

Nutmegging Martin Shrimp-ly too good

Morecambe 1 Luton Town 2

TOP Town striker Chris Martin helped keep the Hatters' slim League Two survival hopes alive by squeezing an equaliser through Morecambe keeper Barry Roche's legs on Saturday, writes Mark Wood.

The goal took him to 11 for the season and moved him one strike clear of Luton's other hotshots, Asa Hall and Tom Craddock who both have 10.

Hall had earlier seen a header harshly ruled out for a push, after Stewart Drummond had given the Shrimps the lead, but Kevin Gallen's strike midway through the second half gave Town three thoroughly deserved points as they made it a hat-trick of straight wins.

Martin, 20 said: "We went a goal behind, but I thought the guys battled very well. We played some good football and I think I think we could have got more than two.

"We had a shaky start and they went a goal in front and after that I thought we dominated the game.

"I thought Kevin Gallen did very well battling against their two big centre-halves."

And he admitted he could hardly miss for his goal, after a great cross from captain Kevin Nicholls had picked him out in the six-yard box.

He said: "Nico put a great ball in and from three yards out I couldn't really miss.

"I didn't really think of anything else other than heading it and I've dived really low. I wasn't going to do anything else other than head it."

And he admitted the prospect of Wembley, the competition for places and the top scorer spot are all helping to spur the players on.

He said: "There's a lot of options, not just up front, with plenty of competition all over the pitch.

"Obviously it's pushing players on. It's good to have that competition between goalscorers and that the



DANGER MEN: Striker Chris Martin goes close, right, and Tom Craddock terrorises the Shrimps' defence, above

three of us are fairly close and hopefully we can push each other on to score more goals."

Hatters fans flocked to the seaside to pay tribute to the statue of former Town director and local lad Eric Morecambe, and the funnyman must have been left with a smile on his face as the Hatters claimed three invaluable points in their battle against relegation.

Wayne Curtis flashed wide early on for the hosts, but a bobby Christie Park pitch was not conducive to good football.

Roche then parried a fierce Tom Craddock effort before the Shrimps snatched the lead in simple fashion on 21 minutes.

Michael Twiss whipped in a decent free-kick to the far post and Drummond rose highest to thump home his header from close range.

The Hatters looked to have got themselves right back into the game three minutes later when Hall got on the end of Nicholls' great cross but his goal was harshly ruled out by the referee for a push on a defender.

Town continued to push and they

got a deserved equaliser two minutes before the break when Martin's header squeezed between Roche's legs.

Martin then almost repeated the trick in first half injury time when he squeezed a shot between Roche's feet, but this time the ball rolled agonisingly along the line and the hosts were able to clear their lines.

He said: "When I saw it just sneak through the legs I thought it was really in, but it ran on the line and their guy just managed to clear it."

A fantastic counter-attack by the Hatters should have given them the lead just four minutes into the second half. Brill's great long throw released Craddock on the right, who beat his man and surged into the box.

The former Middlesbrough man then beat three defenders before forcing a brilliant full-stretch stop from Roche, with the ball destined for the bottom left-hand corner.

Martin then seemed certain to score at the far post with the goal

beckoning, but Hunter flung himself in the way to turn the ball behind.

Craddock headed Lewis Emanuel's cross wide on 55 minutes, as Morecambe's goal continued to live a charmed life under wave after wave of Town attacks.

And Luton's constant pressure finally told on 59 minutes. Craddock did brilliantly to reach a cross field pass and loop a first-time ball into the box from the by-line.

Hall competed bravely in the box and his header dropped to an off-side looking Gallen, who somehow toe-ended the ball past the stranded Roche from close range.

Garry Hunter warmed Brill's gloves with a blistering strike. Curtis and Mark Duffy were just off target with some thunderous efforts, and Rene Howe blasted straight at Brill as the Hatters began to rock.

Brill then produced a great low stop to deny Twiss before Craddock took control at the other end as Town expertly shut the Shrimps out.

WHAT MICK MADE OF IT



UPBEAT Hatters boss Mick Harford challenged his in-form side to go unbeaten until the end of the season after seeing them romp to their third-straight victory.

Harford believes that his side will stay up if they manage to match his challenge, regardless of the results of the sides above them.

He said: "There's nothing we can do about Grimsby."

And the delighted Town manager hailed his side's great win against high-flying Morecambe.

He said: "It was nice to get three points and nice to come back from a goal down, it showed the character and spirit within the squad. I thought we thoroughly deserved the three points."

"It was a good all round performance from start to finish. There was a bit of a blip with a set piece goal, but we bounced back from that. We limited them to very little and overall, I thought it was a deserved win."

"I thought we played some good football and thoroughly deserved the win. It was a tough game to win and thanks to the fans who turned out in their numbers. Everyone at the club can take a pat on the back for getting a deserved victory."

Town's travelling army of supporters numbered 666 in a crowd of just 2,599, but Luton's stars turned in some great individual performances, with captain Kevin Nicholls, new loan midfielder David Livermore and Asa Hall dominating the middle of the park.

Harford said: "I think between them they controlled the game."

"I think Kevin Gallen came back in and looked OK and epitomised the team. I thought he was fantastic, his hold up play, his link up play and his awareness."

Town even had a goal ruled out, a decision Harford thought was harsh. He added: "Asa went up and scored what I thought was a genuine goal, but it was ruled out for a push."

Wembley tickets are under control

HATTERS: Ticket distribution for Town's Johnstone's Paint Trophy final against Scunthorpe United on Sunday is under control according to director Stephen Browne.

Speaking on Monday, he said: "All orders received here before Friday close of business have been dispatched."

"The only ones we have are the internet orders placed on Sunday and today."

"There are some single tickets left at the moment, but that's it."

Can they escape relegation? – 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	-
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)	1-5	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	ALDERSHOT TN	3-1	Spillane 17, Hall 89, Martin 90	4,462	24
Sat 20	Rotherham	0-1		4,005	24
Sat 27	CHESTER CITY	1-1	Hall 41	5,731	24
OCT					
Sat 4	Bradford City	1-1	Spillane 86	13,083	24
Tue 7	BRENTFORD (JP2)	2-2	Martin 39, 55 (won 4-3 on pens)	2,029	24
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
Tue 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	-
Tue 25	BRENTFORD	0-1		5,248	24
Sat 29	Southend (FA2)	1-3	Spillane 80	4,111	-
DEC					
Tue 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	-
Sat 20	MORECAMBE	1-1	Spillane 51	5,664	24

STAR HATTER Kevin Nicholls. Captain almost back to his best.

DEC	Opponents	Score	Scorers	Att	Pos
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	1-5	Martin 30	3,319	24
Tue 20	Brighton (JP5F1)	0-0		6,127	-
Sat 24	BRADFORD CITY	3-3	Hall 5, 90, Wasie 37	6,053	24
Tue 27	Bournemouth	1-1	Hollands og 11	5,230	24
Sat 31	BURY	1-2	Hall 36	5,545	24
FEB					
Sat 14	Dagenham & Red	1-2	Henderson 58	2,310	24
Tue 17	BRIGHTON (JP5F2)	1-1	Craddock 2 (won 4-3 on pens)	8,711	-
Sat 21	SHREWSBURY	3-1	Craddock 15, Parkin 35, Hall 73	5,661	24
Sat 28	Port Vale	0-0		1,033	24
MAR					
Tue 3	GILLINGHAM	0-0		5,739	24
Sat 7	EXETER CITY	1-2	Craddock 39	6,460	24
Tue 10	Notts County	2-0	Martin 25, Craddock 45	2,886	24
Sat 14	Aldershot Town	1-2	Craddock 35	3,098	24
Tue 17	GRIMSBY TOWN	2-1	Bower 45+2, Hall 89	5,830	24
Sat 21	MACCLESFIELD	1-0	Craddock 69	5,363	24
Sat 28	Morecambe	2-1	Martin 43, Gallen 59	2,599	24
APR					
Sun 5	SCUNTHORPE (JP final)				
Sat 11	Lincoln City				
Mon 13	CHESTERFIELD				
Sat 18	WYCOMBE				
Tue 21	ROCHDALE				
Sat 25	Brentford				
MAY					
Sat 2	Brentford				