

ROBINS DESTROY VISITING HATTERS

BRISTOL City finished their home campaign on the high they wanted after being given a stern examination by a lively Luton side.

Aaron Brown struck his first goal of the season in the first half after Luton had looked more than capable of making the breakthrough themselves.

However, Liam George deservedly levelled for the visitors after the break as Luton continued to carve by far the better opportunities, only for them to see Brown head City into the lead again.

The home side finally put daylight between themselves and their opponents when Tony Thorpe sprang from the bench to head their third, although City did have to soak up more pressure before coming through.

Boisterous fans streamed on to the pitch on the final whistle, though knowing full well Second Division football awaited them again next season.

Manager Danny Wilson hinted before the game that he might be prepared to field one of his crop of young starlets up front, with the season effectively over.

And, sure enough, 17 year-old Sporting Lisbon striker Lourenco Da Silva, was given a welcome start up front alongside Lee Peacock, ensuring top scorer Thorpe was forced to settle for a seat on the sidelines again.

The teenager's full debut meant there was no place in the squad at all for Peter Beadle, with City's other young Portuguese front man, Albano Correia, called up to the bench.

A minute's silence was held before kick off as a tribute to 14 year-old City youngster Peter Reeve, from Cheddar, who tragically died last week.

Not surprisingly, there was a somewhat sombre air as kick-off approached, but already relegated Luton were in no mood to dwell on anything and after just two minutes could easily have snatched the lead.

George managed to time his run to perfection to beat the offside trap. He unleashed a ferocious right-foot drive from the edge of the box that Steve Phillips did well to push away with a good save to his right.

The home side, eager to prove a point to their disappointed fans following their inability to force a play-off spot, were unable to find any fluency or rhythm in the early exchanges.

The Hatters were far brisker and more purposeful on the offensive and the City back three needed to be watchful.

Brian Tinnion tried to provide some impetus to his team's play by stroking a firm 25-yard effort which keeper Mark Ovendale comfortably gathered.

At the other end central defender Emmerson Boyce threatened with a header from a corner, which the City keeper this time collected with ease.

City responded with an attack of their own and Mickey Bell, who has scored four times this season, attempted a trademark strike from some 25 yards out which dipped but cleared the bar.

Still the visitors were looking the brighter going forward and an intricate move on the edge of the area ended with George finding space to shoot, his effort thankfully striking the legs of a City defender.

Moments later the Hatters again forced a decent opportunity, Steve Howard this time shielding Petri Helin's right-wing cross before swivelling and blazing over 16 minutes from the break.

The end-of-season feel to the game was tangible, however, particularly on City's part as they failed to establish any decent possession. This is the mistake

Held: Luton keeper Mark Ovendale takes control as City's Lourenco Da Silva challenges

By **SIMON PARKINSON**

at Ashton Gate

that has cost them dearly this season and it continued to creep into their play, much to the crowd's frustration.

Joe Kinnear's team squandered another fabulous opportunity to steal the lead, as Finnish international Helin chased a through ball that had completely carved the Robins' defence apart again. But the pass had just too much weight to it and Helin could only play a weak ball into the middle, which was comfortably cleared.

So the City goal came completely against the run of play as a delighted **BROWN** finally celebrated his first goal of the campaign. Peacock's cross from the right was mis-kicked by ex-City defender Richard Dryden and Brown struck a sweet left-foot shot to find the corner and finally end his long barren spell.

The breakthrough should have woken up the home side. But instead the visitors went desperately close on more than one occasion to snatch an equaliser.

Midfielder Matthew Spring clattered the underside of the bar with a cracking drive and Simon Clist headed brilliantly off his own line from Howard's header. Matthew Taylor darted into space on the left edge of the box but could not loft the ball over the fast-advancing Phillips.

Again Tinnion offered some respite with another long range effort, the ball this time clearing the bar by some distance.

As Luton continued to press for a leveller, Spring drilled the ball just wide as the City defence opened up again. But as the half drew to a close Da Silva did finally get a sight of goal and, as the crowd held its breath in expectation, the youngster fired into the crowd behind the goal.

HALF-TIME:
BRISTOL CITY 1
LUTON TOWN 0

WILSON opted for a change at the start of the second half, Kevin Amankwaah replacing Joe Burnell in defence.

Three minutes into the half and Brown was not too far away from collecting a second. Some neat approach work ended with Bell swinging over a dangerous cross from the left, which just eluded the midfielder as he arrived at the back post in the hope of meeting it.

There appeared to be more urgency to the home side's play in the early stages, although Phillips was

called into action again to get behind Howard's 30-yard drive.

Still the Hatters looked capable of equalising, helped by City's tendency to allow them time and room in which to create openings.

In the 56th minute Thorpe was finally introduced to the action in Da Silva's place. But shortly after his arrival Luton contrived to miss another splendid opportunity, as George sped onto Howard's skilful pass but, with just Phillips to beat, he volleyed emphatically wide.

However, a minute later and the same player was finally celebrating. More intricate patterns were woven around the edge of the penalty area and when the ball finally landed at the feet of **GEORGE**, he coolly stepped inside his man before finishing with a somewhat untidy effort that nestled just inside the near post.

Shortly afterwards the visitors were chastising themselves for missing another golden opportunity. George again burst clear in a frightening amount of space down the left and this time, as he broke into the box, decided to square the ball to striker partner Howard, who completely mis-kicked with a goal appearing a formality.

City were all over the place and a much better team than Luton would have surely picked them off at will.

The Hatters were made to pay for their profligacy on 66 minutes when a break down the right and good hanging cross by Murray led to **BROWN** nodding the ball back across goal and past Ovendale for City's second.

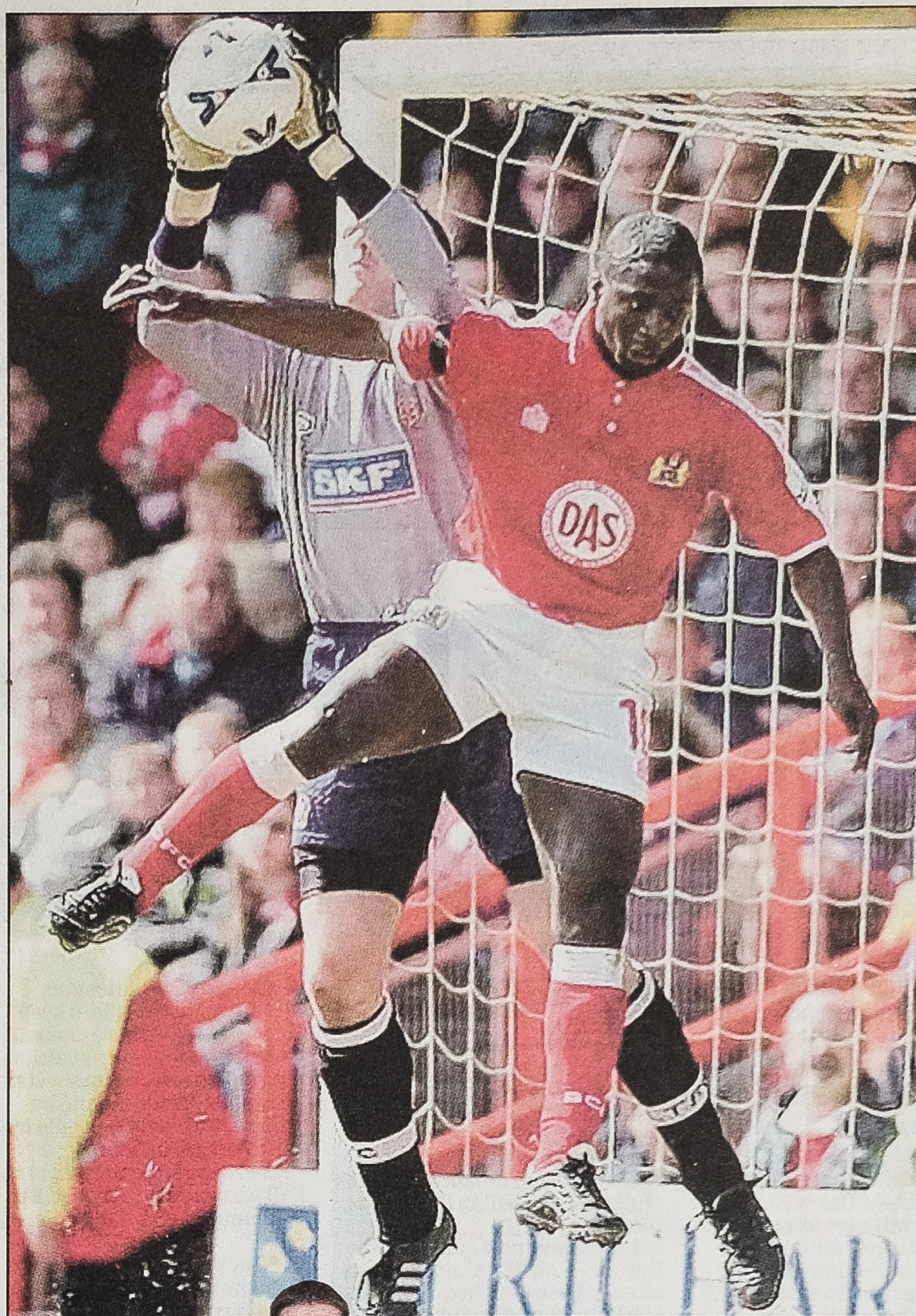
The goal at last seemed to put more life into City, who by now had loanee Neil Maddison on in place of Clist. Murray missed an excellent chance to increase their lead but managed to get under Thorpe's pass and find the empty row of seats behind the goal.

City's second also seemed to knock some of the stuffing out of Luton's play and the zest with which they had been playing diminished. Kinnear threw all three substitutes on in quick succession, applause ringing around Ashton Gate for the arrival of former utility player Adam Locke to the fray.

But no-one was going to stop **THORPE** clinching his 23rd goal of the season with a rare header into the corner from Brown's cross from the left 11 minutes from time.

Luton now looked a beaten team. They did continue to pose the occasional threat and Phillips did well to claw out sub Mark Stein's low-angle drive.

The keeper also did well to block Taylor's effort as he was allowed a free run through the middle.



Saturday Live

Team Check

BRISTOL CITY

14	Steve Phillips
2	Louis Carey (capt)
3	Mickey Bell
7	Scott Murray
11	Brian Tinnion
16	Lee Peacock
18	Lourenco Da Silva
22	Aaron Brown
23	Joe Burnell
24	Matt Hill
31	Simon Clist

SUBSTITUTES

6	Neil Maddison
10	Tony Thorpe
27	Kevin Amankwaah
33	Danny Coles
45	Albano Correia

LUTON TOWN

1	Mark Ovendale
33	Richard Dryden
17	Emmerson Boyce
15	Matthew Taylor
4	Matthew Spring
35	Paul Shepherd
34	Steve Howard
6	Marvin Johnson
30	Petri Helin
11	Liam George
8	Paul McLaren (capt)
	SUBSTITUTES
24	Scott Ward
5	Julian Watts
12	Adam Locke
9	Stuart Douglas
10	Mark Stein

Attendance:

9,161

Referee:

Phil Walton