

Priceless success in the 'debt derby'

07/08

LUTON TOWN

1

Emanuel (50)

CHERRIES

4

Vokes (13), Kuffour (14, 84), Gradel (45)

CHERRIES cashed in to claim a potentially-priceless victory against relegation rivals Luton – in what was dubbed the League One debt derby.

Kevin Bond's men turned in a stirring first-half performance at Kenilworth Road, just two days after the stricken Dorset club had gone into administration.

The Hatters, who are also in administration, were sunk by two goals from Jo Kuffour and a Sam Vokes effort – and a stunning Maxi Gradel special.

And having plunged to the foot of the table after being docked 10 points on Thursday, victory saw Cherries immediately climb off the bottom.

Vokes and Kuffour laid the foundations for Cherries' fourth win in five when they both netted inside the opening 14 minutes.

And Gradel raised the roof in the Oak Stand where the visiting supporters were housed when he scored with a sumptuous volley on the stroke of half-time.

Coincidentally, Vokes, Kuffour and Gradel had all been among the scorers when Cherries' recent run started with an epic 4-3 victory over Luton at Dean Court last month.

Kuffour put the finishing touches to Cherries' first league double of the season when he grabbed his second seven minutes from time.

Boss Bond had the rare luxury of naming an unchanged starting line-up as Cherries looked to follow up their deserved 2-0 victory over Nottingham Forest last week.

Russ Perrett, who spent six years at Luton, was in the thick of the action at both ends on his first return to Kenilworth Road since his summer move to Dean Court.

Firstly, the big defender threw himself full length to block at the feet of David Bell after the Hatters midfielder had let fly from distance.

And then, Perrett was involved at the opposite end as he just failed to make contact from close range after Lee Bradbury had flicked Josh Gowling's pass into his path.

Luton were forced into an early reshuffle when defender Keith Keane was forced off after just 10 minutes following a challenge with Marvin Bartley.

And as the Hatters took time to



UPLIFTING EXPERIENCE: Jo Kuffour lifts the ball over Hatters keeper Dean Brill for Cherries' second

Neil PERRETT

REPORTS FROM KENILWORTH ROAD

re-adjust at the back, Cherries profited to open the scoring through Vokes.

The 18-year-old latched on to Danny Hollands's pass before rolling the ball into an unguarded net after he had coolly rounded Luton goalkeeper Dean Brill.

It got better for Cherries when they doubled their lead just a minute later, with Kuffour capitalising on some ponderous defending to make it 2-0.

The lively frontrunner reaped his rewards after chasing down what had appeared to be a lost cause as George Beavan looked certain to nod Hollands's clearance back to Brill.

However, after the Luton substitute had completely missed his header, Kuffour was on hand to nip in and tuck home his seventh goal of the season.

Dean Morgan could only manage to dispatch a polite lob into Stewart's arms after finding space on the edge of the box before Vokes went close to adding a third as he stretched to meet Gradel's cross.

Beavan atoned for his earlier error when his crucial last-ditch tackle denied Kuffour, the Cherries striker within range of being able to see the whites of

Brill's eyes.

Perrett again got in on the act inside enemy territory when he poked the ball past the post from close range after Gowling had flicked on Warren Cummings's free kick.

Stewart had his heart in his mouth as Morgan's 27th-minute header squirmed through his grasp, the Cherries goalkeeper recovering to save at the second attempt.

And as Luton began to exert some pressure in their bid to halve the deficit, Warren Cummings was forced to clear off the line from Bell.

But the hosts were rocked further on the stroke of half-time when Gradel's stunning 25-yarder capped a superb first-half display.

The tricky Ivorian seized on a poor defensive header before nonchalantly lacing a venomous right-foot volley into the roof of the net.

Gradel immediately made a beeline for the halfway line where he promptly blew kisses towards the Cherries board members in the directors' box and thumped the badge on his shirt.

And but for a fortunate deflec-

tion in first-half stoppage time that saw Hollands's piledriver flash just past the post, the Hatters would have found themselves even further adrift at the break.

However, the hosts were gifted a lifeline just five minutes after the restart when Lewis Emanuel reduced the arrears – in disastrous fashion for Cherries.

Stewart appeared to have the defender's speculative 30-yard blade-cutter covered, only to allow the ball to creep under him at the near post.

The Cherries goalkeeper partly redeemed himself just seconds later when he dived full length to his left to keep out Morgan's sweetly-struck free kick.

Cherries managed to take the sting out of the game for much of the second half, although they went close to extending their lead through Kuffour 10 minutes from time.

The striker, picked out by the impressive Gradel, unleashed a shot after turning smartly inside the 18-yard box, only to see his resultant effort rattle the crossbar.

However, Kuffour had the final say when he grabbed his second and Cherries' fourth, his persistence paying off in the 83rd minute.

Having seen his earlier shot hit the crossbar, Kuffour then managed to strike the post with another drive before following up to net the rebound and cap a memorable Cherries display.

CHERRIES manager Kevin Bond said: "It was a great win. It was an important win on an important day. It was difficult conditions on a bobbly pitch and, maybe to a degree, it was a game of mistakes and goals were going to be scored on mistakes. Fortunately it was our day. Our first two were really well taken goals and then Max Gradel hung one up when I was just about to moan at him for shooting from that range. That was a terrific goal. But it's never over as we found out to our cost when we played them recently when we were two up and got pegged back. We definitely weren't complacent, it was edgy when we gave one away early in the second half, but on reflection I don't think they really had many opportunities over the course of the game. And the longer the game went I think we began to look more likely to score again and we did."

QUOTE/UNQUOTE

CHERRIES: 4-4-2

STAR MAN.....9

Jo Kuffour



Gareth Stewart 6.5

Shaun Cooper 7

Russ Perrett 7

Josh Gowling 7

Warren Cummings 7

Max Gradel 8.5

Lee Bradbury 7

Marvin Bartley 7.5

Danny Hollands 8

Sam Vokes 8

COMPILED BY NEIL PERRETT

Cherries subs: Jason Pearce (for Cummings 45, 7), Joe Partington (for Bartley 90), Brett Pitman (for Gradel, 90).

Unused subs: Tessem, Pryce (g/k).

Booked: Spring.

Luton Town (4-4-2): Brill; Emanuel, Goodall, Keane (Beavan, 10), Davis; Currie (Andrew, h-t), Robinson (Talbot, 67), Spring, Bell; Morgan, Parkin.

Unused subs: O'Leary, Beresford (g/k).

Attendance: 5,897 (including 387 away supporters).

Mike Thorpe (Suffolk)

THE primary focus was on one of the assistant referees as Saturday's game got under way, with linesman Paul Barnes sporting a baseball cap to shield his eyes from the sun.

He looked more like a goalkeeper or golfer than a match official but it seemed to do the trick because the Cambridgeshire flagman hardly put a foot wrong.

As for the man in the middle, he looked in lenient mood for the opening 45 minutes, as a number of robust challenges went without caution.

But, as the game wore on, Thorpe's willingness to let the game go waned, with the official becoming increasingly picky in his decisions. However, he got all the key calls spot on and did not get in the way of what was an excellent spectacle.

HOW THEY RATED

REFEREE WATCH