



■ Hatters joy: Tresor Kandol gets Luton's first (above) and the same player goes close (right) with a tremendous volley. (Below) Liam George is about to be mobbed after scoring the late equaliser



By George – Hatters bag dramatic last-gasp point

**Bristol Rovers 3,
Luton Town 3**

LIAM George bagged a last gasp equaliser as Hatters fought back bravely from 2-0 down.

With just six minutes left on the clock, and trailing 3-2, George struck a terrific shot in off the near post from the corner of the penalty area.

Matthew Taylor had to come to the rescue for Hatters in the dying seconds – heading clear from under his own crossbar after Mark Ovendale had been beaten all ends up – but the draw was the least Luton deserved for the type of gutsy performance that had been so elusive until yesterday.

And with a little luck the visitors might even have snatched all three points.

After a cagey start in which Luton were certainly not second best, the game came to life in the 12th minute, Ovendale came out to collect a high Marcus Bignot cross, got nowhere near it and Steve Foster simply had to loop a header into the net to put Rovers in front.

With the Town defence in tatters the home side could have added two more in as many minutes. Bignot should have capitalised when Emmerson Boyce, looking far from happy on the left side of a back three, missed his kick from a long ball.

Racing into the area, the wingback blazed his shot over the bar. And there was an action replay in the next attack as the ball fell to Bignot when Matthew Taylor's clearance was charged down by Hogg.

The Town, however, settled, and Kandol almost converted when a sliced Mark Walters clearance put his defence in danger and Liam George produced a terrific 25 yarder that Nick Culkin had to go full stretch to palm round a post.

Kandol was proving a constant threat and he missed by inches after being found in space at the far post by George's cross. The best chance so far fell to Peter Thomson. Kandol dummied a pass from Taylor leaving the new boy through on goal, but his shot flew narrowly wide.

The Town were ahead on chances but were dealt a second blow on the half hour when they conceded a classic goal. Mark Walters, making his first start of the

season, produced a wicked centre from the byline that was met by 19 year old Nathan Ellington's forehead for his fifth goal of the season.

Back came the Hatters. Kandol hit the crossbar with a header from George's centre, but it was injury time before he went one better.

Taylor's corner from the right caused chaos in the Bristol defence, Watts got an important touch, and Kandol hooked home from five yards.

Mark Stein and Gavin McGowan came on for Thomson and Fraser at half time and Stein missed a golden chance within seconds as the Hatters proceeded to run Rovers ragged.

But on 61 minutes a thunderclap and hailstorm hit the stadium just as Ellington notched his second of the game. He was allowed to turn in the box and shot hard into the corner of the net.

McGowan had managed to stay out of the referee's book for fully 23 minute – some feat by his poor disciplinary standards – but a crock on Ellington, which ended the Rovers' player's participation, ensured that his name went into the little black book.

Four minutes later, however, he made amends by putting in a good cross that Foster made a hash off and Kandol pounced for his second goal against Rovers' ten men.

And after Taylor fizzed a centre right across the face of goal and Kandol had brought a brilliant save from Culkin, George fired in a beautiful equaliser.

From out of the blue, on the very corner of the penalty area, he struck a terrific shot in off the near post with the keeper well beaten.

Matthew Taylor still had to make a magnificent intervention to secure a result for the Town when, with Ovendale beaten, he headed a Moussa Dagnogo header over his own bar with a minute to play.

Ricky Hill said afterwards: "I was very pleased with the resilience shown when we were 2-0 and 3-1 down. We showed good character and 45 minutes of controlled football in the second half." **Luton Town: Ovendale, Fraser (McGowan 46), Boyce, Watts, Taylor, McLaren, Spring (Holmes 80), Locke, George, Thomson (Stein 46), Kandol. Subs not used: Brennan, Abbey.**

Attendance: 7,901. Hatters Man of the Match: Liam George.

