



LUTON TOWN.....0

TRANMERE ROVERS1

Mellon (81)

BY SIMON STONE

MICKY MELLON sent Tranmere into the fifth round for the fourth time in five years with an 11st-minute winner against Luton at Kenilworth Road.

The Rovers skipper provided the one moment of inspiration in a physical all-Second Division duel by bursting over halfway and then unleashing a 20-yard drive which flicked off a home defender and crashed in off Marlon Beresford's right-hand post.

It maintained Rovers' impressive recent cup record, which has already seen the Merseysiders account for Bolton this term, although manager Brian Little will know his team will have to produce more than this workmanlike display to advance much further.

Little though will wonder how much easier it would have been for his team if Luton defender Sol Davis had been red-carded just 11 minutes into the game.

Rovers' Canadian striker Iain Hume clearly felt he had been barged off the ball by Davis as he attempted to reach a lofted ball to the edge of the Luton penalty area – but referee Matt Messias obviously did not see it.

Immediately afterwards, Hume could not disguise his fury and raced

Mellon's peach sends Rovers through safely



Keane Busted: Luton's Keith Keane (above, right) is challenged by Tranmere's Graham Allen, while Eugene Dadi (below, right) outjumps Emmerson Boyce

over and though Kevin Nicholls and Peter Holmes sent long-range shots wide, it was another half hour before Luton created another decent opportunity.

Mansell was again the man who failed to find the target, although this time it was Rovers keeper John Achterberg who denied him with a fine fingertip save after the Luton front man had got on the end of Holmes' far post cross.

Aside from a goalmouth scramble instigated by Graham Allen's knock down, Tranmere created little in the opening period, but through Hume's industry they did start to force the pace at the start of the second.

Gary Jones could not keep a stooping header down, then Hume failed with a couple of half chances – firing an angled effort over the bar

after neatly stepping inside Ahmet Brkovic, then failing to test Marlon Beresford with a mishit 25-yard drive.

The introduction of Keith Keane for Mansell on the hour seemed to inject fresh life into the home side and when the substitute was sent flying by Gareth Roberts, the Luton players surrounded Messias pleading for a penalty.

The contact had been outside the box but the official decided it was not worthy of a free-kick.

As the clock ticked down, the desperation not to lose increased, as did an already high crime count.

Mellon was among the half dozen players cautioned but it was the impact he made late in the game which proved to be the deciding factor.



Newell: "Ref made mistake"

REACTION FIRST

LUTON manager Mike Newell branded referee Matt Messias "arrogant" after his side crashed out of the FA Cup to Tranmere at Kenilworth Road.

Tranmere skipper Micky Mellon drove home the winner nine minutes from time to send the Wirral club into the last 16 for the fourth time in five seasons but Newell was fuming at Messias' refusal to give his team a late penalty when Keith Keane was sent sprawling in the box by Gareth Roberts.

"I can take it when a referee holds his hands up and says he might have made a mistake but in this instance I thought he was just arrogant," said Newell, who clashed angrily with Messias after the final whistle.

"I don't need to look at a video. I know it was a penalty. I told the referee it is my living that he is affecting, he just said 'it's mine as well'."

"I know he had one season in the Premiership but that says it all."

Newell was gracious enough to admit defender Sol Davis should have been sent off after catching Tranmere livewire Iain Hume with a head butt after just 11 minutes.

Victorious Tranmere boss Brian Little dismissed the incident as "just one of those things that happen in a football match".

However, he did express relief that Luton had not been given the spot-kick Newell demanded.

"It could have been," he said. "I winced a bit when it happened."

Luton had held sway for much of the Second Division showdown but did not create many chances.

"We got a little shock right at the start of the game but I thought we were strong after that," said Little.

"Micky has scored quite a few goals for us this season so it was no real surprise that he stepped up and got another one."

"Luton probably feel they deserved more for what they put into the game in the first half, but I thought we were good in the second and we just about edged it."

LUTON	TRANMERE
45 Possession %	55
5 Corners	9
8 Offsides	5
12 Fouls	12
2 Yellow Cards	3
0 Red Cards	0
4 Shots On Target	6
7 Shots Off Target	1
1 Hit Woodwork	0

LUTON: Beresford 7, Foley 7, Coyne 6, Boyce 8, Davis 6, Nicholls 5 (Crowe 85), Holmes 6, Mansell 6 (Keane 61), Leary 7, Showunmi 7, Brkovic 6.
TRANMERE: Achterberg 7, Allen 7, Sharps 7, Jones 6, Roberts 7, Mellon 7, Taylor 6, Harrison 6, Hume 6, Dadi 7 (Hay 90), Beresford 7.

towards Davis for a face-to-face confrontation.

The Luton man responded with what looked like a headbutt – which again went unseen by Messias and his two assistants.

Hume appeared to make the most of the incident, collapsing to the ground in apparent agony but the impact had been enough to draw blood and there is no doubt Davis should have been given his marching orders.

It was the most noteworthy incident of the first 81 minutes, although Luton did have the better of what had gone before.

The cash-strapped Hatters had been dealt a crushing blow 24 hours before kick-off when top-scorer Adrian Forbes ruptured his cruciate knee ligament in training.

Knowing a fifth round windfall could generate some much-needed revenue, it was a cruel loss for manager Mike Newell to contend with.

However, with Enoch Showunmi using his muscular presence to unsettle the visitors defence, Luton were still the better side.

The Hatters might have gone ahead inside the opening minute but Lee Mansell could only flick a goalbound Emmerson Boyce effort

