

# Frustrating draw as Town pay the penalty

Luton Town 1 (1)  
Newport County 1 (1)

A MISSED penalty from Matthew Barnes-Homer saw 10-man Luton Town drop their first points of the season against Newport County last night.

Town's leading scorer stepped up after substitute Danny Crow had been felled by Danny Rose, but his weak effort was easily saved by Glyn Thompson, diving to his right, on a frustrating night for the home faithful.

Their evening was made even worse when Keith Keane was sent off in the closing stages after picking up two second-half bookings.

But despite those setbacks a point was still good enough to move the Hatters clear at the top of the Blue Square Bet Premier table following AFC Wimbledon's 1-0 defeat at Rushden & Diamonds.

Manager Richard Money: "He was brave enough to step up.

"He scored two at Kettering last week and that makes a ratio of two out of three, which isn't too bad.

"It was a fantastic game of football, throughout the second half we knocked on the door but couldn't get the winner."

On Keane's sending off, he added: "I'm disappointed with our player, a man of his quality and his experience should not be putting himself in that position, so I'm disappointed with him."

Luton made just the one change for the match, with veteran striker Kevin Gallen back in, and Crow dropping to the bench.

The visitors, backed by a superb away following, showed a willingness to attack in the early stages, but too often persisted with some blatant time-wasting tactics, which were never cut out on the night by the officials.

After early shots for an Exiles

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penalty, when Craig Reid tangled with Zdenek Krocak, Barnes-Homer almost broke through, but Chris Todd produced an expert sliding challenge.

French winger Claude Gnabka was a constant threat in the opening minutes, but County looked to attack too, and the pint-sized Kerry Morgan was denied by Mark Tyler, who was preferred to Kevin Pilkington in goal for the second game running.

County keeper Thompson showed his agility to deny both Barnes-Homer and Gallen, while Barnes-Homer was also wasteful after some delightful build-up work with Andy Drury.

The visitors looked dangerous on their forays forward too though as Charlie Henry's deft lob was acrobatically plucked out of the sky by the back-peddaling Tyler.

They served further intent in a five-minute spell which eventually saw Dean Holdsworth's side take the lead.

First Reid's shot was cleared by Keane, before Freddie Murray, on his 50th appearance for the Hatters, blocked Rose's blockbuster.

However, there was no stopping Henry's fierce drive from arrowing into the bottom corner on 26 minutes.

The midfielder then sprinted the entire length of the Kenilworth Road turf to celebrate with the massed ranks of away supporters, but their joy was short-lived as the Hatters quickly hit back.

A corner on the right found its way to Kroca and he forced the ball over the line before mimicking Henry's celebration in front of the home supporters.



Picture by Jane Russell

**Hatters:** Mark Tyler, Dan Gleeson, Freddie Murray, Keith Keane, George Pilkington, Matthew Barnes-Homer (Tom Craddock 79), Andy Drury, Zdenek Kroca, Pavel Besta, Claude Gnabka (Jake Howells 56), Kevin Gallen (Danny Crow 64).

**Substitutes not used:** Adam Newton, Kevin Pilkington.

**Exiles:** Glyn Thompson, Paul Bignot, Jamie Collins, Gary Warren, Chris Todd, Danny Rose, Craig Reid (Scott Rogers 90), Charlie Henry (Darrell Knights 79), Eddie Odhiambo, Robbie Matthews, Kerry Morgan (Sam Fole 70).

**Substitutes not used:** Oliver Thorne, Glyn Garner.

**Referee:** C Berry.

**Assistant referees:** G Connolly and D Richardson.

**Fourth official:** A Degnarain.

**Bookings:** Henry 62, Keane 67, Craddock 83, Keane 89.

**Sent off:** Keane 89.

**Star Hatter:** Zdenek Kroca. Great defensively and grabbed the equaliser.

**Attendance:** 6,945 (423 away).

**BECOMING A HABIT:** Zdenek Kroca wheels away to celebrate his equaliser – his second goal in a row at Kenilworth Road – and enjoys the moment in front of the home fans

Barnes-Homer should have added to his five goals shortly before the break after Gnabka won a towering header and Gallen smartly played him in, but Thompson was out in a flash to block at his feet.

The striker's off-night continued as he couldn't make a proper connection with Gallen's flick-on and the chance went begging.

After the break, Luton were ultimately frustrated for long periods, with County looking to waste every second they could.

Finally, the referee's patience snapped as Henry was booked for kicking the ball away, but Luton never got into fifth gear in the second half as they only threatened sporadically.

Drury's swerving shot was well palmed aside by the impressive Thompson, and Newport almost snatched it late on, when Gary Warren's close-range header went just the wrong side of the post.

Keane was then sent off at the death as Town had to be content with a point despite five minutes of injury time being added.