

Luton set for a party after Vine bears fruit

BRADFORD

0

LUTON

1

Vine (10)

By John Helm

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GOLFING great Gary Player once famously said the more he practised the luckier he seemed to get — and manager Mike Newell used the analogy to describe Luton's latest triumph in a highly-successful season.

This was their 13th successive league game without defeat, while Bradford have not won any of their last 10 home outings, equalling the worst sequence in the club's history, set in the 1963-4 season.

Yet the part luck plays was amply demonstrated as Rowan Vine's winning goal flew in off the inside of an upright, while Bradford's Steve Schumacher's low piledriver came back into play off a post.

Newell thought it was 'a poor match' but said: 'We are a good team, which is why we have won more matches than anyone else. We are happy with all of our players and maybe it's no coincidence that the harder they work the luckier they seem to get.'

Bradford counterpart Colin Todd felt his side paid the penalty for a sluggish start and their inability to create any tempo or purpose in the first half.

Luton might have been three goals up in the first 10 minutes as they tore the Bradford defence to ribbons from the kick-off. But the visitors' Croat midfielder Ahmet Brkovic angered the home fans when he tumbled over home keeper Paul Henderson to win a penalty.

Todd said: 'I have an honest goalkeeper and he wouldn't have reacted the way he did if he hadn't thought it was dubious.'

Henderson dashed furiously towards Brkovic as he picked himself up and referee Uriah Rennie's decision not to book the goalkeeper was perhaps significant, especially as he did show Brkovic and Bradford's Lewis Emanuel yellow cards for the scuffle that ensued.

Henderson kept out Kevin Nicholls' penalty kick with a breathtaking dive to his right and made an even better save to deny Vine shortly before the same player struck a decisive blow with his eighth goal of the campaign.

Steve Howard, back after suspension, could have added to his tally of 18, but Bradford's Dean Windass, who has also scored

Top of League One

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Luton	33	20	9	4	58	32	69
Hull	32	19	5	8	59	40	62
Tranmere	32	16	10	6	52	39	58
Sheff Wed	33	15	10	8	58	39	55
Hartlepool	31	17	4	10	53	42	55
Bournemouth	32	14	8	10	55	43	50
Brentford	30	15	5	10	36	38	50

18, had few opportunities. Todd's dilemma at Valley Parade is to find someone on the left of his side who can provide the same kind of consistent service as Nicky Summerbee is doing on the right. The former Sunderland winger sent over a stream of teasing crosses but there was rarely anyone to take advantage.

Emanuel and Owen Morrison had a fruitless time against a Luton defence in which Curtis Davies and



SITTING THIS ONE OUT: Rowan Vine scores for Luton and gets a helping hand from Kevin Nicholls and Steve Robinson

Picture: GORDON CLAYTON

Chris Coyne both had outstanding games.

Todd spoke of his side's apparent lack of belief at the start and questioned whether he had motivated them properly before the game.

But he was more pleased by their second-half spirit, which got the crowd behind them and probably deserved reward.

Newell, who 'didn't see' the penalty incident and didn't know why Brkovic had been booked, added: 'They hit the post but this is exactly the sort of thing that happens when one side is at the top of the table and the other one isn't.'

BRADFORD (4-4-2): Henderson; Atherton, Wetherall, Bower, Emanuel; Summerbee, Crooks, Schumacher, Morrison (Muirhead 75min); Cooke (Forrest 75), Windass. Subs (not used): Ricketts, Swift, Armstrong. Booked: Emanuel, Wetherall, Schumacher.

LUTON (4-4-2): Beresford; Neilson, Davies, Coyne, Davis, Foley, Robinson, Nicholls, Brkovic; Vine (Showunmi 72), Howard. Subs (not used): Seremet, Perrett, O'Leary, Holmes. Booked: Brkovic.

Referee: U Rennie (S Yorkshire).