

Machin rewarded as Cherries come back from a goal down to leave Hatters hopping mad

Robbo's two hot

96/97

MEL Machin gave Steve Robinson an early birthday present which he unwrapped like a child with a new toy.

Machin granted Robinson – who is 22 tomorrow – his wish to play up front and the lively Irishman repaid him with two goals.

Just like the animals on Noah's Ark, Robinson's goals have

NATIONWIDE DIVISION TWO

AFC BOURNEMOUTH LUTON TOWN

3
2

Neil Perrett reports from Dean Court

started to go in two by two.

It took the former Spurs' youngster 19 games to get off the mark this season when he scored twice against Brentford two weeks ago.

He repeated the dose in

this match as Cherries took the lead, lost it and then came from behind for the first time this season to win.

Robinson has made no secret of the fact he prefers a striker's role, but Machin has been delighted with his input from midfield.

As with the team in general, goals have been in short supply for Robinson, who finished last season as second leading scorer behind Steve Jones.

Together with Jones's 21 goals, Robinson's 10 and nine from Matt Holland almost certainly guaranteed Cherries' Division Two status.

Robinson's double was sandwiched between a header by Ian Cox as Cherries chalked up another milestone by hitting three goals in one game for the first time this season.

The relief around the ground after the final whistle was clear for all to see.

Manager Machin applauded each and every player off the pitch.

Cherries took a giant leap forward after the Brentford win, but followed up by taking a step

backwards with last week's defeat at Burnley.

The tension was starting to mount as Cherries slipped perilously close to the relegation zone familiar territory for the-

side during the past few seasons.

The pressure was on and still is – but results like this and the Brentford win prove Machin's men can live with the best in their league.

Machin was forced to bring in the reinforcements with striker Steve Fletcher sidelined with a hamstring injury and John Bailey ruled out through suspension after his FA Cup dismissal against Brentford.

There was no place for loan signing Iyseden Christie who sat on the bench for 58 minutes before coming on for John O'Neill to make his presence felt.

Christie paid the price for a poor performance at Burnley and his place was taken by Jason Brissett – his first league start for three months.

With Robinson moved up front and Bailey absent, Mike Dean and Dale Gordon were recalled in midfield, but neither had one of their better games.

O'Neill was also not at his best and wasted a good chance to edge Cherries in front when his fifth-minute effort was saved by Luton keeper Ian Feuer.

Cherries had a huge slice of luck when Cox blatantly handled Paul Showler's cross inside the box and Luton appealed for a penalty.

There was a deathly hush around the ground, but remarkably, referee John Brandwood, who was just yards from the incident, waved play on.

The silence turned to euphoria when Cherries rode their luck by taking the lead in the 17th minute.

Jamie Vincent's free-

kick from the half-way line found Brissett lurking on the edge of the box and his neat through ball set O'Neill free.

O'Neill was again denied by Feuer's save, but the ball ran loose to Robinson who side-footed into an empty net.

The lead was short-lived as Luton hit back seven minutes later when Julian James' speculative effort from 25 yards went in off the post.

At this stage, the high-flying Hatters threatened to run riot and deservedly gained the upper hand on the stroke of half-time.

A sweeping move down the left flank ended with Dwight Marshall glancing home Ceri Hughes' cross at the near post.

On the balance of play in the first half, conservative half-time estimates ranged between Luton winning by at least two or three goals.

A horrible miss by Gordon summed up his day when he failed to hit the target from close range after Brissett's

teasing centre picked him out.

Dean and O'Neill made way for Christie and Rawlinson and the double substitution coincided with a revival.

From Rawlinson's 64th-minute corner, Luton's giant keeper utilised all of his six feet and eight inches to palm away Holland's superb header.

The recovery continued when Rob Murray came on for Gordon 13 minutes from time and Cherries equalised just a minute later.

Rawlinson was in inspired form and his excellent free-kick found the head of Cox whose second goal of the season put Cherries back on level terms.

Seconds later, Rawlinson was denied when his piledriver was blocked for a corner before Feuer was beaten again for the winner.

Murray's cross from the right seemed to have eluded everyone except Brissett who nodded it back across goal for Robinson to squeeze inside the near post.



POINTING THE WAY: Steve Robinson celebrates after putting Cherries into the lead



IMPRESSIVE: Jason Brissett in his first league start for three months



RELIEF: Mel Machin applauds his troops off after their come-from-behind victory



MATCH FACTS

AFC BOURNEMOUTH LUTON TOWN

6.....Glass	Feuer
6.....Young	James
7.....Vincent	Thomas
9★.....FERDINAND	Skelton (Linton, 68)
8.....Cox	Davis
5...Dean (Rawlinson, 58)	Johnson
8.....Holland	Hughes
8.....Robinson	Alexander
5....Gordon (Murray, 77)	Showler (Guentchev, 81)
8.....Brissett	Thorpe (Grant, 81)
5....O'Neill (Christie, 58)	Marshall
Goals: Robinson 17, 80	Goals: James 24
Cox 78	Marshall 44
Booked: Gordon, Murray,	Booked: Davis
Rawlinson	Linton
★A1 Windscreens Ment Marks	Attendance: 4,322

Referee: John Brandwood (Lichfield)