

CITY SLICKERS



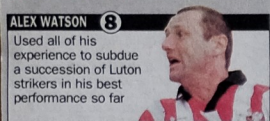
ARJAN VAN HEUSDEN 7

Produced a marvellous early save to deny City old boy Richard Dryden although might have done better with Luton's second



BARRY MCCONNELL 6

Struggled to match the pace of quicksilver winger Matthew Taylor, but added another attacking dimension down the right



ALEX WATSON 8

Used all of his experience to subdue a succession of Luton strikers in his best performance so far



JAMIE CAMPBELL 7

Bounced back from being dropped against Rochdale with his most assured display of the season



GRAEME POWER 7

Largely untroubled at the back and supplied the through ball for Flack's opener



LEE ZABEK 7

Shuttled the ball around with unerring accuracy and never shirked a tackle



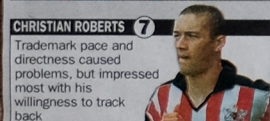
GLENN CRONIN 7

The Republic of Ireland youth international has looked a real prospect in his first two games for the Grecians



MARTIN BARLOW 7

Asked plenty of questions of the Luton rearguard after being handed a more attacking role



CHRISTIAN ROBERTS 7

Trademark pace and directness caused problems, but impressed most with his willingness to track back



GEOFF BRESLAN 8

The winger was always willing to run at the Luton defence in his first start since the season before last



STEVE FLACK 9

Extraordinary display of aerial prowess capped by his sweetly-struck first goal of the season

SUBSTITUTES: ALEX ROSCOE (7) Useful contribution on the left flank, **KEVIN MOOR** (6) Given little time to make impression, **GARY BIRCH** (6) Tried hard without much end product

FLACK'S MORE LIKE IT!

FIRST START: Republic of Ireland youth international Glenn Cronin was handed a first Nationwide League start against the Hatters



BACK TO FRONT: Christian Roberts gives Emmerson Boyce the slip (above) and Steve Flack (right) wins one of a string of aerial victories against Luton's defenders



OLIVER SANDERS

Striker stars as City find their feet at last

EXETER City served up a delicious appetiser for the main course — and only just failed to find a winning recipe against one of the most powerful outfits in Division 3.

For sheer seat-of-the-pants entertainment value, Saturday's scuffle at St James's Park surpassed even the historic events that were later to unfold at the Olympic Stadium in Munich.

For all their high-octane attacking and a steady stream of chances, the Grecians were forced to settle for a point when all three were theirs for the taking.

But after their lost weekend against Scunthorpe and Rochdale, they can take great pride in a performance that boasted all the backbone they had so sadly lacked seven days earlier.

Unbeaten Luton — managed by former Wimbledon boss Joe Kinnear, who talks telephone numbers when he discusses his players' salaries — somehow managed to cling on despite the dismissal of Paul Hughes just seconds after the half-time interval.

They struggled all afternoon to deal with the aerial power of Grecians targetman Steve Flack, who capped his most dynamic display of the season with a clinical first goal of the campaign.

Recalled pair Lee Zabek and Barry McConnell plus all-action full debutant Glenn Cronin all acquitted themselves admirably against far more seasoned opposition.

Two summers have passed since Geoff Breslan last

EXETER CITY 2 LUTON TOWN 2

EXETER: A Van Heusden, B McConnell, A Watson, J Campbell, G Power, L Zabek, G Cronin, G Breslan, C Roberts, S Flack. **SUBSTITUTES:** A Walker, A Roscoe (for Cronin, 60 mins), G Birch (Breslan, 73), Moor (Roberts, 89), Curran.

LUTON: C Emmerson, E Boyce, R Dryden, P Perrett, M Johnson, L Mansell, M Spring, P Hughes, M Taylor, S Douglas, C Griffiths. **SUBSTITUTES:** M Overdale, L George (Griffiths, 56), A Folladios (Douglas, 56), P Holmes (Folladios, 70), Howard.

GOALS: Flack 29 (1-0), Taylor 35 (1-1), Taylor 53 (1-2), Mansell 68 (2-2)

BOOKED: Barlow (Exeter), Griffiths, Hughes, Johnson (Luton)

SENT OFF: Hughes (Luton)

SHOTS ON TARGET: Exeter 7, Luton 3

CORNERS: Exeter 6, Luton 2

OFFSIDES: Exeter 6, Luton 5

FOULS: Exeter 17, Luton 14

REFEREE: Brian Curson (Bathurst) **ATTENDANCE:** 3,088

started a Division 3 game — and the winger grasped his rare opportunity with both hands.

Injury-ravaged City may still prop up the Nationwide League but, on this evidence, they've rediscovered something that smells like team spirit.

And seven days after jeering their side from the pitch following a 4-0 whitewash against Scunthorpe, Grecians fans were dragged shouting and screaming back into the fold.

Only six survivors from the previous week took the field as St James's Park chief Noel Blake demonstrated his displeasure.

"If they don't do what I want them to do, then they don't play," he stated matter-of-factly.

"They did what I asked them to do today and, if we can maintain these sorts of performances, then the

results will follow. We got a draw out of this one and on another day we would possibly have taken three."

Kinnear — who performed minor miracles while keeping the Crazy Gang in the top-flight for almost eight years — insisted Hughes's sending-off had shifted the course of the game through 180 degrees.

And the flamboyant former Tottenham star had to dig deep for the words to describe referee Brian Curson.

"He was absolutely minging," Kinnear finally decided. "I think we would have won with 11 men, but we were playing the last 15 or 20 minutes with nine men (because of injury to Matt Taylor)."

"The referee was the worst one we've come across all season and I hope I don't see any worse for the rest of the season."

"I just think he was waiting for them to get the winner to be honest."

If the apparently competent Mr Curson can come in for such stinging criticism, then Kinnear will fast run out of adjectives when he comes across the real mingers currently operating in Division 3.

Even though his options were limited by injury to seven men, Blake opted to leave out six of the side who started last Monday's 2-0 defeat at Rochdale.

Jamie Campbell swapped places with Chris Curran at the centre of a four-man rearguard while Breslan, Zabek, McConnell, Cronin and Flack were all drafted into City's starting line-up.

And the rugged Grecians waited just 30 seconds before testing Luton stopper Carl Emmerson, who dived low to his right to prevent a Christian Roberts effort from creeping in at the near post.

When Martin Barlow was given a second chance to swing the ball across following a corner, Alex Watson's volley flew wide of the target.

With Flack giving roly-poly ex-Grecian Richard Dryden a torrid time in the air and Roberts and Breslan eager to pick up the pieces, City were asking serious questions of Luton's overworked rearguard.

Exeter's Achilles heel so far this season — statuesque defending from set pieces — was almost exposed again when Taylor curled over a free-kick from the left hand side.

Dryden's downward header from eight yards out was en route to goal until Arjan Van Heusden stuck out a glove.

But the Grecians responded by opening the scoring thanks to an inch-perfect ball over the top from Power. Russell Perrett misjudged the flight, Flack darted clean through, took a split-second to weigh up his options and drilled his left-footed shot just inside the far post.

But after surrendering early leads against Hull and Halifax already this season, City again allowed the opposition to claw their way back on terms before the interval.

Although Carl Griffiths's initial effort was blocked by Power following a jinking run to the by-line by Matt Spring, the ball ran loose to Taylor who threaded his shot under the body of Van Heusden.

The balance of power shifted back towards the home side within a minute of the restart when hot-headed Hughes lunged firstly at Flack and then, just for good measure, poleaxed Breslan right in front of the Luton dugout.

Even Kinnear could not find fault with the referee.

for administering the midfielder's second yellow card in barely 10 minutes of action.

Despite their numerical disadvantage, the Hatters promptly snatched the lead from a looping cross from the by-line delivered by frontman Stuart Douglas.

While goalkeeper and defenders engaged in panic mode, Taylor stole in unnoticed at the far post with a stooping header from an improbable angle.

With Kinnear bizarrely still persevering with twin strikers, City upped the tempo another notch, doubled up down the flanks and launched a relentless bombardment of the Luton penalty box.

Barlow fired wastefully over, a series of frantic goalmouth scrambles produced nothing more than frustration and, to cap it all, a towering Flack header from a deep Roberts cross was flicked onto the bar by the glove of Emmerson.

But the equaliser did finally arrive when McConnell gambled down the right before attempting to pick out Flack in the centre.

Emmerson Boyce, his nerves shredded and his head in a spin, hoofed the ball at luckless colleague Lee Mansell whose thigh completed the job.

With Blake theatrically urging his troops onwards and the Big Bank roaring in agreement, the game then looked City's for the taking.

When the second of two confident penalty appeals for handball was waved away, an incensed Barlow managed to talk his way into the referee's little black book.

Although Luton substitute Liam George did butt powerfully against the woodwork, City turned the screw still further without managing to oke out the winner, their overwhelming superiority

despite the referee's