

Drama and controversy

04/05

Tranmere 1
Luton 1

CHRIS Coyne preserved Luton's unbeaten start to the season with a late equaliser to cancel out Tranmere's controversial goal in a dramatic top-of-the-table clash.

Dino Seremet had earlier saved two penalties and still conceded the opening goal in the space of one first half minute, but Coyne ensured Luton stayed seven points clear at the top of League One with a fine header 15 minutes from time.

Seremet, only in the side because of an injury to Marlon Beresford, pulled off fabulous saves to deny spot-kicks from Iain Hume and Ryan Taylor, who bundled in the rebound amid farcical scenes.

Mark Rankine had already fired an early effort wide as Luton struggled to get a foothold on the game.

Seremet also had to be alert to tip a deflected Taylor cross around the post as Tranmere, missing injured captain Jason McAteer, made all the running.

But the drama unfolded on the half-hour mark when Curtis Davies was adjudged to have fouled Taylor in the penalty area.

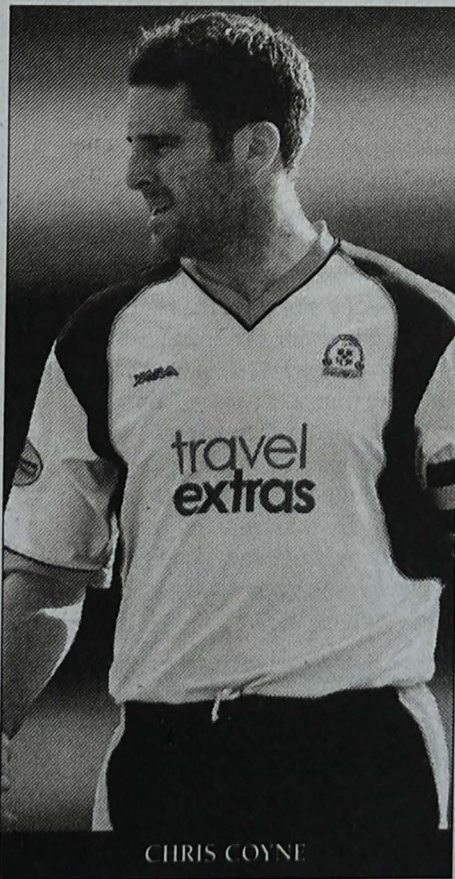
Luton's players protested furiously, surrounding referee Tony Bates, who booked Coyne and Kevin Nicholls.

Taylor was then stunned to be told by the official that he would not be able to take the penalty as, having received

treatment from the physio, he would have to leave the pitch until the game had restarted.

Hume stepped up to take the spot-kick which, almost inevitably, was saved by Seremet.

But Bates was not finished and ordered the penalty to be retaken, by



CHRIS COYNE

which time Taylor was back on the pitch.

Incredibly, Seremet went the same way and saved the second effort, but unfortunately for the Slovenian the rebound fell to Taylor who gratefully tucked the ball away.

Rovers should have doubled their lead before the interval, but Seremet pulled off another fine save to deny David Beresford from point-blank range.

And they were made to pay when Nicholls latched onto a long clearance from Ian Sharps and floated the ball across for Coyne to power home the leveller.

Luton manager Mike Newell was unhappy with the twice-taken penalty.

He said: "Our players didn't think there was any contact for the penalty but the referee must give it on what he sees. The situation with the retake was just petty, frustrating and annoying.

"But we are delighted with the point secured through a grand goal by Coyne. We thought we deserved it on our performance although we rode our luck a bit late on."

Tranmere manager Brian Little sympathised with Newell. He said: "I understand Luton's frustration over the penalty. I wouldn't have enjoyed it if I was their manager.

"It looked like a penalty to me but what followed was bizarre and even more bizarre for Luton. I've been in the game a long time but I've never seen anything like that before."