

Injury time stunner from teenage ace

Luton Town 3
Bristol City 2

TEENAGER Keith Keane resurrected Luton's promotion dream with a sensational injury-time winner – just when it seemed another late goal had cost them victory.

Having led 2-0 with goals through Steve Howard and Emmerson Boyce, City showed their class by levelling in the last minute of normal time.

But then Steve Robinson's third perfectly placed free kick led to Keane's magical moment for Luton's first win in seven games.

The Hatters fully deserved all three points, which could prove vital in clinching a play-off spot.

Three defeats in seven days had seen the Hatters drop to the fringes of the play-offs and manager Mike Newell described the run as 'the worst week of our season' in his programme notes.

The successive defeats by Hartlepool, Tranmere and Swindon had not left Hatters in too bad a shape.

Before kick-off Luton were still seven points adrift of the top six, but others in the play-off race had also faltered, leaving Town with a sporting chance of a date in Cardiff's Millennium Stadium.

One side who would not relish the short trip to Wales were today's opponents Bristol City. The Robins are currently chasing QPR for the second automatic promotion place with Plymouth all but crowned champions.

Ex-Hatter Danny Wilson's men slipped up late on in last season's campaign and surrendered second place to Crewe before losing in the play-offs to eventual winners Cardiff.

For yet another 'must-win' game, Newell made three changes. In came Keith Keane and Ahmet Brkovic, and relegated to the bench were Michael Leary and Lee Mansell.

Enoch Showunmi surprisingly joined them, losing out to fit-again Adrian Forbes.

As good as it was to see Luton's top scorer back in the starting XI, it was still a shock that Newell could not fit in Showunmi,



■ Steve Howard, back to his best yesterday, heads Hatters into the lead

whose emergence this season has been a real plus point, into his team somewhere.

Wilson's men have been in the top echelons all season and from the kick-off they looked a quality side.

But it was Luton who had the first real attempt on goal after four minutes when Steve Robinson tested Steve Phillips with a well-hit 30-yard shot that was equally well saved.

City's right winger Tony Rougier, who tormented Luton's backline throughout the first half, responded with a powerful run through the middle before laying off the ball off to Mickey Fell, whose cross-shot was competently dealt with by Morten Hyldgaard.

Luton took the lead following a free kick won by Howard on 26 minutes when Tony Butler hitched a ride on the big striker's

back. Robinson flighted an inch-perfect cross to Howard at the back post to power in a trademark header – his first home goal since January 17 against Stockport County.

Just after the half-hour mark, they had another chance when recalled Forbes put a ball through for Brkovic, who beat the offside trap but his tame chip over the onrushing 'keeper fell short of the six-yard box.

Luton increased their lead on 56 minutes with a goal from Boyce. Another great delivery from a Robinson free kick found Chris Coyne, whose strong header back across the six yard box came to Boyce and the defender's header went in off the post.

Hatters' joy lasted only three minutes as Christian Roberts pulled a goal back. Put through by captain Tommy Docherty, Roberts allowed the ball to drop before volleying past a stranded Hyldgaard.

City pressed for an equaliser and although their quality was obvious they did not threaten a goal until the very last minute.

From a corner, defender Danny Coles was unmarked to head home, sending the 1500-strong Robins' support into raptures.

They were still celebrating when they were stunned by a Hatters winner from yet another free kick put away by young full back Keane, who chose the perfect moment to score his first league goal.

Robinson stepped up to play another dangerous ball into the box, where a rejuvenated Howard headed for goal. Phillips could only parry the ball to Keane just inside the area, whose volley looped over everyone in the six-yard box and fell into the net with defenders desperately trying to get it clear.

A euphoric Newell said: "I had a feeling we were due one of those. The players have taken so many knocks in the dying minutes of games. We were owed some luck."

"With four games left to go we are still very much in the play-off picture."



■ Emmerson Boyce is on hand to head Luton's second against Bristol City



MATCH FACTS



LUTON TOWN: Hyldgaard; Foley, Coyne, Boyce, Davis; Keane, Nicholls, Robinson, Brkovic; Howard, Forbes (Showunmi 82m)
Subs: Brill (gkpr), Davies, Leary, Mansell,

Referee: Mr Martin Atkinson (Yorkshire)

GOALSCORERS:
Luton: Howard (26), Boyce (56), Keane (90)
Bristol City: Roberts (59), Coles (90)

SHOTS ON TARGET
Luton: 5
Bristol City: 6

SHOTS OFF TARGET
Luton: 4
Bristol City: 6

CORNERS
Luton: 3
Bristol City: 5

OFFSIDE
Luton: 5
Bristol City: 10

BOOKINGS
Luton: Brkovic (43)
Bristol City: Coles (80)

ATTENDANCE: 6,944

HATTERS STAR MAN: CHRIS COYNE

Towering display, frustrated City all game and set up Town's second goal

Division Two results

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

How they stand

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Plymouth	43	23	12	8	78	40	81
QPR	42	20	17	6	76	42	77
Bristol City	43	21	12	10	55	36	75
Swindon	43	20	12	11	74	54	72
Brighton	43	20	10	13	61	43	70
Hartlepool	43	19	12	12	72	57	66
Port Vale	43	18	10	15	67	61	64
Luton	42	16	14	12	64	60	62
Bournemouth	42	16	13	13	54	49	61
Tranmere	43	15	16	12	54	53	61
Blackpool	43	16	11	16	56	58	59
Barnsley	43	14	17	12	51	53	59
Colchester	43	15	13	15	49	54	58
Wrexham	42	16	7	19	46	55	55
Sheffield Wed	43	13	14	16	45	57	53
Oldham	42	10	19	13	60	57	49
Brentford	43	13	10	20	50	67	49
Peterborough	43	11	15	17	53	55	48
Rushden & D	43	13	9	21	60	68	48
Stockport	43	10	18	15	58	66	48
Grimsby	43	12	11	20	52	77	47
Chesterfield	43	10	15	18	47	69	45
Notts County	43	10	11	22	48	74	41
Wycombe	42	6	16	21	47	72	34