

Just Brilliant!

HATTERS 3 CHARLTON 1

Mark Wood
at Kenilworth Road

LUTON TOWN



Unused subs: Coyne, Andrew

CHARLTON



Unused subs: Weaver, Thomas

Referee: Andy D'Urso (Essex) Att: 4,534

STAR HATTER: Matthew Spring – energetic all-action display and a thumping header to boot.



crosses during the first half and forced six corners but rarely looked like scoring, and when McVeigh combined with Bell on 35 minutes the winger could only fire straight at



AERIAL ACTION: Paul Furlong challenges for the ball, above, and Steve Robinson turns away in delight after his sweetly-struck first half leveller

Pictures by Jane Russell

Randolph.

Todorov and McLeod were causing Luton plenty of problems and the Bulgarian international sent the pacy striker clear with four minutes of the half left, but McLeod fired wide with only Brill to beat.

But with two minutes of the half left Steve Robinson rocketed Luton level with a thunderous half-volley.

Bell's corner was cleared only as far as Robinson and the busy midfielder took a touch on the edge of the area before thumping his shot into the top left-hand corner.

Rejuvenated by the goal the Hatters got the second half off to a breathless start as they threatened to race away with the game.

Morgan could have given Luton the lead seconds after the restart but fluffed his first-time effort from Bell's corner.

Furlong then broke clear on 49 minutes and, having teased the defence,

he could only send a weak shot straight at the Charlton keeper.

Two minutes later Bell picked out McVeigh but the striker's long-range curler went just over.

Soon after Furlong's flick sent Bell through and when his shot was blocked Spring fired over.

McVeigh broke on 55 minutes and fed Bell, but Furlong was again inches away from converting his whipped cross.

McVeigh then did well to jink free on the left but his dinked cross was headed behind at the far post.

With 15 minutes left Randolph did well to palm away Morgan's excellent 25-yard freekick, and Spring was then inches away from winning it with two minutes left, his snapshot from the edge of the area fizzing wide.

At the other end Brill then produced a fingertip save to deny Ambrose to ensure the game would go into extra-time.

McLeod had a glorious chance when he turned inside of Perry on 96 minutes, but he curled his effort wastefully over the bar.

And only a brilliant point-blank save from Brill prevented Varney from giving Charlton the lead after McLeod had headed the ball down inside the area.

But Luton made no mistake seconds later when Spring ghosted in at the back post to power home Darren Currie's terrific deep cross.

Spring almost bagged a carbon copy of the goal in the 123rd minutes, but he couldn't direct his header from Ahmet Brkovic's cross.

With three minutes of extra time left Varney had the chance to level but headed straight at Brill and seconds later substitute Drew Talbot sealed victory.

Madjid Bougherra slipped on the edge of the area and Talbot nipped in before slotting the ball into the bottom corner.

A THUMPING Matthew Spring header and a predatory Drew Talbot strike gave Luton a fantastic extra-time victory in a pulsating night of cup football.

Earlier a Steve Robinson thunderbolt had tied the scores on the stroke of half-time, and a much-improved second-half performance and some crucial saves from keeper Dean Brill from the Hatters ensured the game went into added time.

Charlton, who famously came out on top of a pulsating encounter in the same competition back in 2003 which went to extra time and penalties, raced into an early lead but then spurned a string of chances to seal the game before the break.

Dean Morgan tried his luck for the home side as early as the third minute, but his long-range effort went well over the bar and seconds later the visitors were ahead.

All too easily Izale McLeod broke down the left and his deep cross found Svetoslav Todorov lurking at the far post. His header was turned home, under the nose of Brill, by Dean Sinclair.

The visitors had pace to burn going forward and the Addicks gave Luton's defence a torrid time throughout much of the first half, creating chance after chance.

It wasn't all one-way traffic, though – with eight minutes gone veteran striker Paul Furlong was just inches away from connecting with Paul McVeigh's teasing cross.

McVeigh and Furlong then combined again on the edge Charlton's area, but the former Norwich hitman fired wildly over.

Luton almost struck back on 24 minutes when Goodall's deep cross was headed back across goal by Bell but Furlong was caught on his heels and was left a yard short at the far post.

Charlton bossed most of the first half and Luton received another let off on 26 minutes when they could only partially clear their lines and Therry Racon crashed a 20-yard effort against the bar.

On the half-hour McLeod should have doubled Charlton's lead when Todorov through-ball sent the former MK Dons striker clean through but with only Brill to beat, he slid his effort wide of the far post.

Luton did muster some teasing