



Luton Town 1 Hull City 0  
TOM LEECH reports from Kenilworth Road

# Croatian's goal just sensational

**AHMET BRKOVIC** put Luton Town firmly in the driver's seat for the League title as his last gasp goal slayed the toothless Tigers.

For 89 minutes it looked like Luton would be cruelly denied all three points in a game they dominated from the start.

But, a week on from surrendering victory at Huddersfield to a stoppage-time goal, Hatters finally got what they deserved when winger Brkovic swooped to put Luton four points clear of their rivals Hull City, leaving manager Mike Newell a very happy man.

"I'm absolutely delighted especially after last week at Huddersfield," said the Hatters' head honcho. "It was the best we've played in weeks and it was a fantastic time to score."

Newell was also full of praise for his match-winner: "Brkovic has good technique and he's a good header of the ball. He played really well although ironically we were thinking of taking him off as he looked tired late on."

"They (Hull) can have no arguments - we were by far the better team. The players are all delighted in the changing room, but I'm not getting carried away. It's another three points in a tight league. Thankfully results elsewhere have gone our way today so there is a bit of daylight opening up at the top now."

Newell's opposite number Peter Taylor conceded Hatters were now favourites for the League One title. "I felt the result was a little cruel as we were much better in the second half," he lamented. "There's still 15 matches to go and I'm certain my players can clinch that second spot."

Luton and Hull may have been the top two sides in the table, but both were going through a bit of a poor patch before yesterday's crunch game. Hatters had won only once in the previous four games - drawing the other three, while the Tigers had got just three points in their last four matches.

Newell was denied the services of top-scorer Steve Howard who is suspended for two games, so in came Enoch Showunmi for his first start at Kenilworth Road this season.

Back from suspension came the influential Chris Coyne at the heart of defence to partner Curtis Davies and Russ Perrett dropped to the bench. The Luton boss also chose experience over youth at right back, recalling Alan Neilson in place of youngster Keith Keane.

Goalkeeper Marlon Beresford was also included, fresh from winning his hearing at the FA Disciplinary Panel after being charged with verbally abusing the referee after the infamous Huddersfield game - not that he had much to do in the first half as Hatters ran the show from the first whistle.

Brkovic had two good shots go just wide as well as a header which tested Hull's Boaz Myhill.

The move of the half came ten minutes in from Showunmi's quick throw. Rowan Vine ran on before playing it into the box



■ Hatters heroes: Ahmet Brkovic (above), Calvin Andrew (right) and Steve Robinson in yesterday's thrilling 1-0 win over title-chasing rivals Hull City

for Kevin Foley. The Eire U21 international in turn teed up Steve Robinson who beat a man before seeing his blast beaten away by Myhill's feet.

Showunmi, whose tireless display nearly made up for Howard's absence, had a decent run and shot late on in the half and was unfortunate not to get a penalty when he followed up the rebound before defender Leon Cort took him down.

Tigers' best, in fact only, effort came five minutes from the end of the half when rare hesitancy in the Luton defence allowed Stuart Green to sneak in a low drive that was turned around the post by the alert Beresford.

But that attack was a mere prelude to yet more Luton pressure. This was Hatters back to their early season best. Newell's men were determined to show the opposition exactly who deserve to be top of the league. Crisp passing movements, pinpoint crosses and calm defending - all Luton needed to do now was turn chances into goals.

In fairness to Hull, they came back into the game for parts of the second half. Substitute Delroy Facey gave Davies a few problems, although the young centre half must have impressed the watching Taylor who doubles up his Hull role with being coach of the England U21 team.

Hatters thought they had a clear penalty turned down on 75 minutes. A long boot from Beresford found Vine. With just Hull defender Ian Ashbee to beat Vine twisted and turned before falling under the Tigers captain's tackle inside the box.

As the clock ticked away it seemed Luton would not break the stubborn Hull rearguard.

But in the last minute 'The Croatian Sensation' struck the killer-blow. Robinson, out wide on the right, whipped in a cross and Brkovic ran in-between two defenders to power home his 12th goal of the season with a deadly header.

A sell-out Kenilworth Road crowd went into raptures, cheering their heroes off at the end to 'Stand up for the champions'.



## MATCH FACTS



Luton Town: Beresford; Neilson, Coyne, Davies, Davis; Foley, Nicholls, Robinson, Brkovic (O'Leary 90m); Showunmi (Andrew 78), Vine. Subs (not used) Seremet, Keane, Perrett.

Referee: Matt Messias (West Yorkshire)

GOALSCORERS:  
Luton: Brkovic (89)  
Hull: -

SHOTS ON TARGET  
Luton: 7  
Hull: 1

SHOTS OFF TARGET  
Luton: 6  
Hull: 3

CORNERS  
Luton: 7  
Hull: 5

OFFSIDE  
Luton: 4  
Hull: 6

BOOKINGS  
Luton: Davies (33), Vine (72), Davis (82)  
Hull: Ashbee (42)

ATTENDANCE: 9,500

## HATTERS STAR MAN: STEVE ROBINSON

Ulsterman dominated the midfield with a hard-working performance

