

Referee Kettle has Hall boiling over

WHAT MICK MADE OF IT



BOTH Luton Town manager Mick Harford and Bradford boss Stuart McCall were left seething at referee Trevor Kettle's whistle-happy performance during their sides' 3-3 draw at Kenilworth Road.

Luton Town 3 Bradford City 3

HERO and villain Asa Hall believes there is no way the Hatters should have been robbed of victory on Saturday by a Bradford City penalty in the 96th minute, writes Mark Wood.

Hall, 22, looked to have given Hatters victory with a sensational injury time header, only to be penalised with a bizarre penalty seconds later by referee Trevor Kettle, as tempers reached boiling point at Kenilworth Road.

Town had led 2-0 at the break through goals from Hall and home debutant Sunday Waisu, but the Bantams staged a terrific second-half fightback to claim a draw, in a game that was frantic and chaotic from start to finish.

And Hall admitted the roller-coaster ride of emotions he and his team-mates had endured was difficult to take.

He said: "To have gone up again in the 90th minute and have it taken away is devastating really.

"To go from the elation of scoring and the noise in the ground and for the ref to do something like that is unbelievable."

And he was adamant it was never a penalty, despite believing he was the man to have been penalised by Kettle.

Asked whether the penalty should have been given, he said: "No chance. There were quite a few bodies in there and the lad's gone down."

"I think the officials were poor today. We do think the officials aren't getting it right and decisions change games."

"We are feeling the pressure every week, but we are trying our hardest for the supporters."

But he did admit that Chris Martin deserved to be sent off for raising his hands in the ensuing melee that also saw Michael Spillane and Kevin Nicholls booked, while no Bradford City player was shown a card.

He said: "If he has put his hands up to his face then he does have to go and

it was bit heated in the tunnel."

And while Hall admitted that he thought Nicholls was going to go for goal when Town were awarded a late free-kick, he revealed he will always gamble on the opportunity to get a goal and admitted he has also targeted Martin's spot as the club's top scorer as he now stands on six goals in all competitions for the season.

He added: "I always gamble in case he doesn't shoot."

"It's my first double in the league which is nice. I would love to be top scorer, but I don't want to tell Chris Martin that."

Manager Mick Harford was also full of praise for the dangerous midfielder, adding: "Asa pops up and scores goals from all over the place. His main strength is popping up in danger areas and getting on the end of things."

And despite having to replace captain Keith Keane at centre-half with Ian Roper during the warm-up, because of a tweaked hamstring, the first half went on so well for clinical Luton.

It took the Hatters just five minutes to take the lead as replacement skipper Rossi Jarvis whipped in an excellent corner to the front post and Hall rose highest to glance his header home.

Bradford always looked dangerous in possession, but it was the Hatters who doubled their lead eight minutes before the break thanks to a lightning counter-attack and well-taken free-kick.

Jarvis fed Kevin Gallen, whose brilliant cross-field pass found the onrushing Henderson. He was brought down by Luke O'Brien, who received a yellow card for his troubles.

Jarvis launched a long free-kick into the box and Sunday Waisu, on his home debut, just beat Rhys Evans to the ball to prod home from midway inside the box.

Worse followed for the visitors



WATCHED KETTLE: The referee dropped some clangers in the game, both sides agreed

when boss Stuart McCall was dismissed by referee Kettle for encroaching on the pitch. McCall was further incensed when told he would have to walk round the pitch and clambered into an executive box as he made his disdain clear.

Both Peter Thorne and Nicky Law then went close for the visitors before the break as they continued to threaten what was to come.

City made a flying start to the second half and pulled a goal back with less than two minutes gone. A corner

to the far post was headed back across goal by Matthew Clarke and former Hatter Paul McLaren was on hand to stab home from just a few yards out.

And the Bantams were level on 66 minutes, although Roper did appear to be fouled in the build-up. Law managed to pull the ball back to Dean Furman, who did well to create room on the edge of the area, before thrashing home into the bottom left-hand corner.

Omar Daley and Thorne threatened for the visitors, before Waisu and Martin both had glorious chances to restore Luton's lead on 71 minutes.

First Gallen did brilliantly to poke the ball on to Waisu who raced through but, with just Evans to beat, the big striker could only shoot tamely at the keeper. Martin was quickly on to the rebound, but his low curling shot whizzed just wide of the right-hand upright.

Bradford, though, continued to press, with both Furman and Steve Jones sending sizzling efforts just over, substitute Barry Conlon twice heading wide and Jones honestly tried a clumsy Roper tackle in the box.

Town thought they had snatched victory in injury time when Nicholls swung a free-kick to the far post and Hall was on hand to gleefully head home his second goal of the afternoon.

Yet there was time for more drama as in the dying seconds, erratic referee Kettle took centre stage. A flick on by Conlon ran into the box and amid a melee of players he saw fit to give a penalty.

Hall was singled out by the official and, as both sets of players squared up, Spillane and Nicholls were booked and Martin shown a straight red card, while no City players were penalised.

Kettle's decision capped a bizarre day's work from the official and Conlon made no mistake as he rolled home the penalty in the sixth minute of stoppage time.

In positive territory at long last – the 2008/09 season so far...

AUG	Opponents	Score	Scorers	Att	Pos
Sat 9	PORT VALE	1-3	Parkin 35	7,149	24
Tue 12	PLYMOUTH (LGCP)	2-0	Jarvis 15, Plummer 77	2,682	24
Sat 16	Gillingham	1-0	Parkin 3	5,339	24
Sat 23	NOTTS COUNTY	1-1	Martin 49	6,085	24
Tue 26	Reading (LGCP)	1-6	Charles 81	7,498	-
Sat 30	Exeter City	1-0	Parkin 47	5,328	24
SEP					
Sat 6	Macclesfield	1-2	Charles 90	2,349	24
Sat 13	ALDRINGHAM	3-1	Spillane 17, Hall 89, Martin 90	6,462	24
Sat 20	Rotherham	0-1	-	4,095	24
Sat 27	CHESTER CITY	1-1	Hall 41	5,731	24
OCT					
Sat 4	Bradford City	1-1	Spillane 86	13,083	24
Tues 7	BRENTFORD (JP2)	2-2	Martin 39, 55 (won 4-3 on pens)	2,029	-
Sat 11	DARLINGTON	1-2	Gnakpa 31	5,560	24
Sat 18	ACCRINGTON	1-2	Hall 34	5,492	24
Tue 21	Grimsby Town	2-2	Craddock 24, 90	4,021	24
Sat 25	Bury	2-1	Craddock 35, Roper 44	3,052	24
Tues 28	BOURNEMOUTH		ABANDONED DUE TO SNOW		24
NOV					
Sat 1	Shrewsbury	0-3	-	6,188	24
Tue 4	Walsall (JP3)	1-0	Jarvis 90	1,844	-
Sat 8	ALTRINCHAM (FA1)	0-0	-	3,200	-
Sat 15	DAGENHAM & RED	2-1	Davis 6, McVeigh 41	5,402	24
Tue 19	Altrincham (FA1R)	0-0	(Luton won 4-2 on penalties)	2,397	-
Sat 22	Rochdale	0-2	-	2,901	24
Tue 25	BRENTFORD	0-1	-	5,248	24
Sat 29	Southend (FA2)	1-3	Spillane 80	4,111	-
DEC					
Tues 2	BOURNEMOUTH	3-3	OG 18, Gallen 56, McVeigh 83	6,773	24
Sat 6	BARNET	3-1	McVeigh 11, Martin 15, OG 88	5,536	24
Sat 13	Wycombe	0-0	-	5,567	24
Tue 16	COLCHESTER (JP4)	1-0	Gnakpa 30	2,638	-

DEC	Opponents	Score	Scorers	Att	Pos
Sat 20	MORECAMBE	1-1	Spillane 51	5,664	24
Fri 26	Chesterfield	2-2	Craddock 56, Roper 90	4,243	24
Sun 28	LINCOLN CITY	3-2	Martin 31, 33, Roper 50	6,643	24
JAN					
Tue 13	Chester City	2-2	Martin 22, Emanuel 27	1,652	24
Sat 17	Darlington	5-1	Martin 30	3,319	24
Tue 20	Brighton (JPSF1)	0-0	-	6,127	-
Sat 24	BRADFORD CITY	3-3	Hall 5, 90, Waisu 37	6,053	24
Tue 27	Bournemouth	1-1	Hollands og 11	5,230	24
Sat 31	BURY				
FEB					
Tue 3	GRIMSBY TOWN				
Sat 7	Accrington				
Sat 14	Dagenham & Red				
Tue 17	BRIGHTON (JPSF2)				
Sat 21	SHREWSBURY				
Sat 28	Port Vale				
MAR					
Tue 3	GILLINGHAM				
Sat 7	EXETER CITY				
Tue 10	Notts County				
Sat 14	Aldershot Town				
Sat 21	MACCLESFIELD				
Sat 28	Morecambe				
Tue 31	ROTHERHAM				
APR					
Sat 4	WYCOMBE				
Sat 11	Lincoln City				
Mon 13	CHESTERFIELD				
Sat 18	Barnet				
Sat 25	ROCHDALE				
MAY					
Sat 2	Brentford				

It was a fair tackle and a clean tackle.

"We were the best team in the first half, Bradford were the better team in the second half. We hung in there and battled away and scrapped and, in all fairness to the players, they showed a lot of commitment.

"Second half we were too deep, but kept fighting and kept scrapping and got what I thought to be a deserved winner."

And on their odds of staying up, he added: "It's got to be a monumental effort."

McCall, dismissed for 'encroaching on the pitch', before settling himself up in an executive box by the dugout, said: "I've never been as high, low, high, low, high in 90 minutes of football. Both teams went for it."

"From our point of view the only negative is we've conceded three set-pieces. On the spin we've come back from 2-0 down.

"Had we lost to that [Asa Hall's] goal it would have been a big blow."

"I've seen Luton four times this season and every game they've deserved to win and they play good attacking football."