



Mansell steers Hatters into the bag with big boys

**Rochdale 0
Luton Town 2
(FA Cup second round)**

BRING on the big guns – hard-up Hatters are in the hat for the third round of the FA Cup.

Manager Mike Newell knows exactly which team he wants to face – mighty Liverpool at Anfield.

“We won’t win the the cup, so somewhere along the line I want to play one of the big teams,” declared Newell, who made his name with Everton during his illustrious career.

Two first half penalty decisions gave Luton the advantage even though Steve Robinson failed to convert the second one.

Lee Mansell made sure the Hatters would be in today’s draw with the killer second goal.

Hatters, robbed of the services of talismanic Matthew Spring through suspension, were looking to improve on last season’s FA Cup run that ended at Wigan at the same stage.

Spring was replaced by Peter Holmes, who moved inside from his usual right wing position.

With Gary McSheffrey back at Coventry, Adrian Forbes partnered Steve Howard up front. Howard received clearance to play with his hand in a cast an hour before kick-off.

Lee Mansell – who came to prominence with his debut goal against QPR in the cup three years ago – was recalled and started on the right wing.

Rochdale, who have lost their last three games, are currently in the lower reaches in Division Three and were looking for a boost in fortunes.

Neither side offered much until the 12th minute when Holmes cut inside before unleashing a rasping left foot shot just over the bar.

Hatters looked more composed on the ball and took the lead on 19 minutes.

A ball inside from Holmes was controlled by Forbes just inside the box, but the diminutive striker was clattered in to by Dale defender Simon Grand.

Referee Andy Hall pointed straight to the spot with no complaints from Grand’s team mates.

Steve Robinson coolly slotted home the penalty for his second goal of the season.



■ On the spot: Steve Robinson gives Hatters the lead with a penalty

Luton did not have it all their own way. On 23 minutes Marlon Beresford had to be alert to save a powerful low drive from Gary Jones.

Hatters wasted the chance to go further further ahead just three minutes later, when Robinson missed a second penalty.

The incident had a touch of *deja vu* about it. Forbes was again the victim – brought down by Michael Simpkins when in full flight after a 30-yard dribble.

Robinson stepped up to take the penalty,

again he put it low to the left of Neil Edwards but the goalkeeper had not read the script and pushed the drive around the post.

It gave Rochdale – who up until that point had been rather too respectful of their higher league opposition – the confidence to push forward in search of an equaliser, but they got no encouragement from a tight Hatters defence.

In the second half Rochdale introduced young striker Kevin Townson, who ignited their quest for a replay.

On 47 minutes winger Patrick McCourt, who looked impressive, got to the bye-line and squeezed a cross in front of the exposed Beresford, but Townson’s header lacked power allowing the goalkeeper to save.

Five minutes later Luton registered their first attack of the second half. A Sol Davis free kick picked out Coyne at the far post and his header picked out Emmerson Boyce almost on the goalline. He somehow headed high and wide when it looked easier to score.

Despite Townson and McCourt’s trickery, Luton were able to wrap up the tie on 77 minutes.

Robinson broke down the left and drilled a cross into the six-yard box. Edwards fumbled as he came out and the ball spilled to Mansell on the penalty spot to slam in Luton’s second into an empty net.

Manager Mike Newell commented: “It was all about getting through. It is another clean sheet and that is now nine games unbeaten.”

On Robinson’s missed second kick, Newell added: “When he stepped up we had feeling he would miss it – it is hard taking two penalties in a match.”



■ Missing: Inspirational Matthew Spring



MATCH FACTS



Luton Town: Beresford; Hillier, Coyne, Boyce, Davis; Mansell, Holmes, Robinson, Brkovic; Howard, Forbes. Subs not used: Brill (gkpr), Deeney, Leary, O’Leary, Crowe

Referee: Andy Hall (West Midlands)

GOALSCORERS:
Rochdale: -
Luton: Robinson (19 pen), Mansell (77)

SHOTS ON TARGET
Rochdale: 6
Luton: 5

SHOTS OFF TARGET
Rochdale: 3
Luton: 7

CORNERS
Rochdale: 2
Luton: 4

OFFSIDE
Rochdale: 4
Luton: 4

BOOKINGS
Rochdale: Jones (26), Simpkins (61)
Luton: Robinson (31), Holmes (47)

ATTENDANCE: 2,807

HATTERS STAR MAN:
ADRIAN FORBES

Won both penalties and worked hard in defence as well as attack



■ Steve Howard in the thick of things