



Huddersfield 1 Luton Town 1
TOM LEECH reports from the Galpharm Stadium



MATCH FACTS



Luton Town: Beresford; Keane, Perrett, Davies, Davis; Foley, Nicholls, Robinson, Brkovic (Neilson 90m); Vine (Andrew 90), Howard; Subs (not used): Seremet, Holmes, Showumni.

Referee: Mike Thorpe (Suffolk)

GOALSCORERS:
Huddersfield: Beckett (90)
Luton: Brkovic (34)

SHOTS ON TARGET
Huddersfield: 7
Luton: 1

SHOTS OFF TARGET
Huddersfield: 7
Luton: 4

CORNERS
Huddersfield: 6
Luton: 5

OFFSIDE
Huddersfield: 6
Luton: 3

BOOKINGS
Huddersfield: Sodje (56)
Luton: Davis (38), Robinson (76), Howard (78), Foley (90)

ATTENDANCE: 12,611

HATTERS STAR MAN: KEVIN NICHOLLS

All action display from the skipper who led by example

Last-gasp goal has Hatters boss fuming

LUTON TOWN boss Mike Newell could not hide his frustration after watching his side concede a goal five minutes into injury time that robbed the Hatters of all three points.

Town looked home and dry after some staunch defending and Ahmet Brkovic's first half goal.

But Huddersfield, the only side to win at Kenilworth Road this season, stole the draw with almost the last kick of the game through Luke Beckett's precise lob.

After the game Newell slammed the match officials and Steve Howard's harsh booking that rules him out of next week's top of the table clash with Hull City.

"I thought we'd done enough. It's frustrating to lose a goal so late on as it's something we did a lot last season but had eradicated this season," said the Luton manager.

"Howie's very frustrated by his booking. Football in this country is fast becoming a non-contact sport which I put down to the influx of foreign players.

"He gets booked every other week for 'persistent fouling' but his competitors never get booked. Howie came in at half time and said 'the ref's gonna book me'. The lad just doesn't know what to do.

"The ref was poor and the linesman was doubly poor. Some of the officials we've had are just incompetent it's as simple as that. It's frustrating for players and fans alike when the game is broken up by whistles every second. I may well send a tape of the game to the FA to show just how poor the ref was today.

"Overall I'm pleased with our performance. We never felt we were under any real pressure. To get so close to winning then lose it was a sickner. I thought we'd done enough - we almost had it."

The result wasn't as bad as it could have been with Hull drawing at home which means Luton still lead the Tigers before next Saturday's sell out match.

There was just one change to yesterday's Luton side that drew with fellow championship contenders Tranmere Rovers last weekend.

Russ Perrett started his first game of the year and only his second of the season, coming in for the suspended Chris Coyne. Injury again robbed Newell of the services of Paul Underwood so Brkovic was asked to play on the left side of midfield with Kevin Foley and Keith Keane continuing their tandem roles down the right-hand side.

Luton took the lead on 33 minutes in highly controversial circumstances. Foley and Vine linked up well down the right hand side and the young Irishman broke free before delivering a tantalising ball across the Terriers' goalmouth.

It was perfect for the lurking Steve Howard, who the home crowd were sure looked offside but the linesman's flag didn't go up.

The normally lethal hit-man Howard might have wished he was caught offside when his wild swing at the ball missed and bobbled along the six yard area. But his blushes were spared when Brkovic's brave slide took advantage of defender David Mirfin's hesitancy in clearing.



From then on the vocal home support got on referee Mike Thorpe's back on every decision that didn't go Huddersfield's way.

The biggest cheer of the game came a minute after Brkovic's goal when Howard was ruled offside and ironic claps echoed around the impressive Galpharm Stadium.

The Croatian's 11th strike of the season remained the game's only real talking point until the 78th minute when Howard picked up Luton's third booking of the game.

Hatters' top scorer had been trading blows with former Luton player Efe Sodje throughout and he finally let his temper get the better of him with a silly foul by the corner flag.

Howard nearly went some way towards making amends four minutes later when he connected with Sol Davis' cross but his header went agonisingly wide.

At the other end Marlon Beresford was pulling out all the stops in Luton's goal. The veteran shot-stopper caught every corner Terriers put into his area and on 85 minutes pulled off the save of the game. On-loan Luke Beckett was put through by substitute Pawel Abbott and he curled a shot around his marker that looked to be heading in until Beresford's save.

But Beckett was to have the final say. Deep into injury time a long ball was pumped into the Luton area and the striker, who has notched four goals in three games since his move from Sheffield United, was alert enough to creep in-between the Luton rearguard and lob over the stranded Beresford.



■ Steve Howard and former Hatters player Efe Sodje in one of their many clashes throughout the afternoon that eventually led to a booking for both players. Below: Skipper Kevin Nicholls gets in a header