

Forbes stars in Hatters upset

Bradford 1 Luton 2

ADRIAN Forbes' brace condemned Bradford to more FA Cup misery as Second Division Luton caused a third round upset with a 2-1 victory at Valley Parade.

The magic of the cup is not something Bradford have enjoyed in recent years having now crashed out at the third round every season since they beat Crewe in December, 1999 on their way to a fourth round exit.

Mike Newell's men outmanoeuvred and outmuscled their Division One opponents in every department from the first whistle. Chief tormentor was Forbes whose superb individual display reaped its reward with goals in the 20th and 48th minute.

Andy Gray's late penalty turned out to be nothing more than a consolation although manager Bryan Robson — three times an FA Cup-winning captain with Manchester United — will claim his side have more pressing matters to address given their perilous position in the league.

But on this evidence, Robson faces a huge task if his side are to address their defensive problems in time to stave off relegation.

After a frenetic opening, the visitors thought they had opened the scoring after 11 minutes when Steven Howard latched on to a hopeful punt upfield and slammed the ball into the back of the net from 10 yards. However, the linesman deemed Howard to be in an offside position and the goal was ruled out.

The home side were all at sea and were punished for such a sloppy start when Forbes scored nine minutes later. The impressive Howard waltzed past two defenders before flighting a superbly weighted ball in to the penalty area for Forbes to sweep home from close-range.

Bradford responded with purpose and Alun Armstrong bundled the ball into the net shortly before the half-hour mark, only for the linesman to chalk his effort off because the on-loan Ipswich

striker was offside.

But for all their possession, Robson's men looked paper-thin in the final third of the field and Luton were comfortably the more potent attacking force.

Matthew Spring's 30 yard rocket called City goalkeeper Alan Combe into action with a stunning fingertip save while Steve Robinson's deft free kick forced Combe into another tidy stop just before half time.

But three minutes after the interval, Combe could do nothing as Forbes scored his second of the afternoon.

Robinson's cross from the right flank caught Bradford cold and Forbes made no mistake with an incisive finish from six yards.

Shell-shocked, Bradford went about trying to drag themselves back in to the game and laid siege to the Luton goal.



ADRIAN FORBES

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Dean Windass struck the crossbar with a fine header and with seven minutes remaining, Gray's penalty — after Emmerson Boyce had fouled Windass — gave the home side hope, although the hosts could not find an equaliser.

Robson laments poor first half display

BRADFORD manager Bryan Robson felt his side's dreadful first half display cost them the chance of a run in the FA Cup — a result which now frees them up to concentrate on First Division survival.

He said: "I thought our first half performance was unacceptable. We started slowly for whatever reason.

"We were hesitant and we didn't have any drive going forward. It seems we need to go behind before we start playing.

"I cannot believe that a team can play so badly in the first half and lift themselves so well afterwards.

"You cannot start that slowly against anyone.

"We would have liked to have had a good cup run.

"Now we can only concentrate on our survival in the First Division."

The victory was a triumph for the Hatters and manager Mike Newell admitted that Luton would welcome a lucrative away draw in the fourth round to help their financial position.

Newell, who once played on loan for Bradford, said: "We felt our first half performance was good and we deserved to be 1-0 in front at half time — in fact, we could have been further ahead, but the second goal came at a great time just after the interval.

"The last half-hour was a long half-hour from our point of view, but you don't expect things to be easy in the FA Cup and you expect the home team to come at you at some stage in the game.

"We have come to a First Division club, we have won the game and now we are looking for a good draw in the fourth round. If you are drawn away to one of the big clubs that is a pay day."