

'Back pass' sees Luton draw level

03/04
LUTON TOWN.....2

Griffin (32 og), Howard (85)

STOCKPORT CITY.....2

Lynch (18), McLachlan (72)

BY KENNETH RICE

REFEREE Alan Butler was the topic of debate after an incident-packed match at Kenilworth Road saw Luton drop two points and Stockport earn a draw to improve their chances of avoiding relegation.

The Nottinghamshire official's first big decision came on 37 minutes when he sent off Luton's Adrian Forbes for squaring up to Danny Jackman.

By then, left-winger Andy Welsh had threatened to demolish Luton on his own, and had provided the run and cross which led to Simon Lynch shooting his third goal in as many games.

Luton benefited from a lucky equaliser, with Danny Griffin slicing the ball into his own net as he tried to deal with a driven near-post cross by Steve Robinson.

LUTON		STOCKPORT
47	Possession %	53
7	Corners	2
0	Offsides	5
6	Fouls	7
1	Yellows	3
1	Reds	0
9	Shots On	5
8	Shots Off	3
1	Hit Woodwork	0

LUTON: Beresford 7, Foley 6, Coyne 7, Davies 7, Davis 6, Robinson 7, Brkovic 6, Holmes 6, Mansell (Showunmi 43), Forbes, Howard 7.

STOCKPORT: Spencer 7, Hardiker 6, Griffin 6, Clare 6, Jackman 7, Lambert 6, McLachlan 6, Welsh 8, Gibb 6 (Morrison 71), Barlow 6, Lynch 7 (Wilbraham 82).

Forbes was dismissed five minutes later, but the ten men raised their game, only to be thwarted by Stockport goalkeeper James Spencer.

Stockport took the lead through Fraser McLachlan after 72 minutes.

Then, with five minutes to go, Robert Clare, in full view of referee Mr Butler, passed the ball back to his goalkeeper. Spencer was penalised for fielding it, the resulting indirect free kick was touched off to Steve Howard, and he rammed in his seventh goal of the season from ten yards.

Stockport manager Sammy McIlroy was furious, and he was banished from the dugout for expressing his views.

"The referee sent me off for swearing but that was totally wrong," said McIlroy.

"It was never a back pass. The ball came off his shin - it went over his head and he stabbed it backwards. And if you can do a back pass with your shin, you shouldn't be playing at this level."

He added: "I'm disgusted. You work hard all week and look like you're winning and then the referee evens it up."

Luton boss Mike Newell said: "I'm disappointed we didn't win because even with ten men, we had the better chances."

Newell praised the performance of 18-year-old centre-half Curtis Davies, who made an impressive League debut.