

Thrills and spills as Hatters victorious

Blue Square Premier
Luton Town 2 (0)
Mansfield Town 0 (0)

KENILWORTH Road was treated to an evening of high drama and action aplenty as 10-man Mansfield were well beaten 2-0 by the Hatters last night.

Luton continued to miss from the spot three times while visiting captain Stephen Foster and manager David Holdsworth were both dismissed on the stroke of half time by referee S Cook before Town finally put the Stags to the sword in the second half.

Having earlier missed from the spot, Danny Crow broke the deadlock with his first goal for the club before Amari Morgan-Smith doubled Town's lead on his debut soon after to seal victory.

It was a quite amazing game with how Luton didn't win by more being the biggest mystery of them all.

Adventurous manager Richard Money named a massively attacking line-up, handing a surprising debut to free agent Morgan-Smith, signed earlier the same day.

Hatters made three changes to the side that lost 1-0 at Gateshead with Jake Howells and Crow coming into the starting XI and Adam Newton, Taiwo Atieno and Shane Blackett dropped to the bench.

Both sides made a slow opening, with Morgan-Smith showing some early tenacity and the referee handing out two unnecessary bookings to Kevin Sandwith and Keith Keane, which was a sign of things to come.

Another foul by Sandwith on Claude Gnaka could easily have drawn a second yellow before the Frenchman wasted a glorious chance on 14 minutes.

by Mark Wood

01582 798517 mark.wood@jpress.co.uk

Matthew Barnes-Homer fed Crow, whose sublime pass left Gnaka one on one with the keeper. The Frenchman's first effort was straight at Alan Marriott and he could only slide the rebound agonisingly wide of the far post.

Crow dawdled too long on 20 minutes before the ex-Cambridge man went close again six minutes later.

Gnaka beat his man but Crow could only bundle his near post cross just wide of the upright.

The Stags finally crafted their first chance on 28 minutes as an unmarked Chris Smith headed well wide.

Diminutive striker Crow was causing all kinds of problems and, while his opportunistic effort from the halfway line was easily saved, Rob Duffy had to be alert to head his overhead kick over the bar.

The half ended in dramatic fashion as Town twice wasted the chance to take the lead from the spot.

A Keane free-kick picked out Zdenek Krocna in the box and his firm header smacked Gary Mills on the arm, and the referee awarded a penalty.

Gnaka fought off his teammates to take the spot kick but his effort was saved by Marriott who flung himself to his left to save.

However, drama reigned as the official ordered the kick to be re-taken because of encroachment and booked Mansfield captain Foster for his protests.

This time Crow stepped up to the mark and stroked a tame effort towards the same spot, but



NIGHT OF HIGH DRAMA: Mansfield protest but referee S Cook awards Luton another a penalty on an amazing evening at Kenilworth Road

Marriott again got down to save.

Barnes-Homer raced to reach the rebound and, as his cross was blocked behind for a corner, a mass melee broke out amongst the players near the corner flag.

It took several minutes to calm the situation before Foster was given his marching orders for a second booking while Barnes-Homer was also shown yellow.

The referee then marched to the sidelines and ordered Stags boss on Holdsworth out of the dugout.

The second half started in farcical circumstances as the Hatters again missed from the spot after Gnaka was felled by Sandwith in the box after just 13 seconds.

The third penalty taker of the night, Barnes-Homer, stepped up and proceeded to blast his effort woefully over.

The Hatters finally took the lead on 51 minutes when Keane and Howells worked a clever short corner and Howells' teed up Crow up to slam home.

Town's second soon followed three minutes later as Marriott's punch reached Morgan-Smith on the edge of the box and his first-time strike whizzed into the bottom right-hand corner.

Mansfield were then denied a certain penalty on 57 minutes when substitute Luke Medley tumbled under Gleeson's challenge,

Hatters: Mark Tyler, Dan Gleeson, Freddie Murray, Keith Keane, George Pilkington, Amari Morgan-Smith (Adam Newton 81), Matthew Barnes-Homer (Adam Murray 71), Zdenek Krocna, Jake Howells, Claude Gnaka, Danny Crow (Taiwo Atieno 85).

Substitutes not used: Shane Blackett, Kevin Pilkington.

Stags: Alan Marriott, Gary Silk, Kevin Sandwith, Gary Mills, Stephen Foster, Chris Smith, Rob Duffy (Luke Medley 52), Kyle Nix, Adam Smith (Tom Naylor 46), Steven Istead (Louis Briscoe 69), Paul Connor.

Substitutes not used: Paul Stonehouse, Neil Collett.

Booked: Sandwith 6; Keane 8; Istead 43; Foster 45; Foster 45+3; C. Smith 53; Medley 57; Mills 62; Silk 87.

Sent off: Foster 45+3; Holdsworth 45+4.

Referee: S Cook.
Assistant Referees: J Mellor, M Tweed.

Fourth Official: B Furneaux.
Attendance: 6,024 (Mansfield 303).

Star Hatter: Danny Crow. Missed a penalty but a real menace in the hole.

but the referee saw it differently, and booked Medley for diving.

A flowing Luton move saw Morgan-Smith curl straight at Marriott on the hour before Kenilworth Road erupted with more controversy seconds later.

An offside Morgan-Smith beat Mills by the corner flag but the Stags midfielder followed through with an horrendous lunge, yet somehow escaped with a yellow.

Gleeson fired a chance over on 68 minutes while Marriott turned a Crow rocket over the bar.

Town took their foot off the pedal as Paul Connor somehow missed but Luton were comfortable winners.