

Newell left spitting mad

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By Ron Gubba

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LUTON'S hitherto splendid Championship campaign turned sour on Saturday when they suffered their first defeat of the season and found themselves involved in a spitting row after their striker Steve Howard was sent off by referee Andy D'Urso.

The incident appeared to blow up out of nothing in the 26th minute, when D'Urso – who sent Howard off the last time he refereed Luton in a match at Brentford last season – showed the red card, allegedly for spitting at Stoke defender Carl Hoefkens.

Luton manager Mike Newell was angry as he defended his player. "He's been sent off for spitting at their number two, who doesn't know anything about

it," he said. "He's been sent off for spitting, which he hasn't done and wouldn't do. I've asked him and I only have to look him in the eyes, I know my players and I know that they're honest and none of them is capable of spitting at an opponent."

Newell will appeal against the red card, but his case was undermined when Stoke manager Johan Boskamp later said that Hoefkens claimed he was spat at.

The drama spoiled what should have been another satisfactory afternoon for Newell's newly-promoted side.

Before Howard's departure they were much the better side, so much so that Dean Morgan had time to pick out his spot as he gave them the lead in the ninth minute.

It required a dreadful mistake by goalkeeper Marlon Beresford, who allowed Marlon Broomes's

long-range effort to squirm under his body, to bring Stoke level in the 63rd minute.

In the first minute of stoppage time, Dave Brammer completed Luton's misery with a 30-yard shot which Beresford had no hope of stopping.

"If you look at the 90 minutes, we were the better side, even with 10 men," Newell said. "We've come away from home and played decent football. We haven't sat back and tried to defend the lead, we've tried to increase it and in the end we've got done by a goal that was good enough to win any game."

Stoke City (4-4-2). Simonson; Halls, Duberry, Hoefkens, Broomes; Chadwick, Brammer, Henry, Kolar (Harper 60); Sidibe, Dyer. **Subs:** de Goey (g), Buxton, Gudjonsson, Taggart. **Goals:** Broomes (63), Brammer (90).

Luton Town (4-4-2). Beresford; Foley, Heikkinen, Davies, Underwood; Brkovic (Edwards 70), Nicholls, Robinson, Morgan (Davis h-t); Howard, Feeney (Showunmi 64). **Subs:** Perrett, Brill (g). **Goal:** Morgan (9). **Booked:** Heikkinen. **Sent off:** Howard. **Referee:** A D'Urso (Essex).