

Stags have a party at Hatters expense

01/02

Mansfield 4, Luton Town 1
OVER 2,000 travelling Hatters fans were reduced to silence in a game that was a great advert for Division Three.

The match had a crackling atmosphere, almost continuous goalmouth action at both ends, a missed penalty, and three sendings-offs...

Sadly Luton ended up second best. The penalty against them was justified but otherwise the Hatters had the worst of some awful decisions from referee Pugh, who did his best to spoil a full-blooded encounter.

That should not detract from the tremendous performance from Mansfield, matched for an hour by their visitors.

But as the goals came they served to build up the Stags confidence to attack with greater flair.

Town Manager Joe Kinnear has been desperately trying to sign Stags striker Chris Greenacre and he showed why with the first two goals that set Mansfield on their way.

His first, on 20 minutes, was a close range effort after Carl Emberson had done well to parry his initial header and the second a poacher's effort, again from inside the goal area.

Greenacre did blot his copy book by smashing a second half penalty high and wide, but when Chris Coyne was booked for a second time and had first use of the soap, Martin Pemberton curled the resulting free-kick just inside a post at pace for a beautiful third goal.

Shayne Bradley took advantage of the Hatters pushing up with a man short to score a solo effort and make it four before Steve Howard and Matt Taylor set up Dean Crowe for an 85th minute consolation.

By the time Mansfield had their turn to be harshly treated by the eccentric referee, having both Pemberton and Bradley sent off for mysterious reasons, the game had reached the 90th minute and the Town had no time to cash in.

It was end-to-end stuff from the start with Crowe failing to capitalise on an early opportunity before Bradley drove a decent chance over the bar and then headed wide of an open goal when a terrible Emberson-clearance allowed him a free shot.

Mansfield attacked through the middle and the flanks and a cross by Liam Lawrence led to Greenacre opening the scoring. Emberson did well to parry his first effort but the striker was on to the rebound in a flash to net from close range.

The home side threatened to overrun the Luton defence but they weathered the



■ All-action: Crowe (above) and Berkovic (below) battle away for the Hatters at Mansfield

storm but could only respond with half chances themselves.

Russ Perrett conceded the 51st minute penalty when he misjudged a cross and subsequently pulled Bradley down.

He was relieved to see Greencares miss. But the striker made up for that when he converted a cross from Wayne Corden after a superb run down the left wing.

Coyne's first booking on the hour was the beginning of Mr Pugh's nightmare. The challenge was innocuous but his second yellow card two minutes later was merited enough when a professional foul denied Bradley.

After that, there were six more bookings for Town players Spring, Nicholls, Howard, Perrett, Forbes and Hillier plus early walks for Bradley and Pemberton in a match that hardly had a bad tackle.

LUTON TOWN: Emberson, Skelton, Coyne, Perrett, Taylor, Berkovic (Hillier 64), Spring, Nicholls, Valois (Forbes 57), Howard and Crowe.
Substitutes not used: Ovendale (GK), Holmes and Dryden.
Attendance: 5,973. (2,166 away)
Man of the match: Matthew Spring.



NATIONWIDE DIVISION 3			
Exeter	2	Southend	1
Halifax	2	Darlington	2
Hull	5	Cheltenham	1
Kidderminster	2	Bristol Rov	0
Macclesfield	1	Carlisle	1
Mansfield	4	Luton	1
Oxford Utd	2	York	2
Plymouth	1	Hartlepool	0
Rochdale	2	Torquay	0
Scunthorpe	4	Leyton Orient	1
Shrewsbury	1	Lincoln City	1
Swansea	0	Rushden	0