



In control:
City's Lee Peacock in action against Luton



On the ball: Scott Murray holds back the Hatters' attack

LAST-GASP BREAKTHROUGH FOR BEADLE RESCUES CITY

SUBSTITUTE Peter Beadle scored a last gasp equaliser to salvage a point for promotion-chasing Bristol City.

Playing in front of their biggest crowd of the season, the Robins looked destined to lose for the first time in 17 matches when Steve Howard fired the Hatters into the lead.

City piled on the pressure only to be foiled by the woodwork and stout Luton defending.

Tommy Doherty and Beadle both saw efforts rebound off the underside of the bar while Liam Rosenior had a shot cleared off the line.

Luton were reduced to 10 men in injury time when Sol Davis was issued with a straight red card for aiming a blow at Scott Murray.

The 10 men had less than a minute in which to hold out when Beadle met Mickey Bell's corner with a first-time shot which skidded past keeper Carl Emberson and into the back of the net.

City boss Danny Wilson made one enforced change from the side that won in Cardiff a week ago, Louis Carey replacing Tony Butler, who is serving a one-match ban.

Making his first League appearance in seven months after recovering from knee surgery, Carey was deployed on the right side of the back four, with Danny Coles reverting to the middle alongside Matt Hill.

There had been much speculation in the build-up about whether former City striker Tony Thorpe would recover from a hamstring strain in time to make his Ashton Gate return. Not only was he declared fit shortly before kick-off, but also made captain for the first time since he returned to Luton in the summer.

If Thorpe had expected a warm reception, he was disappointed when a majority of those in the Await Stand greeted his emergence from the players' tunnel with a crescendo of boos.

Wilson's team went into the first of three games in eight days requiring a win to regain second position from Cardiff, who beat Colchester on Friday night to leapfrog above the Robins. At least the home side were able to go into this game with confidence high following a 16-match unbeaten run.

Not surprisingly, City began in positive fashion and Brian Tinnion almost engineered an early goal. His left-foot lob caught the Luton defence flat-footed, allowing Christian Roberts to

BRISTOL CITY 1

LUTON TOWN 1

by Andy Stockhausen

at Ashton Gate



collect the ball a split second ahead of out-rushing keeper Carl Emberson.

Fortunately for the keeper he managed to block the Welshman's shot and the visitors cleared the danger at the expense of a corner.

City continued to dominate the opening exchanges and Scott Murray was the inspiration behind their next foray into Luton territory. The winger, just returned from Scotland B International duty in Germany, beat three defenders before teeing up Lee Peacock, whose first-time shot on the turn struck the base of an upright before bouncing clear.

Livewire Murray was at the heart of City's best moments and, when he flung another teasing cross towards the far post, Emmerson Boyce was happy to put the ball in the crowd and concede another corner.

When Luton did threaten, they found City keeper Steve Phillips in solid form and the former Paulton Rovers man rose high to pluck a cross from Stephen Howard's head.

Luton were working hard to disrupt City in midfield and the home side's best moments came when they were able to feed the ball to Murray wide on the right.

When the Scotsman again wriggled free and delivered another deep cross, Boyce had to use his height to clear the danger.

Thorpe, who was jeered whenever he touched the ball, had been kept quiet for the opening 20 minutes. But the pint-size striker eventually eluded his marker, peeling off towards the far post, from where he sent a speculative header looping over the crossbar.

The Hatters were gradually gaining a foothold in the middle of the park and City's Tommy Doherty and Joe Burnell generally found themselves outnumbered.

Hurried out of their stride, the home

side were guilty of sending passes astray and were unable to play with their usual free-flowing rhythm.

But they remained a threat when attacking down the right and another cross from that side, this time from Carey, was headed back across goal and inches beyond the post by the unmarked Roberts.

When Mickey Bell rifled in another cross from the left, Roberts tried to bundle the ball into the net with his arm, only to be shown a yellow card for deliberate handball.

Referee Mark Cooper again produced his notebook moments later to enter Thorpe's name after the Luton captain had voiced concern at a late challenge.

City were almost caught napping when the Hatters won their first corner and Alan Neilson rose unchallenged near the penalty spot to send a powerful header screaming over the bar.

The visitors threatened again moments later, when Howard shot on the turn from 25 yards out, but Phillips proved equal to the task and gathered safely.

City continued to test the Luton defence with crosses and, when Roberts lofted one towards the edge of the six-yard box, Chris Coyne just did enough to take the ball away from Burnell's head.

The red shirts were now in the ascendancy and the crowd momentarily sparked into life as City forced a series of corners shortly before half time. But Luton withstood the pressure and went close to breaking the deadlock at the other end.

Doherty aimed a kick at Paul Hughes to concede a free kick in a central position 30 yards from goal and Coyne sent a thunderous shot inches the wrong side of the upright.

Having booked Hughes for retaliation a minute before, whistle-happy ref Cooper again produced his book to show Howard a yellow card for a late challenge on Carey.

As the interval approached, City almost profited from a mistake when Neilson's sloppy backpass was collected by Peacock, whose shot on the turn was deflected for a corner off Coyne.

The home side almost went ahead in time added on when Bell raced on to Tinnion's clever free kick and sent a first time shot towards goal. Luton keeper Emberson was quickly down to his right to make the save and Neilson hacked the

loose ball clear before Peacock could pounce.

HALF-TIME:
BRISTOL CITY 0
LUTON TOWN 0

BURNELL sustained a calf injury late in the first half and it quickly became apparent he could not continue when play resumed. The second period was four minutes old when the midfielder limped off to be replaced by Aaron Brown.

The newcomer took up a position on the left flank with Tinnion moving into the middle, where he adopted a protective role.

City began where they left off, pressing the Luton penalty area, and Doherty was narrowly off target when meeting Tinnion's cross with an overhead kick.

Like a punch-drunk boxer intent on fighting back, Luton came off the ropes and delivered a knock-out blow after 53 minutes. Thorpe made the most of space on the right of the penalty area, crossing for Steve Robinson to flick on and HOWARD to steam in unmarked and beat Phillips from close range.

The goal stunned home fans into silence. It illicited an instant response from the home side, who poured men forward in an attempt to repair the damage. But it was Luton who almost scored again when Ahmet Brkovic met a cross from Boyce and saw his header deflected inches wide of the far post.

Having survived that scare, City should have equalised when breaking out of their own half and launching a swift counter-attack. When Brown played the ball in to Murray, it seemed he must score, only for the winger to play the ball square across the six-yard box when shooting himself seemed the more profitable option.

Wilson substituted Liam Rosenior for the ineffective Roberts. Rosenior's arrival introduced much-needed pace.

Luton's Neilson limped out of the action to be replaced by Ian Hillier.

With time running out, Wilson played his final card, replacing Tinnion with striker Peter Beadle.

The home side had the ball in the net nine minutes from time when Beadle headed Murray's cross against the bar and Peacock bundled in the rebound. But celebrations were cut short by a linesman's flag and Peacock's effort was ruled out for offside.

TEAMCHECK

BRISTOL CITY

- 1 Steve Phillips
- 2 Louis Carey
- 3 Mickey Bell
- 4 Tommy Doherty (c)
- 6 Matt Hill
- 7 Scott Murray
- 8 Joe Burnell
- 10 Lee Peacock
- 11 Brian Tinnion
- 18 Christian Roberts
- 19 Danny Coles
- SUBSTITUTES
- 9 Peter Beadle
- 12 Aaron Brown
- 14 Mike Stowell
- 25 Clayton Fortune
- 26 Liam Rosenior

LUTON TOWN

- 16 Carl Emberson
- 3 Alan Neilson
- 9 Tony Thorpe (c)
- 11 Steve Robinson
- 12 Chris Coyne
- 15 Dean Crowe
- 17 Emmerson Boyce
- 18 Ahmet Brkovic
- 19 Steve Howard
- 21 Paul Hughes
- 24 Sol Davis
- SUBSTITUTES
- 1 Mark Ovendale
- 31 Alan Kimble
- 32 Lee Mansell
- 23 Ian Hillier
- 14 Andrew Fotiadis

REFEREE

M Cooper, W Midlands

ATTENDANCE

14,057