

THE CREAM OF THE CHOP

Mike fires Cardiff top and says: I'm in dreamland

Cardiff 4 Luton 1

MICHAEL CHOPRA has waited five years to be a hero – so it's easy to understand why the 22-year-old Geordie is relishing Cardiff's storming early-season form.

"I feel like I'm in dreamland," said Chopra as he struck twice in their rout of 10-man Luton to take the Welsh side back to the summit of the Championship.

It takes his tally to six so far – five in his last three games. That puts him level with former Cardiff favourite Robert Earnshaw at the top of the goal charts.

Rescued

And the kid who spent those years in the shadows at Newcastle, farmed on loan to Watford, Forest and Barnsley before Cardiff rescued him back in the summer, insists there's more to come – from him and from his new team.

"When I came here I said I would score 20 goals. People may have thought 'is he for real?' But I've got a lot of belief in my ability," said Chopra.

"If I get chances I know I can score goals. I've shown that in the last few games. I'm a bit disappointed I didn't get a hat-trick. I missed a couple of chances and I wanted to take our penalty but Darren Purse insisted he would take it. He's the captain – and he's bigger than me!"

But Chopra is convinced the goals will continue to flow for him and for his team, who have

already sent shockwaves through the division by surging ahead of more-fancied clubs.

"The players believe we can win this league," he said. "We've got some great players in this team and we are playing some great stuff. Why settle for the play-offs? Why not go all the way?"

Even Luton manager Mike Newell, furious after the sending-off of Lewis Emanuel after just eight minutes, admitted: "Cardiff are a lot better than they were last season. Their manager has brought in some

good players. They are playing well and I don't think they are in a false position."

But Newell was still dwelling on what might have been if his side had been able to face them with a full complement.

Emanuel was dismissed after handling a goal-bound header from Riccy Scimeca. But Newell stormed: "There was no way he could have handled the ball deliberately."

"It was deflected at him by Sol Davis who was just a yard away from him. No player in the

world has reactions as quick as that."

Purse slammed home the resultant penalty and Welsh international Paul Parry doubled Cardiff's lead on the half hour before the hard-working Rowan Vine pulled a goal back for Luton seconds before the break.

But then Chopra took centre stage to seal Cardiff's victory with spectacular goals after 58 and 77 minutes.



BLUE MURDER: Cardiff striker Michael Chopra runs away to salute the first of his two goals that saw off Luton



PURSE celebrates his opener