

All too easy as City are brushed aside

Luton Town 4 (2)
Salisbury City 0 (0)

by Mark Wood

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HOT Hatters continued their rich vein of form by destroying Salisbury City at Kenilworth Road last night.

Town dominated from start to finish and could have even had more against their extremely average visitors as they made it seven straight wins and 18 goals in their last three games.

In-form Claude Gnaka got the Hatters up and running with his sixth goal in three appearances and top scorer Tom Craddock made it two with his 18th of the season before the break.

The impressive Jake Howells got a deserved third in the second half while the industrious Simon Heslop got his first goal for the club as Town cemented second place in the Blue Square Premier.

Needing to win, Luton started well, but were almost caught out in just the fourth minute.

Chris Flood made a fine break on the left and slid in a dangerous cross. George Pilkington's mis-kick confounded Mark Tyler, but Freddie Murray was in the right place to clear off the line with danger man Matt Tubbs lurking.

Town continued to do most of the running and almost found a way through on 10 minutes when neither Craddock nor Howells were able to turn home Kevin Gallen's cross after a neat swivel.

And Craddock was left with his hands on his head when he missed a gilt-edged opportunity to break the deadlock midway through the half.

Keith Keane's inswinging corner picked out Town's top scorer at the near post, but Craddock could only power his header just

wide from only a few yards out.

The Whites had their first real sight of goal on the half-hour mark when Chris Shepherd found room on the edge of the box, but he fired right at Tyler.

A clever pass by Howells released Craddock on 34 minutes, who slipped past his man, but he shot straight at Ryan Pryce.

But the Salisbury stopper, playing only his second ever game, was beaten seconds later by Gnaka.

Pilkington lofted in a great ball from the back and the Frenchman darted in front of his man to loop his header over Pryce and in off the under side of the bar.

And Town should have made it two just a couple of minutes later when Howells launched in a great ball but Craddock's header squirted inches over.

Controversy reigned with five minutes of the half left when the Hatters were denied a sure-fire penalty.

After great work by Heslop on the edge of the box, the ball fell to Howells as he burst into the area and went down under the challenge of Chris Giles. Unbelievably, referee R Merchant deemed Howells to have dived and booked him despite the mass protests.

A lovely ball sent Gnaka clean through on 41 minutes, but his cheeky chip was easily picked off by Pryce.

Great work by Gnaka and Craddock created a glorious chance moments later, but Gallen was just unable to turn the ball home.

But a deserved second did arrive



Picture by Joanna Cross

BACK OF THE NET: Jake Howells nets Luton's third against Salisbury

moments later. Murray fired in across the face of goal and Craddock was on hand to slide the ball home in off the post.

The Hatters started the second half well and only a great stop by Pryce prevented Town scoring a third six minutes in.

A short corner was lofted into the box by Ed Asafu-Adjaye and Gnaka rose highest to head goalwards, only for Pryce to pull off a great one-handed stop.

Town's third did arrive three minutes later, though. Keane's excellent crossfield pass found

the onrushing Craddock, who just beat Pryce to the ball before laying the ball back to Howells to fire past the exposed Salisbury stopper.

A marauding run by Gnaka created a good chance for Gallen, but he could only hook just wide before Merchant turned down another penalty appeal when Howells' cross came off Giles' arm.

Town continued to press and number four duly arrived with 16 minutes left.

Asafu-Adjaye's pass released Craddock, who skipped past Pryce on the edge of the area before roll-

Hatters: Mark Tyler, Ed Asafu-Adjaye, Shane Blackett, George Pilkington, Fred Murray, Claude Gnaka (Craig Nelthorpe 80), Keith Keane, Jake Howells (Adam Newton 75), Simon Heslop, Tom Craddock, Kevin Gallen (Liam Hatch 76).

Substitutes not used: Matthew Barnes-Homer, Asa Hall.

Salisbury: Ryan Pryce, Sean Clohesy, Luke Ruddick, Darrell Clarke (C), Matt Tubbs (Daniel Webb 76), Chris Shepherd, Ben Adelsbury, Reece Connolly, Chris Flood (Jake Reid 63), Chris Giles, Aaron Martin.

Substitutes not used: Stuart Anderson, Tommy Widdington.

Referee: R Merchant

Assistant Referees: J Mayhew and S Brown.

Fourth Official: R Hodges.

Booked: Jake Howells 41.

Attendance: 6,692 (Salisbury 45).

Star Hatter: George Pilkington.

Solid as a rock and fantastic distribution.

ing in a lovely cross for Gallen. The veteran's top-poke was gone, wide but Heslop careered in to head home.

Not done yet, the Hatters should have made it five three minutes later. Craddock's weaving run took him wide and he stood up a lovely cross for Liam Hatch, but the substitute could only head straight at Pryce with Gnaka heading the follow up just over.

A lovely burst down the left by substitute Craig Nelthorpe created another chance with two minutes to go. Hatch's knock down released Craddock who skipped past his man but he could not hammer into the side netting.