

Thorpe spares Luton blushes

By Jonathan Noble

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Luton Town 2

Bristol City 2

LUTON TOWN'S drive for automatic promotion from Division Two continued to stutter at Kenilworth Road last night when they were fortunate to escape with a 2-2 draw against Bristol City, having recovered from a two-goal deficit.

The home side could not believe their luck in the second minute when on-loan Arsenal defender Gavin McGowan slipped on the turf and gave Bristol's Paul Agostino a clear path into the penalty box, just seconds after Tony Thorpe had almost found a way through the opposition defence.

With Agostino almost in the clear for a shot on goal, Marvin Johnson's last ditch tackle may have done its job in clearing the ball, but it also brought down the Australian striker for a penalty.

Shaun Goater's tame shot at Luton goalkeeper Ian Feuer provided an easy save, but the American failed to hold the ball and Goater fired in the rebound to give Bristol City the lead.

In fact, despite Luton's impressive breaks into the Bristol defence, it was Goater in the 31st minute who again had the clearest chance when he broke free of

the unsure Luton defence to shoot just wide to the left in a move that should have given Bristol a two-goal lead.

But it duly came after 40 minutes. Three minutes after their goalkeeper Keith Welch was lucky to escape with a yellow card for bringing down Boncho Guentchev, Agostino made no mistake on the receiving end of a Paul Allen cross along the front of the box.

It was perfectly placed and provided the finish to a beautiful Bristol move down the right wing.

Luton kept their heads up, and just before half-time an accurate Graham Alexander cross from the right was met at the far post by Steve Davis to bring the home side back into the game.

The equaliser came in the 73rd minute when Thorpe headed in his 27th goal of the season after Ceri Hughes, returning from Welsh international duty, served him a perfect cross from a hard-earned corner.

Luton Town: Feuer; McGowan (McLaren 45), Thomas, Waddock, Davis; Johnson, Hughes, Alexander, Oldfield (Grant 58); Thorpe, Guentchev (Marshall 45).

Bristol City: Welch; Owers, Brennan, Shail, Paterson; Kuhl, Hewlett, Carey, Agostino (Bent 65); Goater (Nugent 79), Allen. Sub: Seal. Booked: Welch.

Referee: G Singh (Wolverhampton).