

McVeigh's spot on

by Carl Field

HATTERS twice hauled themselves back from behind to earn a draw after a thrilling encounter with Bournemouth at Kenilworth Road.

Paul McVeigh's late penalty saved Town from a devastating defeat but, in truth, they will see this as two points dropped against their relegation rivals.

The draw is likely to suit Jimmy Quinn's side more, as it now takes them to zero points, with Luton still lagging behind on minus 10.

There were five changes to the side who went down 3-1 at Southend United in the FA Cup on Saturday.

The most notable of which saw talismanic skipper Kevin Nicholls return to lead the side, while there were also starts for George Pilkington and Lewis Emanuel.

Young centre-half Michael Spillane (suspension) and the injured Ian Roper were out, while experienced left-back Sol Davis was missing altogether.

Luton began the game nervously and were guilty of a number of mistimed passes and failed to get any sort of rhythm going.

It was the visitors who had the better of the early exchanges and were being allowed far too much time and room on the ball, that allowed them to fashion a number of half chances.

But, on 18 minutes, the home side managed to take the lead in somewhat fortunate fashion against the pattern of play.

Kevin Gallen played the ball out to Emanuel on the left flank and the resultant cross into the six-yard box didn't appear to be causing too much danger, until defender Jason Pearce deflected it beyond his own keeper, and into the net via the left-hand post.

But that lead only lasted a little over a minute as Bournemouth got themselves back on level terms.

Mark Molesley got the better of Jake Howells on the right-hand edge of the penalty area and, after being allowed a free run on Conrad Logan, he fired the ball beyond the helpless Bournemouth keeper and into the net.

The home side were then handed another blow when Nicholls was forced off with a recurrence of his hamstring problem and was replaced by Rossi Jarvis.

On 26 minutes, Chris Martin headed wide from Paul McVeigh's



Picture by Jane Russell

CLOSE CONTROL: Hatters striker Kevin Gallen shields the ball from Bournemouth defender Scott Guyett

Luton Town 3 Bournemouth 3

cross while at the other end, Cheries skipper Shaun Cooper was just off target with a free-kick seven minutes later.

Bournemouth were by far the better side and they ended the half strongly and had a number of promising situations in and around the Luton penalty area, while Gallen's through ball almost set McVeigh clear on goal for the Hatters, but the pass just had a bit too much on it.

Town knew the importance of upping the ante after the break, although they re-appeared for the second half without one of their better first half performers in Emanuel, as striker Drew Talbot, who is also trying to regain full match fitness after injury, came on to replace him.

But, despite shooting out of the blocks, the hosts were dealt a cruel blow five minutes after the re-start when they fell behind.

Josh McQuoid led a breakaway move from midfield before slipping the ball into the feet of Molesley

and, after cutting inside Logan, he slid the ball in to an empty net for his second goal of the game.

Substitute Talbot almost gave Luton the perfect response a minute later, but his flick towards goal was hacked off the line.

But on 55 minutes they were level in spectacular fashion, as loan striker Gallen let fly with a free-kick pile driver from 25 yards that gave Shwan Jalal in the Bournemouth goal no chance, as the long-suffering home faithful started to believe again.

Luton, driven on by their rau-

STAR HATTER Kevin Gallen. Scored and won Town a penalty

LUTON TOWN



Unused subs: Brill, Beaven

BOURNMOUTH



Unused subs: Anderton, Pryce

Referee: Gavin Ward (Surrey)

Attendance: 6,773 (277 Bournemouth)

couis support, were now finally starting to take control of proceedings.

McVeigh's cheeky lob almost caught Jalal off his line, while just before the hour mark, Frenchman Claude Gnaka surged forward and, after his shot was only partly lally cleared, Gallen skied the resulting chance high and wide.

They continued to press, with Talbot's cross flashing across the face of goal on 71 minutes but, as they have done on so many occasions this season, Town shot themselves in the foot yet again five minutes later, as the visitors took the lead for a second time in the match.

All of Luton's hard work was undone when Matt Tudor was left completely unmarked inside the six-yard box and it came as no surprise when he got his head on the end of a cross from the right, diverting the ball across Logan and into the far corner.

Things were starting to get desperate for Mick Harford's men, but they were handed an unlikely lifeline on 83 minutes when Gallen was pulled down inside the box and from the resultant spot-kick, McVeigh buried the ball past Jalal to pull the Hatters level once again, as both sides had to make do with a point.