



Player Watch/Star Hatter

Howard you like that every week?

AFTER speaking out on his intention of staying at Kenilworth Road, striker Steve Howard let his football do the talking on the pitch on Saturday to win our Star Hatter award.

Howard donned the captain's armband to show his commitment to fans.

And he also signalled that he and new strike partner loan signing Gary McSheffrey were beginning to forge an understanding in the final third as both produced impressive displays.

- Here's how Howard fared:
- Time on pitch: 90 minutes.
- Efforts on target: 2
- Efforts off: 5
- Shots blocked: 0
- Passes to own player: 18
- Passes to opposition: 4
- Pass completion rate: 82 per cent.
- Tackles won/interceptions: 3

- Tackles lost: 2
- Free-kicks won: 1
- Free-kicks conceded: 2
- Headers won: 24
- Headers lost: 5
- Dribbles ball retained: 4
- Dribbles ball lost: 3
- Dribble completion rate: 57 per cent
- Crosses: 1
- Bookings/Sendings off: 0
- Offsides: 1
- Goals: 2

VERDICT: Howard was a constant threat in the air as shown by the number of headed duels he won. But he was also effective on the floor in holding the ball up and bringing teammates into play as shown by his high pass completion rate.

OUR L.S. VIEW: "We just had a look around and felt Steve was the best option for captain. He got a couple of goals and played well - I don't know if it was down to him having the armband, but we'll be giving it to him again!"



Picture: Jane Sherlock

SO CLOSE: Steve Howard jumps higher than Chris Coyne to send his header crashing against the bar as Emerson Boyce looks on.

Howie shows his Hart!

HATTERS 3 HARTLEPOOL 2
TRANSFER target Steve Howard put the sales speculation behind him to produce a performance of true Hart against his home town club on Saturday.

Howard was made skipper for the day against Hartlepool in the absence of club captain Kevin Nicholls. And the big striker's first-half brace either side of a job from loan signing Gary McSheffrey gave the Hatters a flying start against Mike Newell's former team at Kenilworth Road.

But Darrel Clarke's strike at the end of the first-half and Paul Robinson's penalty in the second period meant Luton had to cling on in the final stages before inflicting the first defeat of the season upon the Division Two new boys. Luton's changes from the Brighton defeat saw Nicholls missing through a knee injury, meaning youngster Kevin Foley was pushed up to right midfield, while Emerson Boyce returned from a calf strain to fill in at right-back.

David Bayliss kept his place alongside Chris Coyne at the centre of defence, while Alan Neilson was preferred to Sol Davis at left-back. As yet were on Howard as he ran out donning the captain's armband. Howard had been the subject of rejected bids from Sheffield Wednesday and Northampton Town and his valuation can only

Steve and Shef sink The Pool

have gone up after a sparkling first-half display.

In front of a slightly disappointing crowd of 5,515 - including a number of watching scouts - Howard took only five minutes to get on the scoresheet.

McSheffrey produced a smart turn on the right-hand side of the penalty area and his left-foot shot deflected straight into the path of Howard. The target man made no mistake, side-footing home from 10 yards.

In the 14th minute Courtney Pitt, another loan signing, was dismissed in his own half. But the flying winger sprinted back to produce a perfectly executed sliding tackle on the edge of his own penalty area.

He then hit a raking pass half the length of the field to find McSheffrey racing clear behind the Hartlepool defence. The 21-year-old, at Kenilworth Road from Coventry, controlled beautifully on his chest before calmly lobbing the advancing Jim Provelt for his first goal in Hatters colours.

Howard made it 3-0 in the 23rd minute, diving in front of his marker Michael Nelson to powerfully head home McSheffrey's left-wing free-kick. And he almost grabbed a hat-trick

when his header from Pitt's corner hit the bar in the 26th minute.

Pool fought back and a 39th minute free-kick from Gavin Strachan, son of Southampton boss Gordon, bounced off the Luton wall into the path of Clarke to sweep home from six yards.

The visitors continued the pressure after the break and Robert Beckwith did well to block Richie Humphries' fierce left-foot volley with his legs after 48 minutes. But the teenage keeper couldn't stop Robinson's powerful 71st minute spot kick after Neilson brought down substitute Steven Istead in the penalty area.

It set up a frantic finale, but Luton held on for a deserved victory.

NEWELL'S VERDICT

"WE WERE sweating a bit long before the end to be honest. We had a fantastic start, but I didn't feel that the game was over at all. "We warned them that if we took the foot off the gas and let them back into the game then they would start to play it around and that's what happened.

"We really needed a win and some of the staff we played in the first-half was really pleasing."

"Hartlepool got a sniff with their goal and I just think that if you get into a situation where you become nervous you can start making mistakes, which is what we did."



NICE ONE: Howie congratulates McSheffrey.

HATTERS Luton 3-2 Hartlepool Howard 6, 23 McSheffrey 14 Clarke 40 Robinson 71 (pen)	6yd 2 2 18yd 7 4 Outside 18yd 0 2	When Scored For/Agt 0-15 16-30 31-45 46-60 61-75 76-90	Luton Town's Scorers Steve Howard 3 1 4 6 0.67 Tony Thorpe 2 1 3 1 1.00 Gary McSheffrey 1 0 1 3 0.33 Alan Nelson 1 0 1 5 0.20 Kevin Nicholls 1 0 1 5 0.20 Matthew Spring 1 0 1 5 0.20 Kevin Foley 0 1 1 6 0.17 Courtney Pitt 0 1 1 6 0.17	Seasonal Progress Chart August October	Last 5 Matches Opponents H/A Score Hartlepool H 3-2 Brighton A 0-2 Grimsby H 1-2 Stockport A 2-1 Rushden H 3-1	Swings Won when behind Drawn when behind Lost when behind Lost when ahead Drawn when ahead
	How Scored For/Agt Shots 3 2 2 Headers 4 2 4 Volleys 1 2 4 Penalties 1 1 6 Free Kicks 0 1 0 Own Goals 0 0 0	Goals in last 10 mins Goals Scored 2 Goals conceded 0 Points won 0 Points lost 0	Fouls & Offsides Avg Fouls/game 14.8 Div 2 Rating 19 Long Range Shots none Inside 6 yards 5.6 Avg Offsides/game 5.6 Div 2 Rating 20 Shots 6-18 yards Howard 2	Top Scorers in each Category 4 players 1 Volleyed shots Penalties scored Scored 1st Goal Neilson, Howard, Spring, Nicholls 1 McSheffrey 1 Nicholls 1 Neilson, Howard, Spring, Nicholls 1	Set Piece Goals Scored from Corners 2 Scored from Free Kicks 1 Conceded from Corners 0 Conceded from Free Kicks 1	Attendance Figures Highest Attendance 6,878 Lowest Attendance 5,515 Ave Attendance 6,073