

Willmott hit puts Buckle's boys back in the mix for promotion

BY LAUREN ARCHELL

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MANAGER Paul Buckle beamed that Luton's 1-0 win in their crunch match against fellow Blue Square Bet Premier play-off hopefuls Kidderminster Harriers 'epitomised where the club are at the moment' and how far they have come in the last four games.

In front of a season's best crowd, a superb second half strike from Robbie Willmott was enough to seal the victory which saw Town leapfrog the Worcestershire side into fifth spot.

Now if Luton can win their game in hand against Gateshead on Tuesday night they will book themselves in the end of season shake-up.

Harriers had a late effort hit the post while another was cleared off the line by Jake Howells but Town hung on to claim a crucial victory.

Speaking after the game Buckle said: "There was a lot riding on it.

"I'm not sure whether Kidderminster came for the draw or to win, but we did all the running.

"We got behind them, worked the ball really well and showed a good side that we could really open them up on a number of occasions in the first half.

"In the second half we just had to be patient until we got the goal.

"The goal and the performance epitomises where we are at the moment as a club.

"Mark Tyler was on his guard, he dealt with a nasty ball and cleared it for Willmott who chased it right down. He made his own luck and it was a great finish.

"It was difficult because of Kidderminster's style, but we showed that we can combat that, get the ball and pass.

"It's a really pleasing day and the players deserve all of the credit."

The boss also said that he fielded an unchanged side from the one that beat Ebbsfleet 3-0 as he felt the 11 players had earned their shirts.

"When I'm picking the side I'm thinking about two things - who has earned the shirt and tactics.

"If things aren't going right I'm not afraid to make changes, but I know how strong the chemistry is between the players that have earned the right for those 11 shirts.

"They've not disappointed anyone, their work-rate is evident and the fans are reacting to an energetic Luton team playing in the right way."

With so much riding on this game for both teams, the tempo was extremely high from the start with balls being pumped from end to end.

However, there was a dearth of real chances as Kidderminster, yet another tall and physical side, did their best to frustrate the Hatters by efficiently closing down a number of forward moves.

But Luton managed to battle their way through to trouble their defence on a number of occasions with attempts from Willmott and Adam Watkins.

The best chances of the half came from cen-

tre back Janos Kovacs, who could have put Town ahead with two efforts from a Willmott corner.

His first, a powerful goalwards header was cleared off the line by Lee Vaughan before the Hungarian blasted the rebound over the bar.

As half time approached the Hatters launched a sustained attack on the Kidderminster goal but a lack of orange shirts in the box prevented Town from capitalising.

A number of balls pinged across the six-yard area begging to be buried but with no-one in the box the chances went begging.

The second half started in much the same way, Andre Gray unleashing a shot from a tight angle which Harriers keeper Tony Breeden managed to collect, while Willmott launched a long range effort which was easily saved.

As the frustration began to set in the Harriers worked their way back into the game with Marvin Johnson and substitute Ryan Rowe forcing Mark Tyler into saves.

Just as the visitors looked to be taking the upper hand the deadlock was broken - a fantastic strike from Willmott putting the Hatters ahead.

Spotting him racing forward, Tyler launched a long ball forward, which the winger collected and fired home from an incredibly acute angle.

Howells did his part at the other end to keep the Hatters ahead, clearing a strike off the line from substitute Steve Guinan in the 88th minute, after Luke Jones saw his shot rebound off the upright.



CHEERS: Paul Buckle (left) and Adam Watkins lead the players' applause for the Luton Town supporters

photos by Gareth Lee

Luton Town: Mark Tyler, Keith Keane, George Pilkington, Alex Lawless, Robbie Willmott (Shane Blackett, 84), Stuart Fleetwood (Craig McAllister, 82) Jake Howells, Curtis Osano, Andre Gray, Adam Watkins (Godfrey Poku, 78), Janos Kovacs

Unused Subs: Dan Gleeson, Greg Taylor, Shane Blackett

Kidderminster Harriers: Tony Breeden, Lee Vaughan, Mike Williams, Luke Jones, Tom Marshall, Dave Hankin (Steve Guinan), James Vincent, Nick Wrigh (Ryan Rowe, 63), Kyle Storer, Anthony Malbon, Marvin Johnson

Unused Subs: Dead Lyness, Mickey Demetree, Daniel Bradley
Att: 8415 (751)



TOP ROB: Robbie Willmott (right) is chased by teammate Andre Gray after scoring the goal that put Luton back in a play-off position

BLUE SQUARE BET PREMIER TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PTS
1 Fleetwood (C)	45	31	10	4	102	46	93
2 Wrexham	44	28	8	8	79	32	47
3 Mansfield	45	24	14	7	84	48	36
4 York City	45	22	14	9	80	45	36
5 Luton Town	44	21	14	9	76	42	34
6 Kidderminster	45	22	10	13	82	60	22
7 Southport	45	20	13	12	71	69	21
8 Forest Green	45	19	13	13	66	69	20
9 Grimsby Town	45	19	13	13	79	59	20
10 Cambridge U	45	19	13	13	55	39	16
11 Gateshead	44	20	10	14	66	61	0
12 Braintree	45	17	11	17	75	75	0
13 Barrow	45	16	9	20	59	75	-18
14 Ebbsfleet	45	14	12	19	67	81	-14
15 Alfreton	45	14	9	22	60	85	-25
16 Stockport Co	45	11	15	19	56	73	-17
17 Newport Co	44	11	14	19	52	61	-4
18 Tamworth	45	11	14	20	53	64	-11
19 Lincoln City	45	12	10	23	53	64	-11
20 AFC Telford	45	10	16	19	45	62	-17
21 Hayes (R)	45	11	8	26	57	88	-31
22 Darlington (R)	45	10	13	22	42	72	-20
23 Bath City (R)	45	7	10	28	42	67	-45
24 Kettering (R)	45	8	9	28	38	97	-50

C = CHAMPIONS, R = RELEGATED