



NO PRIDE AND NO PASSION



Report by
JOHN FIELDHOUSE
HULL CITY 0, LUTON TOWN 4
Attendance: 9,379

ALMOST an hour after the final whistle and a group of Hull City fans were still waiting patiently at a bus stop on Boothferry Road.

As if reflecting on an abysmal performance by their own team wasn't a humiliating enough experience, they had to endure the taunts of passing Luton Town supporters as they made their way back to their coaches. A few hundred yards away and City's crestfallen first team stars were climbing into their cars and wending their way home.

It's a pity there was nobody around to order them to put in an appearance at that bus stop.

Perhaps they could explain to those loyal and badly let-down fans exactly what has gone wrong this season. And while they are at it, perhaps they could explain how a team that cost £1m to put together – and is one of the best paid in the Third Division – can play with so little pride and so little passion.

Those fans will still wear their amber shirts with pride, even though they have witnessed so many embarrassments since the turn of the year.

Saturday, though, must surely rank alongside the all-time lows.

It should have been Jan Molby's day. The new manager was given a terrific welcome. But with 10 minutes to go, only Luton's fans were singing and dancing.

Where the City supporters had stood with so many expectations at three o'clock, there were only gaping gaps.

City's players have already let down one manager this season and have hardly boosted the reputation of a caretaker who deserved much better.

After this debacle, it will be interesting to see how many of them are still around next season to put things right.

We were told immediately after Molby's arrival that there was already the nucleus of a squad to challenge for promotion. There wasn't much evidence of that in 90 very sobering and very painful minutes.

Most people would have thought the appearance of a new manager would at least instil something – anything – especially as futures are on the line. Sadly, those people were wrong.

Apart from a couple of early openings, City were outplayed in every possible department and that by a Luton side which hardly had to break sweat to claim three points.

It would be easy to extol the virtues of Joe Kinnear's men who duly registered a third record 12th consecutive victory thanks to a hat-trick from Steve Howard and a goal from his strike partner Dean Crowe.

That's not the point, though. The visiting press could not believe how far City have declined since that 1-0 win at Kenilworth Road in November. Sadly, they weren't alone in that.



BEATEN TO IT: Stand-in skipper Mark Greaves is tackled as he tries to play the ball upfield

thing... except flash cars. If Molby was unaware of the size of the challenge he faces, he has been left under no illusions now.

The Dane could probably make 11 changes for tomorrow's trip to Rochdale and justify every single one of them.

Everyone accepts confidence is low after a return of just four points and six goals from the last 10 matches.

That, though, is no excuse for the current plight of a side which started the season in such style. The end of that season can't come quick enough.

Quite where the Tigers go from here is anyone's guess, but another hectic summer clearout is surely on the cards – along with some desperately needed extra training.

The plusses from Saturday were few and far between. Mark Greaves – leading the side in the absence of the injured Justin Whittle – showed some heart, while Ben Petry ran his socks off in midfield.

The loss of Whittle, ruled out by a calf strain, was a blow and forced Molby into a reshuffle.

Those who would have played in midfield, switched to the centre of defence while Petry, recently axed as a full back, found himself back in favour in midfield.

Ahead of several other candidates including Theodore Whitmore, Lee Philpott and David Norris.

David Beresford, whose fortunes seem to have epitomized City's entire season, didn't even make the final 16 while the visitors' second goal in the 38th minute. Taylor's hopeful crossplay pass should have

been food and drink to Jason Van Blerk. However, his casual back header never reached Musselwhite. Crowe nipped in, rounded the stranded keeper and tapped the ball into an empty net.

Even when the visitors took their foot off the pedal in the second half, City were not good enough to take advantage. They saw plenty of the ball but lacked any sort of threat in the all-important final third.

Luton's defence and midfield is packed with the type of characters City have lacked all season.

The killer blow came in the 79th minute and it was a classic strike – the sort City were producing earlier in the campaign. Taylor galloped down the left and fired in a superb cross which found Howard who arrived at pace and stroked a first time shot past Musselwhite.

To be honest, Luton could have scored more goals. They did manage a fourth in the final minute when Howard strode through a demoralised rearguard to seal his 23rd goal of the campaign and his first hat-trick for the Hatters.

The total look of bewilderment from Molby at the end was matched by the look of thunder on Adam Pearson's face. It was the first time City have conceded four goals at home in the league since August 1997.

That was against Swansea. The manager of the Welsh club that day? Jan Molby. Mind you, City managed seven goals to win a high-scoring thriller.

Perhaps the Dane could be forgiven for thinking Boothferry Park is jinxed. At least, he can look forward to a move to the new stadium. Sadly, he can't wait that long to resurrect the Tigers' fortunes.

Whittle on the casualty list. Molby went for a four-three-three formation – a tactic which has served him so well at Kidderminster. Williams was handed a more central role alongside Petty and Richard Sneekes, with Kyle Lighthourne on the wide right and Gary Bradshaw on the wide left supporting Gary Alexander.

The players, though looked unsure and uncertain of their various roles. Still, Luton – widely accepted to be the best team in the division – were hardly firing on all cylinders either.

Paul Musselwhite did have to produce a smart save to deny Frenchman Jean Louis Valois but the Tigers definitely had the best of the early chances.

In the fourth minute, a push on Bradshaw saw Sneekes drive in a 25-yard free kick which Carl Emberson did well to clear away at full stretch. Then, in the 21st minute, Nicky Mohan met a Williams corner with a powerful header which was knocked off the line by Emmerson Boyce.

The rebound fell to Lighthourne who, under pressure, lifted the ball over the bar.

That's what they say was that City never really threatened again and some schoolboy defending handed the initiative to Kinnear's men – and the impressive Matt Taylor in particular.

The Tigers never suggested a recovery was on the cards and they gifted the visitors a second goal in the 38th minute. Taylor's hopeful crossplay pass should have

PLAYER WATCH

5 Paul Musselwhite
NO CHANCE with any of the goals. Looked unsure and uncertain on occasions – there was a reluctance to leave his line at times.

Mike Edwards 5
Had his hands full with Valois and Taylor down the left. Didn't receive much support. Did better than some but wasn't the result he wanted on his 200th appearance.

5 Nicky Mohan
Even if Justin Whittle had been fit, the experienced campaigner deserved a start after his heroics at Cheltenham, but he could not keep Luton out.

Mark Greaves 6
Did as well as anyone which, to be frank, is not saying a lot really. At least, put himself about and made some determined tackles.

5 Jason Van Blerk
The error which led to Luton's all-important second goal over-shadowed an otherwise solid if unspectacular effort.

Ryan Williams 5
Handed a new and free role in the centre of midfield but struggled to make an impact. Looked busy at times but the final product was lacking.

6 Ben Petty
One of the few who earned praise from his manager, and one of the few who could look back on the afternoon with any kind of satisfaction.

Richard Sneekes 6
Never given time to settle in midfield by the likes of Kevin Nicholls and Matt Spring who squeezed the life out of City's main creative weapon.

5 Kyle Lighthourne
Another handed a new role in a four-three-three formation but found it difficult to get into the game. Did produce a couple of promising runs.

6 Gary Alexander
A shadow of the almost arrogant player who set the division alight early on. There again, he's only battling on without any credible support.

5 Gary Bradshaw
Fans were glad to see the teenager back after a five match absence, but he looked lost in his role on the wide left and faded after a battling opening.

Substitutes
14 Matt Glennon (not used); 23 Theo Whitmore (for Williams, 50) 5 – Simon Rice touches but could not spark anything; 22 Dean Crowe (for Lighthourne, 65) 5 – Lost his way with a terrific strike; 16 Lee Philpott (not used); 3 Andy Holt (for Bradshaw, 50) 5 – Added a presence on left flank.

Luton Town
16 Carl Emberson; 17 Emmerson Boyce; 5 Russ Perrett; 12 Chris Coyne; 20 Matt Taylor; 20 Peter Holmes; 9 Kevin Nicholls; 4 Matthew Spring; 28 Jean Louis Valois; 19 Steve Howard; 34 Dean Crowe; 30 Steve 3; 1 Mark Ovenside; 6 Martin Johnson (for Valois, 69); 7 Adrian Forster (for Crowe, 82); 44 Steve Walsh; 27 Paul Hughes (for Holmes, 46).

IN THE WAY: Ryan Williams (left) and Gary Bradshaw have a midfield collision after both were handed new roles



FAMOUS FACE: Newcastle boss Bobby Robson (right), who is believed to be looking at signing Luton's Matt Taylor



NO WAY THROUGH: Theodore Whitmore is outnumbered

Division 3 Stats									
Results, Attendances and Scorers									
Division 3 Table (Home & Away)									
P	L	D	W	L	D	W	L	D	W
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70
71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80
81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90
91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100

552	11 Doves:	55 (0%)
522	And Doves:	53 (0%)
30 (2%)	Arg. Gulls:	2.53
30 (2%)	Card. Goldfinches:	145
	Redpolls:	158

Top 3 Clubs Top Scorers

Player	Goals	WC	FA	LD	Total
George Ormel	8	0	1	1	10
John Duggan	8	0	1	1	10
Alan Aspin	10	0	4	1	15
Sammy Cann	10	0	1	0	11
John Rudge	10	0	1	0	11
Alan Horsley	10	0	1	0	11
John Wainman	16	0	1	0	17
Jimmy Alexander	16	0	2	3	21
Inter/Fleet/Stratton	10	0	0	0	10
Steve Jones	12	0	0	0	12
Lee Hewitt	12	0	0	1	13
Steve Howard	9	0	0	1	10
John Greenacre	20	5	0	0	25
Alan Moody	13	0	0	0	13
Alan Jones	8	0	2	1	11
John Thomas	13	2	0	0	15
John Ingham	13	0	0	0	13
David Love	11	0	3	1	15
John Swann	10	0	0	0	10
John Rodgers	22	0	0	0	22
John Jones	10	0	0	0	10
John Wainman	8	0	1	0	9
David Graham	8	0	0	0	8
Michael Porter	12	0	0	0	12

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The current situation - admittedly - is short on just about everything.

Argyle

PLYMOUTH Argyle the top for the first October 28th. goalless draw with Cheltenham. Boothty Park.

The nearest P goal to scoring in 10 minutes was Wotton's cross. The goal was headed in by a linesman referee.

his mind and Cheltenham's third attempt were hit hard with 10 at Macclesfield.

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Argyle find themselves second best after blank day

PLYMOUTH Argyle were knocked off the top for the first time since October 28 after playing out a goalless draw with Southend, while Changers Luton won 4-0 at Boothferry Park.

The nearest Paul Sturrock's side came to scoring was in the 69th minute when they thought they had been awarded a penalty after Paul Wotton's cross appeared to have been handled in the box.

But after consulting with his linesman referee Ray Oliver changed his mind and gave a goal-kick. Cheltenham's hopes of securing the third automatic promotion berth were hit hard as they went down 1-0 at Macclesfield, Matthew Tipton

THIRD DIVISION REVIEW

Mansfield moved to within a single point of the Robins with a 2-0 victory over Bristol Rovers, their first win in six games.

Debutant Scott Sellars set up goals for Adam Murray (57) and Andy White (79).

Fifth-placed Rochdale also kept up the pressure on Steve Cottrell's men with a 3-1 triumph over Darlington.

Dario went ahead in the fourth minute through Barry Conlon, while Dale roared back with Clive Platt (77), Lee McEvilly (27) and Paul Simpson

(35) all getting on the scoresheet. Play-off hopefuls Scunthorpe and Rushden & Diamonds played out a 1-1 draw. The Iron went ahead in the 44th minute through Martin Croucher, but Rushden gained an equaliser through Onandi Lowe.

Shrewsbury kept their play-off hopes alive with a 3-0 win over 10-man Carlisle, Ryan Lowe grabbing the winner seven minutes before the interval after the Cumbrians had Peter Murphy red-carded.

Hartlepool remain in the hunt for a top-six spot with a 2-0 win at relegated Halifax.

London Watson opened the scoring in the ninth minute and Graeme Lee headed a second.

Kidderminster's promotion aspirations look over after they were held to a 1-1 draw at home by Lincoln, substitute Dave Cameron scoring for the visitors with the last kick of the game after Drewe Broughton had put the Harriers ahead in the 48th minute.

The smallest crowd of the season at the Vetch Field saw Swansea go down 1-0 to lowly York, Scott Jones heading the winner.

Substitute Andy Scott prevented Oxford crashing to a fourth consecutive defeat with an equaliser six minutes from time in his side's 1-1 draw with Leyton Orient. David McGhee had put the visitors ahead in the 58th minute.

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Wednesday 19 April, Sky Sports 2

Chelsea v Manchester United
Saturday 20 April, Sky Sports 1
Blackburn Rovers v Newcastle United
Tuesday 23 April, Sky Sports 1

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