

LU BETTER

Willmott's goal puts Buckle's



WHERE THERE'S A WILL: Robbie Willmott celebrates
PICTURES: Gareth Owen

LUTON TOWN 1
Willmott 67

By Stuart Hammonds

BUCKLE up and hold on to your hats, Hatters! The rollercoaster Luton have ridden in the three years since coming down from League Two might yet avert back on platform 92.

The Great Escape rang around Kenilworth Road before the game dubbed 'The play-off for the play-offs', with Kidderminster holding a two-point advantage over the sixth-placed hosts.

By the end, with Robbie Willmott's solitary strike having lifted Town back into the top five, the throats of 7,664 locals among Non-League's highest crowd of the season - 8,415 - whistled the tune normally associated with teams beating relegation.

The club which has had more ups and downs than any other in recent years might just escape their ride through the Rode Square Bet Premier's not-so-Pleasant Beach.

The task is simple. Win on Tuesday at Gateshead, whose own play-off hopes are now over, and next week's trip to Fleetwood matters not.

And with the momentum gained under new boss Paul Buckle - this was their fourth game unbeaten, three of them wins - they'd be heavily fancied to zoom right through the play-off fun park.

The tension of a hosting a Harriers side with five straight wins behind them made this game fascinating.

Kidderminster were more than a match for much of the game and could have left with a point had Luke Jones' 89th-minute header not come back off a post and substitute Steve Guinan's follow-up volley not been blocked on the line by Jake Howells.

Buckle called it a: "Determined, gritty, no nonsense" performance.

"It's been a crazy few weeks and I think we should all be proud of ourselves the way we're turning the season around. It's not finished yet, not by a long way."

"We've got a massive game now on Tuesday that we need to prepare for and focus on, but if we can get this crowd behind us, anything can happen."

Two draws will be enough for Luton, unless Kiddy were to beat third-placed Mansfield next Saturday by 13 goals. Buckle knows a win at the

KIDDERMINSTER H 0

BELIEVE IT!

boys two points from play-offs

International Stadium relieves the pressure of getting something from the champions.

"I don't want to sit back. I want to go forward and score goals, so that should suit us down to the ground," he said. "It's going to be a difficult game - that's why you didn't see over-celebration here."

"It was a big relief today for everybody. It's a huge win. But let's concentrate on the next game because it's huge as well."

Willmott had been Luton's most likely in a first half in which Harriers' midfielders James Vincent and Kyle Storer - lucky to get only yellow for shoving Stuart Fleetwood to the deck - harried the Hatters into misplaced passes and slips while building play neatly.

Ex-Cambridge winger Will-

mott's 25-yarder was deflected wide, but it was a series of inviting, yet unfinished crosses he, Andre Gray and Howells flashed across the six-yard box that caused most danger.

After the break Howells, Gray, Fleetwood - with an overhead - and Willmott again went close, before Marvin Johnson and Ryan

Rowe, with his first touch, made sure Mark Tyler was alert at the other end.

And in the 67th-minute Tyler was involved in what turned out to be a rare goalkeeping 'assist'.

He looked to have got in a mess with skipper George Pilkington as he raced out to meet a ball over the top. But his sliced clearance dropped a

70-yard ball in the hole behind Kiddy right-back Lee Vaughan.

Tony Brooden hesitated as Willmott caught the ball, cut back from the left byline and rifled his shot into the far corner - leaving Harriers needing a favour from the Head.

"It was a straightforward punt we should have dealt with," said Kiddy boss Steve Burr. "We are disappointed because there wasn't that much in it. We proved we've closed the gap on Luton since the start of the season."

"We obviously want Gateshead to beat them and then it goes into the last game. It's out of our control, but it's not over yet by any means."

STAR MAN: George Pilkington (Luton Town)
ATE: 8,415
ENTERTAINMENT: *****
REF RATING: Darren Rand 6/10

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PAUL BUCKLE, Luton manager

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STEVE BURR, Kidderminster Harriers manager



SOLID DEFENCE: Man-of-the-match George Pilkington gets above Anthony Malbon to clear

MATCH STATS

LUTON v K'MINSTER

4 SHOTS ON TARGET	4
8 SHOTS OFF TARGET	4
6 CORNERS	7
1 OFFSIDE	3
12 FOULS CONCEDED	3
1 YELLOW CARDS	2
0 RED CARDS	0

LUTON TOWN (4-4-2): Tyler 7, Oursell, Rowson 2, Thompson 6, Howells 7, Lane 6, Williams 7, Stoke 75, 55, Keane 6, Willmott 7 (Blackett 85, 55, Fleetwood 6, Mulvihill 82, 55, Gray 6, Ballell not used) Ovenson, Taylor

KIDDERMINSTER HARRIERS (4-4-2): Brooden 6, Vaughan 7, Jones 7, Marshall 7, Williams 6, Harker 6 (Graham 88, 65, Storey 7 (Bradley 81, 55, Vincent 7, Johnson 7, Malbon 7, Wright 6 (Rowe 64, 55, Ballell not used) Lyness, Dervetto