



Luton Town FC

Luton Town 4 Brentford 2
TOM LEECH reports from Kenilworth Road

04/05



**MATCH
FACTS**



Luton Town: Beresford; Foley, Coyne, Davies, Davis; Brkovic (Showunmi 84), Nicholls, Robinson, Underwood; Feeney (Vine 72), Howard. Subs (not used); Seremet, Perrett, Holmes.

Referee: Kevin Friend (Leicester)

GOALSCORERS:

Luton: Brkovic 5, Nicholls 83 (pen), Showunmi 90, Robinson 90
Brentford: Sodje 20, Burton 25

SHOTS ON TARGET

Luton: 10
Brentford: 3

SHOTS OFF TARGET

Luton: 9
Brentford: 3

CORNERS

Luton: 3
Brentford: 5

OFFSIDE

Luton: 4
Brentford: 2

BOOKINGS

Luton: Howard 8, Davis 50
Brentford: Pratley 11, Hutchinson 36, Frampton 38, Burton 43

ATTENDANCE: 9,313

**HATTERS STAR MAN:
KEVIN NICHOLLS**

Just as he has all season 'Super Kev' drove his side on with another inspiring performance in the Luton engine room



■ The lone Hatter Enoch Showunmi scores in the brilliant 4-2 win against Brentford

Champions put a sting in Bees' tail

The Champions of League One signed off at fortress Kenilworth Road in style with an amazing comeback against bogey side Brentford.

The Bees had stung Hatters twice this season – at Griffin Park and in the third round of the FA Cup – and came close to inflicting only Luton's third defeat at home when they led 2-1 with seven minutes to go.

But a Kevin Nicholls penalty and two late goals from Enoch Showunmi and Steve Robinson made it an impressive 17 wins and four draws at home for Mike Newell's men.

The three points from this tempestuous encounter keeps Hatters on course for their target of finishing the season with 100 points if they can beat Doncaster in next week's final game of an extraordinary season.

During the week Newell promised he would field his strongest side to be fair to Brentford's play off rivals and he was true to his word.

Back into the starting line-up came Paul Underwood and Steve Robinson and there was a first start for £150,000 deadline-day signing Warren Feeney in the place of Rowan Vine who was carrying a knock and dropped to the bench.

The champions got off to the best possible start when they went ahead after just five minutes.

The recalled Underwood did well to squeeze a cross into the box while surrounded by Brentford defenders at the byline.

Top-scorer Howard was the target but the striker seemed to be pushed as he jumped. Luton didn't complain for long however as the ball rolled into the path of Brkovic who slide volleyed it past Bees' goalkeeper Stuart Nelson and a despairing Sam Sodje on the line from ten yards.

Sodje got his and Brentford's revenge on 20 minutes when he grabbed the equaliser. Brentford's direct style of play was causing problems in the air.



■ Winning duo: Skipper Kevin Nicholls and manager Mike Newell proudly hold the trophy aloft to the Kenilworth Road faithful

Time and time again balls were hit high into Hatters' penalty area and this time it worked when Beresford was blocked as he came for a cross and Sodje looped in his far post header.

The Brentford curse seemed in full effect five minutes later when they went ahead through Deon Burton. Defender Michael Turner read Kevin Nicholls' pass to Robinson and intercepted before going on a run.

He got all the way to the edge of the box unchallenged before squaring it to former Premiership striker Burton who coolly slotted past Beresford.

It galvanised Luton who went into the break

unlucky to be behind after late chances from Howard and Robinson.

Howard's shot from a tight angle from Sol Davis' strong run went agonisingly wide and four minutes from time Robinson's long range volley was too hot for Nelson to hold and Feeney's quick follow up went straight across goal.

Brentford had the upright to thank just two minutes after the restart when Nicholls hit the post with a curling free kick from 25 yards out. Nelson was the Bees' saviour on 55 minutes although how much he knew about his block on the line is debatable.

Robinson fizzed a corner to the near post to

Coyne to flick on and Howard diverted it goalwards but it hit the Bees' keeper on the shins and was cleared to safety.

As the clock ticked away, further chances came Luton's way. Underwood had an overhead kick scrambled away on the line and this time from a Robinson free kick Howard hit the woodwork, this time with a bullet header.

Brentford, who were on the backfoot all second half very nearly stole a shock third when another Sodje headed effort was goalbound before Brkovic's timely intervention on the line kept Luton in the game on 75 minutes.

With time running out Newell threw on former Brentford striker Vine to unsettle a stubborn defence and on 83 minutes it did.

Tireless worker Howard won yet another header and played in Robinson who was unceremoniously bundled over on the penalty spot by Turner, handing Nicholls a chance to make amends. The skipper did just that, sending Nelson the wrong way from the penalty spot.

With the bit between their teeth, Hatters went all out for the winner which came in the last minute. Substitute Showunmi won a corner after his shot was deflected and the big forward finished the move when he connected with Robinson's setpiece from close range to score his seventh goal of the season.

There was still time for a glorious fourth, when Robinson despatched his first goal of 2005. Vine cut the ball back for the skilful Irish midfielder who precise sidefoot drive past a rooted Nelson put the cherry on Luton's championship cake.

At the final whistle there was ear-drum-bursting applause from the Kenilworth faithful who saluted their manager and later there was a celebration pitch invasion that former boss David Pleat would have been proud of.

For current manager Newell it was finally one over on an overly physical Brentford side who he was worried had a hoodoo over his side. Clearly not anymore.

Top of the league and having the last laugh.