

## ANDY ROSE marks Jones' men out of 10

### NEIL ALEXANDER

INEXCUSABLE to be beaten at his near post for Luton's goal but made amends by preventing teammate McNaughton finding the wrong net and pulled off a hat-trick of superb late saves.

### KERREA GILBERT

SOLID in defence but unspectacular in attack. Tracked up and down the right flank but didn't see as much of the ball as he would have liked.

### DARREN PURSE (C)

AFTER taking plenty of flak for his midweek display wormed his way back into the fan's affections by scoring the opener and looking more like his usual solid self.

### GLENN LOOVENS

WAS partly at fault for Luton's goal having already narrowly missed at the opposite end moments earlier. Otherwise sound.

### KEVIN MCNAUGHTON

LIKE Loovens failed to halt Vine's run into the box which finished with a goal and nearly scored an own goal for the second game running.

### PAUL PARRY

SHOWED his teammates exactly how to do it by calmly slotting home his second goal of the season. Beat his man practically every time he got on the ball.

### RICARDO SCIMECA

DENIED a goal by the hand of Emanuel but turned in another commanding box-to-box display. Won't be long before he is on the scoresheet again

### STEPHEN MCPHAIL

WOULD have scored in the first half were it not for a weak finish and started the move which brought Cardiff their third. Quietly efficient throughout.

### JOE LEDLEY

FINISHED the game at left back and while he was sound in most things he did this was one of his quieter games this season.

### STEVE THOMPSON

LOOKS to be the perfect foil for Chopra and proved it again by setting up his strike partner's first goal. Worked tirelessly throughout.

### MICHAEL CHOPRA

ANOTHER all-action display from the Geordie striker who took his tally to five goals in three games in typical style.

### SUBSTITUTES

Kamara for McNaughton (76); Flood for Parry (83); Glombard for Thompson (88). Subs not used: Johnson, Campbell.

### LUTON

Beresford, Foley, Barnett, Heikkinen, Davis (Coyne 23), Edwards, Robinson (c), Langley, Emanuel, Parkin (Morgan 46), Vine. Subs not used: Brill, Brkovic, Feeney.

### SCORERS

CARDIFF: Purse (10), Parry (30), Chopra (58, 77)  
LUTON: Vine (45)

### BOOKINGS

CARDIFF: Purse (13)  
LUTON: Emanuel (sent off 9), Robinson (10), Vine (17), Edwards (44), Barnett (88)

### REFEREE/ATTENDANCE

Referee: Paul Melin (Surrey)  
Attendance: 14,108

### MAN-OF-THE-MATCH

#### MICHAEL CHOPRA (CARDIFF)

The Geordie hitman just cannot stop scoring right now and once again the £500,000 striker looked worth his weight in gold.



**SILK PURSE:** Cardiff captain Darren Purse celebrates scoring Cardiff's first goal from the penalty spot with Riccy Scimeca while (below) Chopra completes the rout

PICTURE: DARREN BRITTON/WALES NEWS



# WHAT A CHEERY CHOPPY

06/07

**MICHAEL CHOPRA** blasted Cardiff City back to the Championship summit with a second-half double that should send shivers down the spin of opposition defences.

Having bagged two goals in midweek and one last Saturday Chopra added two more classy finishes to his total yesterday to finally put a spirited 10-man Luton out of their misery.

With no defender currently able to blunt his threat the only thing that might stop him in his tracks is a fifth booking and the one game suspension that goes along with it.

Thankfully though, Chopra avoided it yesterday and is now free to try to continue his purple patch at Southend a week today.

***In this kind of form there are few strikers to match him in the Championship but just as pleasing as his goals is his all-round contribution and his flourishing partnership up front with Steve Thompson.***

Chopra compared it after-

**By ANDY ROSE**



wards to the former Manchester United deadly duo of Andy Cole and Dwight Yorke.

But while City's strikeforce may not quite be at that level there is little doubt that few Championship defenders will relish the daunting prospect of coming up against Chops and the Tomohawk.

City had gone into the break 2-1 up courtesy of a penalty from Darren Purse and a fabulous finish from Paul Parry.

But even though the visitors had been handicapped from the ninth minute by a red card for Lewis Emanuel it wasn't until Chopra hit the roof of the net in the 58th minute and scored again 13 minutes from time that the points finally looked safe.

At times Cardiff's approach play was almost as good as the finishing but Luton refused to lie down and had Neil Alexander not pulled off a hat-trick of late saves then the scoreline could have looked completely

different. Just like at Preston last Saturday the game was plunged into controversy with an early sending-off.

This time though it was Cardiff who were the beneficiaries when eagle-eyed linesman Malcolm West spotted Emanuel handling the ball on the goal-line from a corner to keep out Ricardo Scimeca's header.

Luton boss Mike Newell insisted the ball had hit him on the elbow after flicking off Sol Davis' head from point-blank range.

But whatever the rights and wrongs of the linesman's long-distance decision Emanuel was gone and Darren Purse snatched the chance to get back in the good books from the penalty spot after taking flak for his performance and own goal in the 3-3 midweek draw at Plymouth.

The sending-off failed to dent Luton's adventure and even though City were the better side for most the match they still knew they had been in a battle.

Stephen McPhail should have scored just before the half-hour

mark with only the goalkeeper to beat but poor finishing let him down as it did Chopra moments later.

But Parry, who was enjoying another magical afternoon on the left flank, showed them both how to do it with a masterful side-foot finish from Chopra's pass which was simply too good for Marlon Beresford to keep out.

City should have headed into the dressing room at the break with a two-goal lead, but some shoddy defending allowed Rowan Vine to stroll between Kevin McNaughton and Glenn Loovens before beating Alexander from a tight angle with the last act of the half.

The Bluebirds upped the pace after the restart hoping to take full advantage of a tiring Luton side but Newell's men were still well in the hunt right up until Chopra's first.

McPhail clipped a ball into the area where Thompson headed across goal for Chopra to ram into the stanchion. It was beautifully simple. And he wrapped things up just as stylishly with a neat volley from Malvin Kamara's cross to seal it.

## Jones: My striking ace is hot to trot

DAVE Jones last night hailed the brilliance of Michael Chopra after his two-goal salvo helped blast Cardiff City back to the top of the Championship.

"Chops is on fire at the moment and it just goes to show that if you give him the supply he will score the goals," said the Bluebirds boss after Chopra took his tally to five goals in the last eight

days. The only thing he will be upset about is that he could have had his hat-trick."

Jones admitted he was delighted at the manner in which his side had reacted after the double disappointment of being knocked off top spot last weekend and then turning a certain win into a draw at Plymouth in midweek by conceding three late goals.

"It was a good, solid performance and a good way to bounce back," said Jones.

"I told my players to stay big and stay brave. I knew this was going to be as difficult a game as the ones against Birmingham and West Brom because the expectation level has risen now and people just expect us to win at home now.

"We are there to be

shot at now. This club has always been the one chasing but it's a different scenario now. We have to keep working now and do the dirty work to stay up there."

The game swung on the ninth-minute sending off for Luton midfielder Lewis Emanuel for handball.

Hatters boss Mike Newell was outraged that a linesman stood 30

yards away made the controversial decision and moaned that the ball had struck him on the elbow from point blank range.

"It was physically impossible for him to have deliberately handled the ball in that situation and I'm amazed that the linesman gave it and could say it was deliberate from where he was," said Newell.