



TOWN TOWN 2
Hatch 28, Craddock 65

EBBSFLEET UTD 3
Vieira 42, 45+1, Ashikodi 87



DAISH JOINTLY BRAVE FLEET SHOW

JOB DONE: Ebbsfleet players celebrate victory



THE NEW STAR MATCH

LIAM DAISH called it "one of the biggest results in little old Ebbsfleet's history", as a

Magno Vieira double and a winner from Moses Ashikodi consigned sorry Luton to their fourth home defeat of the season.

The Fleet boss' counterpart, Richard Money, declared he had "never been more disappointed, angry and embarrassed" in his entire career.

Such are the highs and lows of football. As one team continues its rise from the depths – United climbed out of the relegation zone with a sixth win in ten games – it was another dark day in the Hatters' first season in the Blue Square Premier. It might not be their last.

The now familiar boot rung around Kenilworth Road as the pre-season title favourites wasted the chance to jump back into the play-off places, with AFC Wimbledon in cup action and Kettering's game postponed.

After three straight wins, Luton had the ideal opportunity to remind the top sides they were still a force. Not on this showing-out-played, out-fought and out-thought by a team built on what is probably less than a quarter of the budget.

"The clubs who have played in the FA Trophy will be laughing their socks off," admitted Money after his side threw away an undeserved lead given them by Liam Hatch, then collapsed within two minutes of Tom Craddock's leveller for 2-2.

"When the third goal went in and what a load of rubbish started ringing from the terraces, I

By Stuart Hammonds

was leading them," Money added. "Normally I'm very positive and will always try to defend the players, but that performance was unforgivable."

It was only the quality goal-keeping of Kevin Pilkington that prevented the Fleet racing into a two-goal lead.

First the on-loan stopper raced out to deny Ricky Shakes in the eighth minute, saving his thigh in the process. In the four minutes he tried to carry on, he tipped Peter Holmes' drive onto a post before being replaced by Shane Gorn.

Ashikodi and Holmes, again, went close before Hatch – making his first start after a second ankle operation this season – netted his first Luton goal just before the half-hour. Matthew Barnes-Homer fluffed a great chance to make it two, and the Hatters paid when Vieira struck his 11th and 12th goals of the season in the three minutes leading up to half-time.

Craddock laboured into the stanchion from close range in the 69th minute, but the visitors regained the lead they thoroughly deserved when Darius Charles nodded down for Ashikodi to hammer home his second goal in three games.

Ebbsfleet may have had to rely on a very late offside flag when Hatch headed in on 74 minutes, and two stunning saves from Lance Cronin to deny the Peterborough loanee and George Pilkington, but they had earned their points.

"I'm delighted with the result and how we've played to get it – everyone played their part, worked extremely hard and I thought we deserved it," said Daish, whose side moved into 18th place. "We moved out of the relegation zone last week with the win over Forest Green, though not for long because they won in midweek. But we've turned things around again today. It's a big win for us."



SWEPPING TOM: Tom Craddock scores Luton's second goal

PICTURES: Gareth Owen

WHO WOULD HAVE BELIEVED IT? NOT ME...

THE VERDICT

GO ON, hands up. When Ebbsfleet's budget was cut to just £5,000 a week last summer, with MyFC.com subscriptions not being renewed, who gave them a chance of survival?

I didn't, and, if he's honest, neither did their manager Liam Daish, pictured. A few internet donations and the sale of Michael Gash might have raised it to just over £8,000, but that's nowhere near a competitive figure for the BSP. What a go Daish and his team are having, though. Back-to-back wins, coming from behind both times, have taken the Fleet into safe waters.

With Magno Vieira – a striker more used to promotion chasing than this – and

Cambridge – bang in form and Moses Ashikodi turning in disciplined forward displays, they have every chance of staying there.

And let's not forget the England C goalkeeper Lance Cronin – superb here – and a ball-playing midfielder in Alex Stavrou who overshadowed Luton captain Kevin Nichols. It's easy to focus on how bad Luton were. They barely strung two

together, and when they did, they went backwards. Ebbsfleet are "starting to believe", said their manager. They deserve all the credit.

