

Bell chimes in with winner

06/07

Luton3
Birmingham2

SUBSTITUTE David Bell's late header gave Luton a dramatic 3-2 win over high-flying Birmingham at Kenilworth Road.

The midfielder had hardly been on the field 10 minutes before he finished off a flowing move from the Hatters in the 81st minute.

Sol Davis charged down the right, crossed the ball to Carlos Edwards. He laid the ball off for Bell, who found the bottom corner with a 12-yard strike.

Neil Danns' spectacular strike seemed to have given Birmingham a share of the spoils but it was not to be enough.

The midfielder took the ball down on his chest before crashing a spectacular 12-yard yard volley in off the post after 66 minutes — his first goal for the Blues.

The goal cancelled out two goals in as many minutes from Rowan Vine after DJ Campbell had opened the scoring.

Steve Bruce's second-placed side dominated the early proceedings and they swiftly took a deserved 14th minute lead.

The former Brentford striker left the Luton defence for dead, racing onto Gary McSheffrey's chipped ball over the top before rifling a half-volley past Marlon Beresford from 18-yards for his fourth of the season.

But the lead was to last just 14 minutes when Mehdi Nafti was adjudged to have manhandled Lewis Emanuel inside the box.

Vine grabbed his sixth of the season, coolly slotting the ball into Maik Taylor's corner despite the Northern Ireland international diving the right way.

A minute later the game was turned on its head as Vine took advantage of some desperate defending from the Blues.

Again Emanuel was at the centre of things, sending in a dangerous inswinging corner from the right which led to an almighty scramble in the area.

Vine could not believe his luck as the Birmingham defence froze. The ball fell to his feet and he made no

mistake prodding the ball into the middle of the goal from 12-yards with a classic opportunist strike.

Former Bolton centre back Jaidi was a constant thorn in the Hatters side from set-pieces, and should have scored in the opening minute of the second half, rising highest to meet McSheffrey's corner to force a fantastic save from Beresford.

And the Blues should have grabbed a late equaliser when Stephen Kelly somehow failed to capitalise on an error by Beresford in a breathless end-to-end battle at Kenilworth Road.

Referee fails spot test

BIRMINGHAM boss Steve Bruce lamented the tale of two penalty decisions as the Blues fell to defeat at Luton.

He said: "When you see the one he turned down at the other end, you have to say the penalty was harsh."

"Decisions like that win football

matches. The referee got it totally wrong and it was a blatant mistake.

"We had two that were very similar which weren't given and Cameron Jerome's particularly was a stonewall penalty.

"For 25 minutes we were in front, the best team and looked a threat going forwards.

"But the referee evened it up and they went 2-1 up straight away and we were left scratching our heads.

"Again we scored goals away from home and should be closing out games, but there were positives to take from it."

On the penalty decision, Luton boss Mike Newell said: "I thought it was a little bit harsh and if ours was a penalty, then their one earlier on probably was as well.

"With the way they had started and with them being 1-0 up, I have to say I wasn't feeling too confident if I am honest.

"But we have got goals in us and we fancy our chances against anyone at home so I'm never too worried.

"It remains to be seen how far we can go, but we know we can compete with anyone on our day."