

Pair pledge their futures to Town

LUTON TOWN 1
Craddock, 33 (pen)

ROCHDALE 1
Rundle, 56

League Two
Kenilworth Road

BY TOM LEECH

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IAN Henderson and Jake Howells confirmed their desire to stay at Luton Town and get the club out of the Blue Square Premier at the first attempt after Kenilworth Road signed off from 89 years in the Football League.

Youngster Howells earned himself the man of the match award but couldn't prevent Rochdale spoiling the day with an inspired double substitution which secured the Lancashire side a play-off place.

However, the 18-year-old, who also won Young Player of the Year at Luton's Supporters' Club awards on Sunday, hopes to be a major part of manager Mick Harford's future plans.

The left back said: "He's [Harford] trying to get me some experience so I can play next season and hopefully get us back into the league.

"I played 90 minutes in the reserves on Thursday, did well and the gaffer said to me 'you're going to get a chance' so I thought I'd give it my all for the fans as well as myself. When I got on that's what I did."

Howells also reiterated the Hatters won't go out of the league with a whimper when they face League Two champions away at Brentford on Saturday.

"I think everyone wants to play games, do as well as they can for the team and go from there. Every game we try and win and we'll be doing the same against Brentford.

"It's for the fans really. They're the ones who turn up and pay their money so we've got to play well for them.

"We need to show them we are going



ON TARGET:
Michael Spillane
shoots for the
Hatters

to come straight back up next season."

Apprentice Howells who joined the Hatters from school is expected to sign professional forms in time for the trip to Griffin Park.

"It's been a long wait," he said. "I've played over 30 games now so it means a lot to finally get it. I've got a meeting

so we'll sort it all out then. Get it all done and dusted."

Winger Henderson, who joined Luton from Northampton at the start of the year, insisted he was going nowhere and thanked the fans for their unwavering dedication despite the Hatters' 30-point handicap that ultimately relegated them.

"You saw from the fans' reactions at the end, standing there clapping us off, singing Luton songs it's amazing," said the 24-year-old.

"When you've got fans like that it's a great feeling to have, cheering you on week-in, week-out. Especially when you consider what happened at the beginning of the season.

"The manager has spoken to the players, the board of directors have told us what they want to do next season and we all want to bounce straight back up.

"I'm not sure about contracts at this stage but obviously you want to keep hold of your best players. I want to stay."

One of those stars is Tom Craddock who could attract attention from other clubs in the summer.

The striker, who signed from Middlesbrough, opened the scoring against Rochdale with a penalty – his 12th of the season – after Chris Martin was pushed in the box. But the story of Luton's season was encapsulated in 90 minutes as the home side battered their opponents in the first half but only had the spot kick to show for it. They were then left to rue their wastefulness when Dale equalised.

Manager Keith Hill brought on substitutes Joe Thompson and Adam Rundle after the break and the pair combined to pull Dale level on 56 minutes. Thompson's cross found the winger who controlled the ball and buried it underneath Dean Brill from six yards out.

With the home fans in a boisterous mood, at one point even starting a 'conga' across the back of the main stand, there were several pleas over the public speaker system for no-one to invade the pitch at the final whistle as the players applauded them.

Hopefully in 12 months' time on the back of a Conference-winning season they'll have reason to.



FAREWELL FOR NOW: A
grateful team applaud
their brilliant fans as
they leave the field