duo of Watkins and Jamie Hand were in midfield, while Jake Howells moved to left-back.

Town settled the quicker and James Dance enjoyed plenty of the ball on the right flank, with Fleetwood having his close-range shot parried by James McKeown, but Grimsby forced the first real save as top scorer Liam Hearn's low drive was splendidly turned away by Mark Tyler.

The bright opening rather petered out as the half progressed, but Watkins continued to stand out, spraying the ball around intelligently and having a fierce half-volley blocked, while Fleetwood turned his defender in the box and his low effort drew an excellent reaction save from McKee.

Wright could only divert

Dance's cross wide of the post and with the half almost at an end, Hatters piled on the pressure as Watkins cut on to his left but saw a left-footer deflect inches wide.

In the second period, Michael Coulson sent a bouncing effort into the palms of Tyler, while Robbie Willmott's free-kick never looked like testing McKeown.

Coulson then went on a storming run through the middle of the field only to place his outside of the boot effort straight down Tyler's throat.

The impressive Watkins sent a long-range drive over, while Hearn cut into the penalty area and almost opened the scoring with a low drive, but Tyler again saved well, deflecting the ball behind for a corner.

Town came close on 67 minutes when Curtis Osano charged down the right wing and Fleetwood headed tamely over from a good position.

The visitors finally broke the deadlock on 73 minutes though as Hand's chipped ball found Fleetwood and his cross was powerfully headed home from close range by Wright.

Substitute Rob Eagle tried to respond immediately but Tyler flipped his curling free-kick over the bar while, with time running out, the keeper blocked Coulson's fierce dead-ball strike too.

Although Grimsby huffed and puffed for an equaliser, they never seriously threatened breaching Town's solid defence, with substitutes John Paul Kissock and Danny Crow combining well to run down the clock.