



LUTON TOWN

DARTFORD 2

Noble 5, Bonner 41



DARTS HIT A BULLSEYE

12/13



By **STUART HAMMONDS**

HAVING seen a team establish themselves firmly in the fight for promotion to the Football League, the Luton Town fans showed their appreciation by applauding them off.

Remarkably, after a hectic, end-to-end encounter between teams third and sixth at Kick-off, it was newly-promoted Dartford taking the plaudits from the home support, their own travelling faithful having outstayed the disgruntled hosts from minute one.

'Can you hear us? Can you hear us? Can you hear us, over there?' We are Dartford, super Dartford, sang the 484-strong black and white army after first-half goals from Lee Noble and Tom Bonner ensured they, like AFC Telford and Beantree before them, left Bedfordshire with three points.

Luton, joining a growing list already featuring Kidderminster, Cambridge, Newport, Hereford, Grimsby and Mansfield, certainly know who the Kent club are after Tony Burman's side leap-frogged the Hatters into the play-off places.

Proud Burman said: 'We've had some great results this year, going to Wrexham and getting a 2-2 then winning at Grimsby, but this one has got to be the best so far.'

'Luton is a fabulous club with a great history, and in our own little way we've had the same problem as they've got where everyone comes, defends and breaks. We've had that for the last six years at home, and it really is difficult.'

'But I felt the boys deserved everything we got. In the first half I thought we were really good. We passed it on the break very well.'

'Yes, we got lucky breaks, but our game plan worked and that's not just for today. We've got a way of playing away from home and it's been good.'

That way of playing involves Jacob Erskine leading the line on his own, but with the creativity of Noble behind, Ryan Hayes tormenting Jake Howells on the right and Tom Champion and captain Elliot Bradbrook bounding. If O'Donnell and Arnaud Mendy into meek mid-

Burman's boys into top five after stunning win

field submission, it worked a treat.

Burman acknowledged that Luton 'threw the kitchen sink at us' in the second half, and new signing from York, Jonathan Smith, threw himself around to try to galvanise his new teammates on his home debut.

But Bonner and the ever-green Mark Arber were superb at centre-back and young keeper Marcus Bettinelli punched, caught and blocked everything.

When the Fulham loanee was beaten, the crossbar denied the prodigal Andre Gray ten minutes before the

Paul Buckle, only this time Arber's set-piece delivery from just inside the Luton half was straight down the middle. His centre-half partner Bonner stole in between the static Brill once more to walk the ball home.

'Two set plays have undone us,' said Buckle, whose men have now dropped 13 points from 21 available at home this term.

'The first was as poor a goal as you'll ever see conceded, the second the same. We've been water-tight in those situations for a number of games now, but it's reared its head again and cost us.'

'We had enough chances to at least draw the game today, but we deserved to lose because of those two things. Most disappointing is that we've missed the chance to cut the gap at the top to a point with Newport losing.'

Luton were poor, and their fans let them know as they made their way off. To their credit, they also let the Darts know how well they'd done.

The day belonged to them, and fans who, after going on Kent League away days to places like Darenth Heathside and Crookenhill, had revelled in the famous surroundings.

'I hope that the Luton fans now know who we are now and will say, 'Maybe they aren't a bad little side'', added Burman.

STAR MAN: Tom Bonner (Dartford)
ATT: 6.5/7
ENTERTAINMENT: + + + +
RET RATING: Not Even 7/10

MATCH STATS
LUTON v DARTFORD

6 SHOTS ON TARGET	2
7 SHOTS OFF TARGET	3
11 CORNERS	3
3 OFFSIDE	2
13 FOULS CONCEDED	19
4 YELLOW CARDS	3
0 RED CARDS	0

LUTON: 4-3-3: 1st 5, Lawless 6, Henry 2, Arber 6, Howells 7, Smith 7, Mendy 4 (Walker 6), St, O'Donnell 6, Gray 6, Herdall 7, Farrant 6, St, Noble 6, Erskine 6. Subs not used: Tyler, Flowers, Turner, Kewell, Watkins.

DARTFORD: 4-4-1-1: Bonnell 7, Burns 2, Bonner 8, Arber 8, Preece 7, Hayes 7 (Collins 6), St, Champion 7, Bradbrook 7, Harris 6, Preece 8, St, Noble 6, Erskine 6. Subs not used: Wells, Green, Wells.



NO WAY THROUGH: Luton's Andre Gray is tackled



WE'RE ON OUR WAY: Lee Noble, right, celebrates his goal with Mark Arber, centre, and Leo Burns, left.
PICTURE: South Owen

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PAUL BUCKLE, Luton manager

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TONY BURMAN, Dartford manager

