



ON LEVEL TERMS: Sam Vokes strikes an 89th-minute equaliser for Cherries against Luton Town

Pictures by Mick Cunningham

Comeback kids lift gloom in late show

CHERRIES

4

Gradel (2), Kuffour (31), Vokes (89), Pitman (90)

LUTON TOWN

3

Spring (45, pen), Morgan (60), Furlong (78)

SUPERSUB Brett Pitman hauled Cherries off the foot of League One after grabbing a dramatic late winner to settle a pulsating seven-goal thriller last night.

Pitman came off the bench to head home Lee Bradbury's cross deep into stoppage-time to cap a remarkable Cherries victory.

Sam Vokes's exquisite late strike appeared to have rescued a point for Cherries after Paul Furlong had put the Hatters in front with 11 minutes remaining.

But Pitman popped up to put the finishing touches to an absorbing contest after Luton had hit back to cancel out Cherries' two-goal lead.

Kevin Bond's side were in the ascendancy thanks to Max Gradel's lightning strike after 57 seconds and Jo Kuffour's 31st-minute effort.

But after Matthew Spring's disputed penalty had reduced the arrears on the stroke of half-time,

Dean Morgan levelled for the visitors on the hour.

And although Furlong's goal edged the Hatters in front, Vokes's effort set up a grandstand finale before Pitman's winner raised the roof at Dean Court.

Rookie goalkeeper Ryan Pryce was drafted in for his full debut, with both Neil Moss and Gareth Stewart restricted to a watching brief due to injury.

Pryce, the club's 18-year-old youth team stopper, was one of two changes to the Cherries starting line-up following Saturday's crushing defeat by Southend.

Bradbury was recalled and came in on the right-hand side of midfield, with Kuffour pushed up front and Jo Tessem dropping down to the bench.

Cherries made a dream start when Gradel fired them ahead inside the opening minute, the Leicester loan star netting with his first touch.

The tricky Ivorian arrived unmarked at the far post to volley

Vokes's hanging cross into the top left-hand corner of Dean Brill's net.

Gradel's finely-taken sixth goal of the season owed much to the endeavour of Kuffour whose superb pass to Vokes started the move.

Pryce was afforded a reassuring early touch when Hatters striker Furlong rolled a tame effort straight into his hands from close range after five minutes.

And Cherries' enterprising start continued when Danny Hollands's 20-yard drive fizzed over the crossbar after Russ Perrett's centre had only been half cleared.

Pryce was again untroubled as Spring's long-range effort sailed over the top before Hatters old boy Perrett was booked for a foul on Drew Talbot.

Luton appealed in vain for a penalty after Darren Currie had gone to ground under Gradel's challenge before Cherries doubled their lead in the 31st minute.

With the impressive Vokes again providing the assist, Kuffour left former Liverpool star Don Hutchison for dead before racing clear from just inside the Luton half.

And although the lively Londoner still had plenty to do, he kept his composure before finishing coolly with a clipped right-foot effort past Brill.

Cherries were thankful to Pryce for preserving their two-goal lead, the teenager diving bravely at the feet of Talbot after the striker had burst through.

Despite playing second fiddle for much of the opening period, Luton were thrown a lifeline when the Hatters were awarded a controversial spot kick on the stroke of half-time.

Referee Steven Cook penalised Perrett for apparently tugging the shirt of Furlong as the two players challenged for Morgan's high cross.

And although the contentious decision angered the hosts, Spring showed Cherries no mercy as he confidently drilled the ball past Pryce from 12 yards.

At the start of the second half, Keith Keane saw yellow for a clumsy late challenge on Kuffour before Pryce got down well to smother Spring's side-footed shot from the edge of the box.

Neil



PERRETT

REPORTS FROM DEAN COURT

07/08