

match summary:

Luton Town 3 Rushden & Diamonds 0

Rushden & Diamonds were convincingly beaten by Luton Town in their first game of 2011. A Matthew Barnes-Homer header after 44 minutes gave the hosts the lead at the interval. He then added his second after 51 minutes, and Claude Gnackpa completed the scoring after 76 minutes.



An impeccably observed minute's silence before the game paid tribute to Dale Roberts and ex-Luton skipper Terry Branstoun.

The hosts had the better of the first quarter of the game, although the Diamonds perhaps came the closest to scoring in the first ten minutes when a powerful shot from Alan Power was beaten away by Tyler. After 11 minutes it looked as if the home side had taken the lead when Andy Drury waltzed past several Diamonds midfielders and defenders before laying a ball to Claude Gnackpa on the left edge of the Diamonds area. Gnackpa's well hit curling shot would have given Day no chance to save, but the linesman's flag came to the Diamonds rescue.

Day was called upon to make saves from Crow, Gnackpa and Morgan-Smith. Both Jamie Stuart and Shane Huke were having busy afternoons with both men making excellent last ditch tackles to stop runs from the impressive Drury and Barnes-Homer.

After weathering the initial storm the Diamonds had begun to compete with their opponents on something like level terms. Just as the game entered the final minute before half-time a well crafted move by the Hatters gave them the lead. A neat ball from Danny Crow out to the right wing allowed Claude Gnackpa to find space and hit a cross towards the penalty spot, from where Matthew Barnes-Homer directed a header that curled inside the right hand post.

There was still time for the Diamonds to almost snatch an immediate equaliser, as Ryan Charles made a break down the right, and his low cross was almost scrambled home by Aaron O'Connor.

Half-Time: Luton Town 1 Rushden & Diamonds 0

Four minutes into the half Matthew Barnes-Homer should have doubled his tally when he was set clear by Gnackpa, but he blazed over with only Day to beat. Sam Smith had a chance to open the Diamonds account a minute later when his 25-yard shot narrowly missed the angle of post and bar. However, after 51 minutes the hosts doubled their lead as Matthew Barnes-Homer broke down the left and this time he made no mistake when he fired home a low shot into the far corner of the net.

Minutes later the Diamonds might have got back into the game when Danny Crow fouled Alan Power about 30 yards from goal. The Diamonds midfielder had been given dead-ball kick responsibility all afternoon, and he hit a free kick that saw Jamie Stuart and Aaron O'Connor burst past the Hatters' defence to be clear on the edge of the six-yard box. There was a suggestion the two players got into each other's way, but it was O'Connor that headed over. At the other end the impressive Dan Gleeson made a powerful run out of defence before hitting a powerful shot into the side netting.



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The Diamonds gave a league debut to 18-year old Aaron King after 75 minutes but the young midfielder had hardly set foot on the pitch before the hosts sealed the game with their third goal. This time it was Claude Gnackpa who turned and hit a left-foot shot into left side of goal.

Alan Power and Aaron O'Connor had both worked tirelessly all afternoon, and the Diamonds midfielder went close with a well hit shot after 85 minutes, and then an effort from Jamie Stuart was cleared off the line, but at the other end Day had to make further good saves from Keane and Barnes-Homer.

Full-Time: Luton Town 3 Rushden & Diamonds 0

Luton Town: Mark Tyler, Dan Gleeson, George Pilkington, Zdenek Kroca, Jake Howells, Claude Gnackpa (Alex Lawless 90+1), Keith Keane, Andy Drury, Amari Morgan-Smith (Godfrey Poku 90+2), Matthew Barnes-Homer, Danny Crow (Jason Walker 89).
Subs Not Used: Craig Hinton, Ed Asafu-Adjaye.

Rushden & Diamonds: Joe Day, Justin Miller, Curtis Osano, Shane Huke (Michael Corcoran 60), Jamie Stuart (Capt), Matt Johnson (Aaron King 75), Alan Power, Sam Smith (Rene Howe 58), Ryan Charles, Michael Gash, Aaron O'Connor.



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