

Taming of the Shrews

Report by
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Luton Town 2
Shrewsbury 0

ANDREW Fotiadis played the game of his life as Hatters rode their luck to cling onto their automatic promotion dream.

In a game so pedestrian at times one expected the electronic scoreboard to start flashing "do not walk", only the stand-in striker emerged with credit.

A burst of pace seconds before the interval won Hatters a crucial penalty – which out-of-sorts Tony Thorpe planted firmly in the corner.

Shrewsbury manager Fred Davies complained bitterly that his side should have had a penalty just before the hour which would have changed the face of the game – and he was quite right. Mitchell Thomas should have been sent off as well.

But with both Stockport and Brentford slipping up, victorious Hatters bounced back into third – just a single point behind the promotion line.

But what a poor, tired and disappointing performance – one which would seem to show Hatters are rapidly running out of steam at a time when they need to be firing on all cylinders.

With just nine minutes played, relegation-threatened Shrewsbury should have sneaked ahead – but Ian Stevens somehow spooned his open goal opportunity high over the bar.

Marvin Johnson then made the first of a number of potentially costly errors – his season's catalogue has more entries than Kays – only for Paul Evans to hammer his angled drive straight at Ian Feuer.



● **IT'S THERE! Dwight Marshall celebrates scoring for Hatters**

Fotiadis broke the deadlock when he drove into the box with one of many powerful runs, then was clattered as he pushed the ball cleverly past Lee Taylor's clumsy challenge.

Three minutes after the break Shrewsbury should have been level, but after Mark Dempsey had comfortably sprung the Hatters' off side trap and rounded Ian Feuer he

fell over, and was booked for trying to con the referee that he had been pulled down.

Graham Alexander hit the bar for Hatters and from Oldfield's cross Thorpe somehow missed his free header right in front of goal.

Just before the hour Shrewsbury again should have been level, this time after a near fatal Mitchell

Thomas slip just outside his own box.

As he waited for Ian Feuer to make a call, the lanky left back stumbled over his own feet allowing Ian Stevens a free run on goal.

But the defender clearly pulled Stevens back only for the referee to wave play on.

With Shrewsbury gaining the upper hand, Lawrence pulled off Paul McLaren, replacing him with striker Dwight Marshall, in a bid to increase Hatters' attacking options.

The ploy worked and 16 minutes from time David Oldfield's left foot drive from the corner of the box was turned in by the alert Marshall from close range at the far post.

Thorpe missed another great chance soon after, but Shrewsbury could not find anything more in reserve.

After the match Lennie Lawrence conceded there had been an element of luck in his side's victory.

"I have been claiming we have not had much rub of the green in recent weeks, but today we did. The second goal had an element of fortune about it, and the win though deserved was not exactly convincing.

"Marvin and Mitchell got themselves into tangles, but it would have been an injustice if we had not won.

"Shrewsbury are entitled to feel disappointed they did not get a penalty, but we should have had one at Blackpool in midweek and have had several other strong appeals throughout the season waved away.

"I have said to the players just get ready for the play-offs and you do not know what will happen.

"I do not think Brentford and Stockport are going to win all their remaining games so we have got a chance of automatic promotion, although it is still just out of our hands.

"If we beat Bury on Tuesday it might make them jittery, but I cannot see them missing out and they will probably be champions."



● **ON THE CHARGE – David Oldfield leads another Luton attack on the Shrewsbury goal**