



Booked Thorpe has last word as he lays on late equaliser

Luton Town 1 QPR 1

03/04

NOT even heroics from youngster Robert Beckwith could deny QPR a share of the spoils in a fiery encounter.

Tony Thorpe had endured a nightmare return to Kenilworth Road until his injury-time touch allowed Paul Furlong to slide past Beckwith.

Thorpe, who left Luton for the paltry sum of £50,000 in late August, was booked within 100 seconds of his introduction, and was then twice denied by the Luton backline.

Until Furlong's strike, it had looked as though Steve Howard, returning from suspension, would be the Hatters hero.

Howard replaced the unfortunate Adrian Forbes, who had had a good showing in the midweek win over Port Vale.

Michael Leary was surprisingly chosen in the heart of midfield despite Courtney Pitt's re-release from Portsmouth.

Those relishing an action-packed game after last season's corresponding fixture were disappointed by a stop-start first half littered with free kicks.

Luton had the creative edge but it was QPR that had the ball in the net twice – only to be denied by the referee.

Rangers' front man Furlong glanced Gino Padula's cross

into the net only to be adjudged off-side on 15 minutes.

Furlong was again foiled by Luton's tight offside trap as he slotted home 20 minutes later.

Meanwhile, Luton's own target-man Howard was becoming increasingly frustrated with his lack of breaks up front.

The team's best chance arrived on 20 minutes when Ahmet Brkovic saw his rasping shot tipped wide by Chris Day.

Luton's most potent outlet Gary McSheffrey spotted Day off his line only to see his whipped free kick strike the crossbar.

Furlong headed wide as David Bayliss struggled to keep the burly striker under wraps and it was Furlong again, who was clean through early in the second half but the ball ran away from him.

Luton went close when Emmerson Boyce's centre was met by both Leary and McSheffrey but Danny Shittu came to the rescue with a last-ditch tackle.

Beckwith palmed away Shittu's powerful header, and at the other end Kevin Foley saw his intelligent lob just miss the far post.

It was at this point that Luton sprang into life.

Their persistence was rewarded on the hour mark as clever work on the right allowed Howard to poke home, although the deflection that wrong-footed Day looked to have come off McSheffrey.



It could have been two had Brkovic been able to apply a finish to his mazy run.

The Hatters would rue this miss as the fireworks really began.

Thorpe's introduction was instantly controversial. The reception he received from the Kenilworth Road faithful was inevitably rude before Mr Rennie booked him as he squared up to Bayliss to the delight of the crowd.

Thorpe twice had the opportunity to quieten his critics but his first effort was tame and his second looped over the bar.

McSheffrey danced his way into the box but was too shot-shy and the ball was stolen off

his toes by Day.

The visitors then turned the screw as veteran Kevin Gallen's free kick was acrobatically flicked around the post by Beckwith.

The reported Arsenal target proved it was no fluke when he produced a save of similar quality from Arthur Gnohere's header.

Just when it looked as though Beckwith had earned all three points a defensive misunderstanding culminated in the QPR equaliser.

Day's clearance was allowed to reach Thorpe, who flicked through cleverly for Furlong to score at the third time of asking with just about the last kick of the game.

Luton Town: Beckwith; Boyce, Coyne, Bayliss, Davis; Foley, Spring, Leary, Brkovic; McSheffrey (Pitt 87m), Howard. Subs not used: Brill, Hillier, Mansell, Forbes

Referee: Uriah Rennie (Yorkshire)

GOALSCORERS:

Luton: Howard (60)

QPR: Furlong (90)

BOOKINGS

Luton: Bayliss (2), Leary (73)

QPR: Bean (13), Gnohere (45), Thorp (66), Furlong (82)

ATTENDANCE: 8,339

HATTERS STAR MAN:

ROB BECKWITH

Pulled off two great saves

Division Two results

Barnsley	1	Swindon	1
Bournemouth	2	Rushden	1
Brentford	2	Hartlepool	1
Brighton	2	Sheffield Wed	0
Bristol City	0	Port Vale	1
Grimsby	4	Chesterfield	0
Luton	1	QPR	1
Notts County	2	Tranmere	2
Peterborough	1	Colchester	2
Stockport	1	Blackpool	3
Wrexham	2	Plymouth	2
Wycombe	2	Oldham	5

How they stand

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Port Vale	9	6	1	2	15	12	19
Brighton	9	5	2	2	15	9	17
QPR	9	4	4	1	18	8	16
Swindon	9	4	4	1	17	11	16
Barnsley	9	4	4	1	12	8	16
Hartlepool	9	4	3	2	20	11	15
Bournemouth	9	4	3	2	11	9	15
Plymouth	9	3	5	1	19	15	14
Luton	9	4	2	3	14	12	14
Sheffield Wed	9	4	2	3	14	13	14
Colchester	9	4	2	3	13	12	14
Bristol City	9	3	4	2	12	6	13
Rushden	9	4	1	4	16	15	13
Wrexham	8	3	2	3	7	8	11
Grimsby	9	3	2	4	15	18	11
Blackpool	8	3	2	3	12	16	11
Oldham	9	2	4	3	16	16	10
Brentford	9	3	1	5	7	14	10
Peterborough	9	2	3	4	12	12	9
Tranmere	9	1	5	3	9	11	8
Stockport	9	1	3	5	11	17	6
Notts County	9	1	3	5	6	18	6
Wycombe	9	1	2	6	11	20	5
Chesterfield	9	0	4	5	5	16	4



■ Joy for Steve Howard as he gives Luton the lead against QPR. Top: Chris Coyne gets in a powerful clearing header