

Big match facts and figures...

●**ROCHDALE:** Steve Banks, Wayne Evans, Matt Doughty, Richard Jobson, Gareth Griffiths, David Flitcroft, Michael Oliver, Patrick McCourt, Steve Jones (Alan McLaughlin, 68), Kevin Townson, Lee McEvilly (Kelran Durkin, 89). Subs not used: Matt Gilks, Simon Coleman, Lee Todd.

●**HATTERS:** Carl Emberson, Emmerson Boyce, David Bayliss, Russell Perrett, Matthew Taylor, Adrian Forbes, Kevin Nicholls, Matthew Spring, Jean-Louis Valois (Chris Coyne, 59), Steve Howard, Dean Crowe (Paul Hughes, 90). Subs not used: Mark Ovendale, Aaron Skelton, Ian Hillier.

●**Shots on target:** Rochdale 2 Luton 5.

●**Shots off target:** Rochdale 9 Luton 8.

●**Corners:** Rochdale 2 Luton 6.

●**Referee:** Matt Messias (York).

●**Attendance:** 4,306.

●**Star man:** Matthew Spring – confident display and the creative fulcrum in the Hatters midfield both in open play and at set-pieces.



JUMP TO IT: Hatters defenders Russell Perrett and Chris Coyne in penalty box action at Rochdale on Saturday.

And man under the spotlight...

WINGER ADRIAN FORBES

●**Shots on target:** 0

●**Shots off target:** 2

●**Blocked shots:** 1

●**Passes to own player:** 6

●**Passes to opposition:** 6

●**Crosses to own player:** 0

●**Crosses to opposition:** 3

●**Pass completion rate:** 40 per cent

●**Dribbles ball retained:** 2

●**Dribbles ball lost:** 7

●**Dribbles completion rate:** 22.3 per cent

●**Headers:** 3

●**Offside:** 0

●**Clearances, blocks and interceptions:** 4

●**Tackles:** 4

●**Fouls committed:** 0

●**Fouls won:** 4

●**FINAL VERDICT:** Adrian Forbes was often a peripheral figure at Spotland and his passing and dribbling success rates were both low. The 23-year-old winger also missed two good chances, but did set up Dean Crowe after an explosive run from the half-way line and won four free-kicks for his team.

'Bails' off in Dale return

DAVID BAYLISS' emotion-charged return to Rochdale on Saturday ended in a red mist as Luton lost at Spotland for the first time since 1966.

The 25-year-old defender was sent off on 75 minutes for violent conduct and then had to be restrained during an aggressive altercation with Rochdale assistant manager David Hamilton in full view of the fourth official.

Hamilton appeared to taunt Bayliss as he headed for the changing rooms and a passionate mixture of fury and frustration consumed the Hatters defender, who has clearly not settled his differences with the man who precipitated his departure from Rochdale after six seasons as a first-team regular.

Bayliss was told to seek new employers during Hamilton's spell as caretaker manager of the Lancashire club earlier this season. He joined the Hatters in December and has been a model of consistency in the heart of the defence since his free transfer.

In fact, Saturday's defeat was his first in 10 starts for the Hatters, but it came in a game that he would dearly loved to have won.

Bayliss revealed in last week's *News-Gazette* that his former team-mates had joked about getting him dismissed in the pre-match banter leading up to Saturday's match.

But there was little laughter when Bayliss was booked after just four minutes for a high challenge on Lee McEvilly or, moments later, when he received a stern ticking off by fussy referee Matt Messias for dissent.

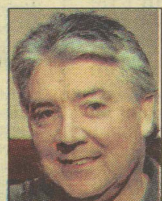
Bayliss' second-half sending off was for another high challenge that pole-axed full-back Wayne Evans in the home penalty box.

Referee Messias reached straight for his red card, rather than brandishing a second yellow, and Bayliss now faces the prospect of a three-match suspension.

The Liverpool-born defender's

Joe's view

We totally dominated even with 10 men. The only player they had was their keeper. He made some crucial and tremendous saves – two or three from Matthew Taylor. The pitch was diabolical, like a pig sty. They play rugby on it and it's more suited to that but it was the same for both teams and you have to cope with it. I'm disappointed we did not get a draw because it was probably the easiest away game we have had in terms of creating chances.



actions incited contrasting responses from respective managers John Hollins, old adversaries themselves from their playing days at Stamford Bridge and White Hart Lane.

Hollins said: "He should have gone in the first five minutes because the first tackle of the game was a sending-off offence. There was no attempt to play the ball and Lee McEvilly has got the stud marks to prove it."

"Lee did well to continue because he's got a massively blown up leg. Some people get sent off for less than that. He stayed on the pitch but eventually got his marching orders. If people want to be reckless I will make my views known."

Kinnear's retort was equally as strong. "He would say that," argued the Hatters boss. "That's the idea of seeing things both ways."

"What I do know is there was only one team playing football on a cowfield of a pitch. That's the truth."

"The ball dropped in front of David Bayliss for the sending off and he went for a shot. Their fellow got a great

block in and Bayliss' leg made contact with him. Even their player does not know why it was a sending off. The doxy referee saw something but their guy is bright and honest enough to say Bayliss had to go for the shot."

"I thought the referee made some really strange decisions. He had a very poor game and I went in and told him so afterwards. He was disappointing for both sides and caused all the problems himself. He's probably the worst we have seen this season."

Messias was, certainly, over-zealous in dishing out six yellow cards to the home side although the Hatters' cautioned quartet of Bayliss, Kevin Nicholls, Steve Howard and Russell Perrett could have had few complaints about the York official's decisions.

Howard was booked for dissent with the other three punished for crude challenges.

Hatters winger Adrian Forbes could have fired his side in front before Mr Messias had scribbled any names in his notebook but shot wide from 15 yards after just two minutes.

Rochdale went ahead 10 minutes later although Nicholls' earlier caution may have explained the lack of a challenge on home midfielder Patrick McCourt in the build-up to the goal. McCourt ghosted past the Hatters captain but his hopeful 20-yard shot required a deflection off the hapless Bayliss to help the ball loop over the head of Carl Emberson to open the scoring.

That fortuitous effort and a wind-assisted punt by home keeper Steve Banks were to be the only on-target attempts on Emberson's goal.

The Hatters failed to test Banks once before the break, although Matthew Spring twice fired wide from long range and Dean Crowe wasted three chances to end a goal drought that has now lasted six matches.

Howard and Nicholls combined to release Crowe on 24 minutes, but the former Stoke striker dragged his shot narrowly wide. The Hatters' top scorer



GRIPPING STUFF: Kevin Nicholls wrestles for possession.

then dallied and spurned an opportunity created by a powerful burst of pace by Forbes before brushing the top of the netting with a curling 43rd-minute effort.

At the other end, McEvilly could have given Rochdale a flattering two-goal cushion on the stroke of half-time, but his downward header from six yards bounced over Emberson's crossbar.

Emmerson Boyce survived a penalty scare on 51 minutes when he scythed down McCourt with Messias ruling that the offence had occurred on the edge of the box rather than inside it. Banks saved a deflected Howard shot shortly afterwards before Kinnear replaced the ineffective Jean-Louis Valois with fit-again Chris Coyne and pushed

Matthew Taylor into midfield. Taylor's positional switch, coupled with the Hatters finally mastering difficult pitch and weather conditions, led to constant pressure on the Rochdale defence for the remainder of the game. The visitors' first corner arrived on 70 minutes and, moments later, Nicholls shot low at Banks after charging into the penalty box to collect Spring's intelligent pass. Banks, who has joined Rochdale on-loan from Bolton, then saved Taylor's close-range volley at the near post before Bayliss received his marching orders.

Luton's numerical disadvantage did not, however, provide any relief for Rochdale and Kinnear's side created four more chances to equalise before the final whistle.

First, Howard met Spring's 79th-minute free-kick with a downward header that was saved by Banks.

Howard had escaped the shackles of marker Gareth Griffiths on that occasion but, throughout the match, Rochdale's centre-back again showed, after a commanding performance at Kenilworth Road in October, that he is one of the few defenders to get the measure of the Hatters' target man in the air this season.

Forbes sliced high and wide on 83 minutes after having his first effort blocked by a Rochdale defender and an unchallenged Taylor headed over from eight yards after rising high to meet Spring's corner. The undeterred Taylor almost made amends in the fourth minute of injury-time, but his deflected bouncing shot was pushed over his bar by a prostrate Banks.

Rochdale boss Hollins praised his loan signing for living up to a famous goalkeeping name afterwards and Banks' heroics, as well as earning his side's first home victory over the visitors since 1966, left Luton without a goal in an away league game for the first time this season.

Victory also meant Rochdale became the first club to complete a double over the Hatters this season.