



Bradford 0 Luton Town 1
TOM LEECH reports



MATCH FACTS

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

Referee: Uriah Rennie (south Yorkshire)

GOALSCORERS:

Bradford:
Luton: Vine 10

SHOTS ON TARGET

Bradford: 6
Luton: 3

SHOTS OFF TARGET

Bradford: 6
Luton: 3

CORNERS

Bradford: 2
Luton: 3

OFFSIDE

Bradford: 2
Luton: 5

BOOKINGS

Bradford: Emanuel 6, Schumacher 88
Luton: Brkovic 6

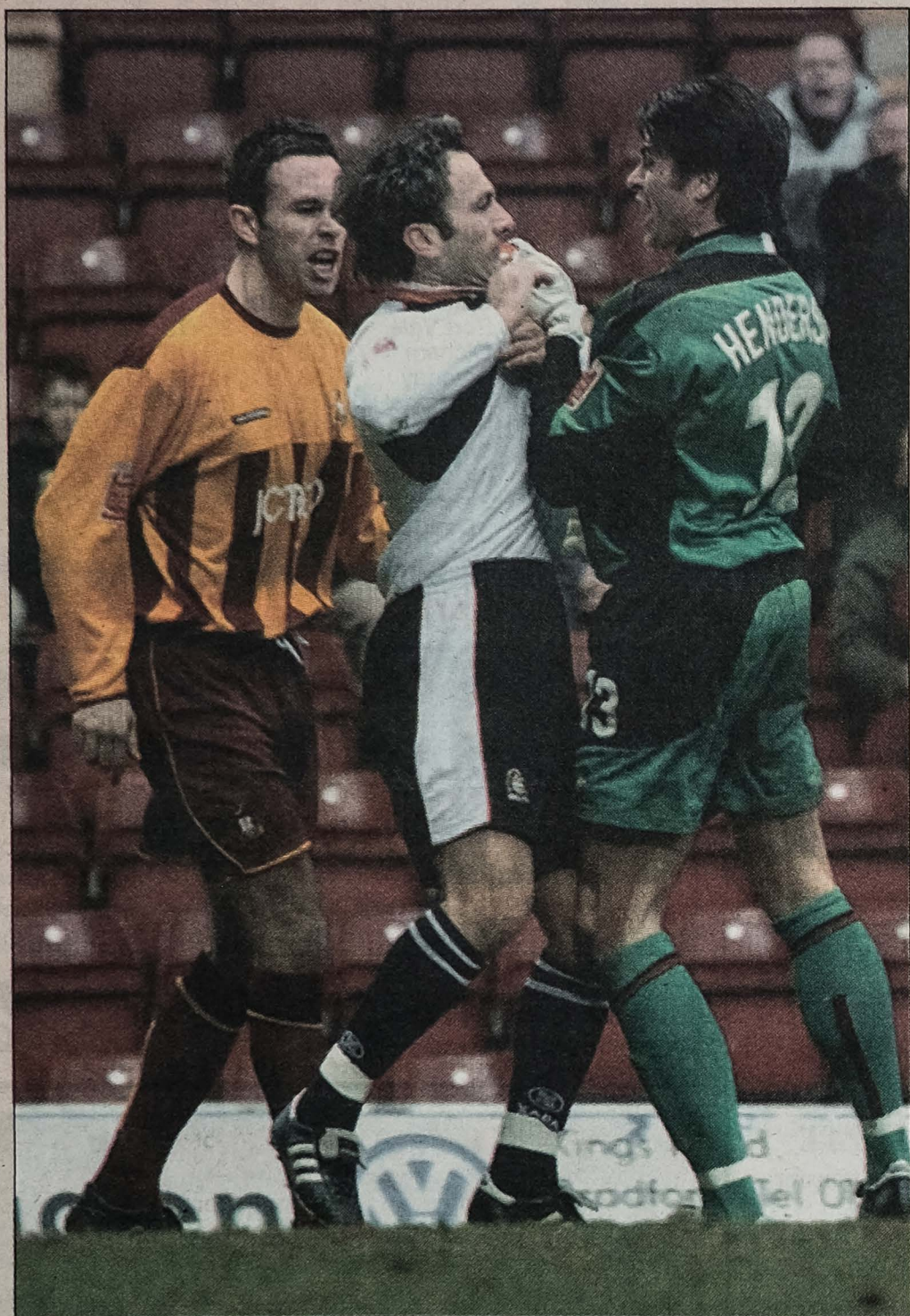
ATTENDANCE: 8,702

HATTERS STAR MAN: Marlon Beresford

Described as 'top class' by his manager after another solid display in goal

It's all just Vine for the Hatters

04/05



■ Brkovic gets sandwiched while, below, Vine tussles for the ball

NOT even 'Jake The Wonder Dog' could prevent Luton Town notching up their second impressive away win in a week.

Bradford City boss Colin Todd called on the services of the lucky mascot whose pre-match ball tricks had resulted in home wins for Reading, Swindon, Yeovil and Torquay to give a boost to his play-off chasing side.

But the 'best in show' title went to Hatters' goalkeeper Marlon Beresford who made some vital saves to keep a clean sheet and make sure that Rowan Vine's tenth minute goal was enough to sneak all three points.

Luton had to hold on at the end as Bradford piled on the pressure and manager Mike Newell said his side were fortunate to maintain their seven-point lead at the top of League One.

"We're pleased with the result but not with our performance," he said. "We looked a bit leggy today after playing at Hartlepool mid-week and rode our luck in the second half. But the harder you work – the luckier you get. It was a poor game – we didn't keep the ball as well as we can. You can't be on top of your game for 46 matches in a season, it's as simple as that."

"It's all about results now."

Newell also had words of praise for Vine who scored his eighth goal of the season. "It was a great strike from Rowan and I'm very pleased for him. He hasn't got as many goals as he or we would have liked, but his quality and his ability is there for all to see."

There was just one change to the side that won 3-2 at Victoria Park. Newell recalled Steve Howard back after suspension for Enoch Showunmi – "the hardest decision I've had to make all season" according to the Luton boss.

The 'lucky' Yorkshire Terrier gave the crowd a giggle with his ball-juggling antics and it seemed Jake's jinx was in full effect after just six minutes when the normally prolific Kevin Nicholls missed his first penalty of the season. The spot kick came about when a Bradford defender trod on the ball just outside the area and Vine took advantage of the slip

up by threading the ball through for Ahmet Brkovic. Last week's matchwinner against Hull rounded goalkeeper Paul Henderson who seemed to swipe the Croatian's feet. Premiership referee Uriah Rennie had no hesitation in pointing to the spot but first he had to deal with the after-effects of his decision.

Henderson leapt up and seemed to aim a punch at Brkovic claiming he'd dived. It sparked a 12-man brawl and remarkably Bantams' goalkeeper avoided a booking but Brkovic – the innocent party – didn't.

Up stepped Nicholls, who'd buried all four of his previous penalties this season to put Luton in the lead, but Henderson guessed correctly and pushed the Hatters' captain's low drive round the post.

It could have affected lesser players – but not Nicholls who dusted himself off to play a part in Luton's opener just four minutes later. He busted past three Bradford players in midfield before chipping the ball over City's backline for Vine to chase. The striker's snap-shot was well-saved again by Henderson who parried away for a corner.

Bantams only had themselves to blame as they failed to clear their lines from the set piece as Brkovic pounced on some hesitancy before passing to Chris Coyne, still up for the corner, who in turn fed Vine on the edge of the area. The striker, on loan from Portsmouth, took a touch before showing his class with a lethal finish that bounced in off Henderson's far post.

Hatters weren't having it all their own way however, with Bradford contributing a fair amount to an entertaining opening. Veteran defender David Wetherall had their best effort from a corner, but his free header lacked any real pace to trouble Marlon Beresford.

After all that action came the inevitable lull which lasted all the way to half time as neither side created another opening.

Bradford looked to have more urgency in their play after the teams came back out – clearly eager to get a first home win since October 23 last year. Owen Morrison and Andy Cooke all had efforts on target but both were thwarted by in-form Beresford in the Luton goal.

The game had swung in City's favour but despite having most of the possession could only come up with a couple of half-hearted penalty claims until Steven Schumacher's 88th-minute drive (almost a carbon copy of Vine's) cannoned off the post to safety.

