

Spillane pens happy ending

ON LOAN DEFENDER EARNS A POINT TO MAKE UP FOR THE ERROR THAT GIFTED TEN-MAN CITY THE LEAD

LUTON TOWN FC

LEAGUE TWO
BRADFORD CITY 1
Luton, 79
LUTON TOWN 1
Spillane, 86

TOM LEECH
at Valley Parade
www.bhammedia.co.uk

HATTERS defender Michael Spillane got himself and his team off the hook with a late header to earn a draw against ten-man Bradford.

Bantams' defender Paul Heckingbottom saw red midway through the second half but his side took the lead with 11 minutes left, when a defensive mishap let substitute Barry Conlon head into an empty net.

Spillane's botched clearance gifted Conlon the chance but the on-loan Norwich City player atoned for his mistake by heading in Luton's equaliser on 86 minutes.

After two disappointing away performances on the trot Luton had it all to prove against Stuart McCall's Bradford City.

One player particularly keen to impress was Bradford born and bred Lewis Emanuel who left his boyhood team to join the Hatters and received a mixed reaction from the Valley Parade crowd.

The Luton midfielder would have had an even hotter homecoming had he not wasted the best opening of the half 17 minutes in. A slick move down the left was actually started by Emanuel before a clever ball down the line from Sol Davis and a neat touch from Chris Martin put the former Bantam clear.

The goal opened up as Bradford desperately tracked back but with too many options on offer Emanuel overran it letting his old side off the hook.

Hatters were lining up 4-5-1 with Martin deployed as a lone striker and Asa Hall pushing forward from midfield. Hall took his new roving role to heart when he warmed the gloves of Bantams keeper Rhys Evans with a rasping drive and Martin almost caught Evans off his line with a long shot as the visitors did all the running.

In fact an assured defensive display from Mick Harford's men restricted Bradford to just one attempt on Conrad Logan's goal - and that shot from ex-Hatter Paul McLaren didn't come until the 64th minute.

The defence was forced into a reshuffle before the break when left back Davis limped off injured and was replaced by 17-year-old Jake Howells. The rookie had only ever tasted first team action once before - as a sub last season - but went on the wing as Emanuel dropped back.

Howells did get a go in his favoured position when Emanuel was replaced at half time by the forgotten man Paul McVeigh. The Ulsterman was making his first appearance of the cam-



ON THE ATTACK: Hatters striker Chris Martin tries to get the better of the City defence

paign and didn't have time to settle as the Bantams - and the north Yorkshire wind - took off.

They may have been shot-shy in the first half but a free kick moments after the restart from McLaren left much more of an impression. The set-piece was well worked and he let fly with a thunderbolt that Logan had to be at full stretch to tip over.

Hatters' on-loan Leicester keeper came to the rescue again on the hour mark when he got his fingers to Bradford skipper Graeme Lee's point blank header and again when he smothered Omar Daley's drive.

Bradford were on top until the 73rd minute when Heckingbottom swung the game back in Luton's favour with a shocking challenge on Martin that rightly earned him a second yellow. The referee allowed play to go on as Hatters were on the break but when Hall and McVeigh got in each other's way from a Rossi Jarvis pull back, the referee sent the Bradford defender off.

It should have put Luton in the driver's seat - instead a piece of car crash defending undid all their earlier good work as Bantams' substitute Conlon gave City the lead. A tute Conlon gave City a mix long ball into the box caused a mix up between Logan and Harry

Worley as the defender headed past his goalkeeper who had raced off his line to gather. Spillane was covering and got to the ball first but his slipped clearance only spun the ball onto the head of the lurking Conlon who nodded into an empty net.

With the crowd behind them it looked more likely ten-man Bradford would grab a second than Luton muster an equaliser

but four minutes from time Hatters were level.

The goal came from the energetic Ed Asafu-Adjaye who bombed down the right hand side and sent a swirling cross into the box. Bradford's defence remained firmly rooted as Spillane leapt up to power a header past Evans and redeem himself for his earlier mistake.

The stats

FOOTBALL LEAGUE TWO

Saturday	3	Bury	3
Aldershot	2	Accron St'ley	1
Barnet	1	Luton	1
Bradford	1	Macclesfield	0
Brentford	0	Lincoln City	2
Chester	0	Shrewsbury	1
Darlington	0	Gillingham	0
Exeter	2	Chesterfield	2
Morecambe	2	Notts County	2
Port Vale	0	Dag & Red	2
Rochdale	0	Bour'mouth	1
Wycombe	3	Grimsby	1
Rotherham	4		

THE SQUAD

Luton: Logan; Asafu-Adjaye, Spillane, Worley, Davis (Howells '37); Gnaka, Keane, Hall, Jarvis (Charles '83); Emanuel (McVeigh '45); Martin. Subs: Brill, Plummer.

LEAGUE TWO TABLE

TEAM	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
1 WYCOMBE	9	3	2	0	7	3	3	1	0	4	0	8	21
2 BURY	9	3	1	0	6	2	2	3	0	10	7	7	19
3 SHREWSBURY	9	4	0	0	14	0	1	3	1	5	5	14	18
4 BRENTFORD	9	2	0	8	2	2	1	1	2	1	7	18	18
5 DAG & RED	9	2	2	0	11	2	3	0	2	9	6	12	17
6 BRADFORD	9	3	1	1	10	6	2	0	2	6	5	16	16
7 EXETER	9	2	1	2	7	5	2	1	1	7	6	14	14
8 ALDERSHOT	9	2	0	11	8	1	0	3	6	0	14	-6	13
9 GILLINGHAM	9	0	1	5	1	1	1	1	2	8	5	6	12
10 DARLINGTON	9	2	1	6	5	1	1	2	0	5	6	12	12
11 NOTTS COUNTY	9	1	3	0	5	4	1	3	1	7	7	1	12
12 ROCHDALE	9	2	1	2	6	1	1	2	1	5	0	12	12
13 CHESTERFIELD	9	1	0	3	2	5	2	1	2	7	8	-10	10
14 LINCOLN CITY	9	1	2	1	5	5	1	1	3	4	6	-2	9
15 CHESTER	9	1	2	2	7	1	1	2	5	11	-4	9	9
16 MACCLESFIELD	9	1	0	3	3	12	2	0	3	5	8	-13	9
17 MORECAMBE	9	1	2	6	0	3	1	4	5	-3	8	-7	8
18 ACCRON ST	9	1	1	2	4	5	1	1	0	4	8	-5	7
19 PORT VALE	9	1	0	4	5	11	1	1	2	5	-6	7	7
20 BARNET	9	1	1	3	5	8	1	0	3	3	10	-10	7
21 GRIMSBY	9	0	1	3	1	5	0	2	3	3	13	-14	3
22 ROTHERHAM	9	0	1	0	11	4	1	2	1	4	3	8	1
23 BOURMOUTH	9	1	1	2	4	1	1	2	2	7	9	-2	8
24 LUTON	9	1	2	1	6	6	2	1	2	4	0	-18	8

Post match...

MICHAEL SPILLANE admitted his relief at seeing his 86th minute header hit the back of the net after an earlier slip up looked to have handed Bradford the victory.

"My heart went when I missed the ball - I don't know what I was thinking," he said.

"We all know we need results so we had to go for it at the end. I took it upon myself to go forward and it paid off. I don't remember much about the goal - just that I had to make amends.

"We'd all played our part and we deserved something from the game."

His manager Mick Harford echoed the same thoughts and said: "We're disappointed we didn't come away with the three points after being in control in the first half. When you're on top and you don't score you're always vulnerable.

"Then they score with a hopeful punt down the middle and it looks like a fantastic substitution from Stuart (McCall). It was blowing a gale out there and a mistake was made but we were punished for not scoring when we were on top in the game.

"It would have been criminal if we'd have not got something from today.

"We came here with just 14 pros and then Lewis (Emanuel) and Sol (Davis) have to come off injured. We've got an injury crisis at the moment.

"We showed character to pick the ball up, put it in the centre circle and start again. The goal was deserved and I've said to the players 'I'm proud of your performance.' To get a result here bodes well for the rest of the season."

MAN OF THE MATCH

MICHAEL SPILLANE
Defender went from zero to hero

MATCH FACTS

SHOTS ON TARGET
BRADFORD 8 LUTON 5
SHOTS OFF TARGET
BRADFORD 2 LUTON 6

BOOKINGS
BRADFORD: HECKINGBOTTOM, 14, COLBECK, 69
LUTON: MARTIN 45-5, GNAKA, 66, KEANE, 82

REFEREE: G Laws, Tyne and Wear

ATTENDANCE: 13,083