

Kandol hot as Hatters make point

NEVER-SAY-DIE Luton Town came away with a point in a memorable 3-3 draw at the Memorial Ground.

Ricky Hill's Hatters have now gone 10 games since their last victory, but if they continue to show the same enterprise and spirit as they did against Bristol Rovers on Saturday that elusive win will be just around the corner.

Luton trailed 2-0 and 3-1 at Bristol, but two goals from teenage striker Tresor Kandol and a Liam George wonder-strike earned the visitors a share of the spoils.

Remarkably, at the other end, Hatters keeper Mark Ovendale did not make a save during the match. Bristol's first three shots on target hit the back of the net and the fourth – an 89th-minute header by sub Moussa Dagnogo – was cleared from under his own crossbar by Matthew Taylor.

Luton dominated the game for long periods after wobbling for the opening 25 minutes. Rovers took the lead on 14 minutes when Marcus Bignot's cross lured Ovendale off his line and left Steve Foster with the simple task of heading over the Hatters keeper, who was stranded in no-man's-land.

Bignot then wasted two opportunities to increase the home side's lead, failing to capitalise on a paucity of marking in the Hatters penalty box. But there were also defensive gaps to be exploited in Bristol's back-line and Luton should have pulled at least one goal back with three chances in four minutes.

George and Kandol both went close to netting before Peter Thomson missed a glorious chance on 29 minutes.

Kandol's clever dummy released Thomson for a clear run on goal, but the ex-NAC Breda forward pushed his shot wide with only on-loan Manchester United keeper Nick Culkin to beat.

Thomson's agony was intensified two minutes later when more slack defending cost the Hatters a second goal.

Veteran winger Mark Walters ran Stuart Fraser ragged during a torrid first-half for the Hatters' Scottish under-21 international. And the ex-Liverpool and England player waltzed past Fraser to cross for Nathan Ellington, who headed into Ovendale's top corner. Luton's response to the

second goal was again gritty in stark contrast to previous capitulations against Swansea and Sunderland.

George and Kandol, both proving a handful, combined again on 40 minutes.

This time, Kandol's header flicked off the top of Culkin's crossbar, but the Zaire-born striker was not kept off the score-sheet for much longer.

He bundled the ball over the line after Matthew Spring had helped on a Taylor corner in the last action of the first-half.

Hill brought on Gavin McGowan and Mark Stein in place of the struggling Fraser and Thomson for the second-half. Stein's impact was almost immediate. He raced clear within seconds of the restart, but Culkin pushed his shot behind.

The home side appeared to be flagging after midweek heroics against Everton, but their prayers for a third goal were answered when the heavens opened over Bristol.

Luton's defence lost concentration on the hour

match facts

BRISTOL RVS 3 LUTON 3

● **BRISTOL ROVERS:** Nick Culkin, Marcus Bignot, Scott Jones, Mark Walters (Moussa Dagnogo, 63), Steve Foster, Che Wilson, Simon Bryant, Lewis Hogg, Vitalijs Astafjevs, Clinton Ellis (Trevor Challis, 49), Nathan Ellington (Dwayne Plummer, 73). Subs not used: Mark Foran, Matthew Glennon.

● **HATTERS:** Mark Ovendale, Julian Watts, Paul McLaren, Emmerson Boyce, Stuart Fraser (Gavin McGowan, 46), Matthew Spring (Peter Holmes, 79), Adam Locke, Matthew Taylor, Liam George, Peter Thomson (Mark Stein, 46), Tresor Kandol. Subs not used: Dean Brennan, Nathan Abbey.

● **Referee:** George Cain.

● **Shots on target:** Bristol Rovers 4 Luton 9.

● **Off target:** Bristol Rvs 5 Luton 6.

● **Corners:** Bristol Rvs 7 Luton 6.

● **Star Man:** Tresor Kandol – two goals and dangerous throughout.

as a torrential downpour descended on the Memorial Ground and Ellington's shot on the turn beat Ovendale after Bignot's cross. Ellington's afternoon was ended prematurely nine minutes later by McGowan, whose crude challenge was punished with a yellow card.

McGowan then rubbed salt into the wounds by providing the cross that led to Luton's second goal on 72 minutes.

Foster failed to clear the wing-back's low centre and Kandol pounced to prod the ball in from close range. Kandol, sensing a chance to net his first senior hat-trick, then forced Culkin into a save.

But it was the resurgent George who levelled the scores on 83 minutes.

The 21-year-old striker's low, 25-yard swerving volley was as unexpected as it was devastating and went in off a post to beat a surprised Culkin.

Bristol produced a late flurry but Dagnogo's effort was headed off the line by Taylor and Simon Bryant sent a rasping volley wide in injury time.

Hill view

I was very pleased with the performance, especially the resilience. We showed committed football in the second period and I'm thankful for the point. It was courageous of Liam to take the opportunity. He hit it so well. The keeper was slightly unsighted but the ferocity of the shot beat him. I was disappointed with the manner of their goals as Bristol will be with our's. All the goals were too easy. Somewhere along the line something's wrong because all the goals were about 12 yards out.

