

09/10
(20)



YORK CITY 1
Brodie 90

LUTON TOWN 0



FOYLE'S WAR HAS A LONG WAY TO GO

LAST-GASP: Richard Brodie celebrates after scoring York's all-important first-leg goal



THE NLP STAR MATCH

YORK CITY manager
Martin Foyle insisted life side would not be shouting from the rooftops after taking a first-leg advantage against play-off favourites Luton Town.

Richard Brodie grabbed his 37th goal of the season in the 90th minute of a close-fought Bootham Crescent clash to secure victory. It was Luton's first defeat in 15 matches but Foyle is keeping his players grounded ahead of tomorrow's semi-final second leg at Kenilworth Road.

"We have told the players it's only half-time and that we are nowhere near yet," the York boss said. "We won't be shouting from the rooftops or getting excited but I'm delighted to have kept a clean sheet against a very good side and to be going there with a lead."

With both league encounters between the two teams ending in draws, the same outcome looked likely until Brodie's late strike.

The former Newcastle Benfield Bay Plastics forward was sent clear when a long ball skidded off the top of Hatters' centre-back Shane Blackett's head.

Brodie showed immaculate composure, drilling a low shot past Mark Tyler.

Luton had created the first half with home keeper Michael Ingham making a smart double save to deny veteran striker Kevin Gallen.

Right-winger Claude Gnaka also hit the post following good work by Jake Howells.

An overrapping Tom Craddock then drove wide of the near post when teed up by Frenchman Gnaka just before

By John Hunter

half-time. York's goal attempts were restricted to a couple of long-range efforts by Len Mackinnon that failed to trouble Tyler.

The former Peterborough keeper produced a good save to keep out Luke Graham's header from a Chris Carruthers cross early in the second half.

Gnaka then lifted a great chance over the bar from six yards with his weaker left foot while Carruthers was equally wasteful, blasting wide after being picked out by Ben Purkiss.

As the match seemed destined for stalemate, Brodie provided an emphatic finish to a tense night, prompting Foyle to beam: "Goalscorers like him are worth their weight in gold."

Hatters boss Richard Money complained about an Adam Smith challenge on Freddie Murray he felt should have received greater punishment than a yellow card on 80 minutes.

But he remained upbeat despite the first-leg deficit, saying: "Brodie's had one kick and scored and Shane Blackett's made one mistake and it's cost him. But if we play as well as that on Monday, we'll be happy. If the game had finished 0-0 it would have been one of the best 0-0s I've ever seen."

"Both teams shrugged it out and it was a fantastic advert for the Blue Square Premier."

"York will fill their end at Kenilworth Road now, so the second leg's going to be a full house. We're looking forward to it and the 56's well in the balance. I want 8,500 Luton supporters to say how well we played."

Only one side that has finished the regular season as runners-up have gone on to secure promotion since the play-offs were introduced to the top tier of Non-League football in 2003 but Money is hoping his team can beat York and emulate Hereford United's 2005-06 side by triumphing in the May 16 final.



ON THE SLIDE: Luton Town's Shane Blackett tackles Alex Lawless of York City

PICTURES: Action Images

UNDERDOGS YORK PUT THE BITE ON LUTON

THE VERDICT

YORK CITY went into this game as play-off underdogs but few Luton Town fans will be underestimating their visitors to Kenilworth Road tomorrow.

The Minstermen's back four displayed a resilience in Thursday night's first leg that could prove difficult to overcome and, with the prolific Richard Brodie and powerful Michael Rankine up front, Luton will be wary of getting caught on the counter attack.

Midfielder Keith Keane, pictured, was at the hub of most of the Hatters' good work and York will need to stop him pulling the strings in front of his own fans if they are to hold on to their slender advantage.



The semi-final is finely poised although it will be interesting to see what kind of psychological impact Brodie's late goal has on the Blue Square Premier's runners-up.

Thursday's defeat was Luton's first since the end of February and York go to Bedfordshire knowing they are yet to be beaten by their hosts in three encounters this season. An early goal for the visitors in the second leg would leave Luton, who have only scored once in four-and-a-half hours against York, feeling the pressure.