

Town's sweet revenge as York are thrashed

Luton Town 5 (4) York City 0 (0)

LUTON Town gained sweet, sweet revenge by blitzing a ragged nine-man York City 5-0 on Tuesday night.

It was the Minstermen who knocked Hatters out of the Conference play-offs last season and the build-up to the game had seen both sides lock horns over the gate receipts from the fixture.

Add to that, Town hadn't beaten York in four league encounters, not scoring in over four hours of football and it was with a fair amount of trepidation the home side entered the game.

That all changed though once City keeper Michael Ingham was sent off after just 15 minutes and Hatters made them pay severely with goals from Andy Drury, Claude Gnaka, new signing Lloyd Owusu, Zdenek Kroca and Taiwo Atieno.

Boss Richard Money made two changes from the side that drew 0-0 with AFC Wimbledon on Wednesday night in Town's last league encounter with experienced striker Owusu handed a debut in place of Danny Crow, who dropped to the bench.

Youngster Godfrey Poku was also given his first league start in the centre of midfield, with Drury deployed in his favoured left wing position.

The visitors displayed some strong-arm and at times downright dirty tactics throughout the night, but Poku was inches away as his 25-yarder flew just wide, while Gnaka's close-range effort went straight at Ingham.

The game exploded into life on 15 minutes though when Owusu cushioned a header into the path of Drury, whose first touch pass sent Gnaka clear.

Ingham came out and caught the Frenchman with his trailing

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leg just outside the box, to earn an instant red card from referee S Bratt.

With no substitute keeper on the bench, captain Chris Smith donned the gloves, but his first touch was to pick the ball out of the net as Drury's driven free-kick deflected into the net.

City immediately took off Peter Till for defender Greg Young and it needed a brave header from George Pilkington to keep out a wicked cross from Ashley Chambers.

Owusu came close to a debut goal as he flicked wide, and Hatters switched to a 4-2-3-1 formation to try to optimise their extra man, pushing Matthew Barnes-Homer and Gnaka wide, with Drury in the hole behind Owusu.

It worked to perfection on 31 minutes too when Barnes-Homer swung in a cross from the left flank and Gnaka rose highest to head past the hapless Smith.

Owusu had a one-on-one opportunity deflected wide, but it mattered little though as from the resulting corner, he thundered home a header.

Just when things looked like they couldn't get any better, Kroca made it 4-0 on the stroke of half time, acrobatically volleying Drury's free-kick past Smith.

After the break, City decided that Smith's brief sojourn in goal was over with the skipper slotting back into central defence, and Young taking over between the posts.

It didn't appear to halt Town's charge as a corner from Drury was headed across goal by Keith Keane, but Pilkington placed his effort just wide.

Dan Gleeson then made a su-

Pictures by Joanna Cross



RAISING THE ROOF: Claude Gnaka is felled as City's keeper is sent off, main picture, and Lloyd Owusu celebrates his goal on his Hatters debut



perb sliding intervention to deny Andy Boucard and somehow the fifth didn't arrive as Young spilled Gleeson's hopeful drive, Drury's pinpoint cross was powered against the bar by Gnaka from five yards, with Kroca's follow up somehow blocked on the line.

Naturally, the Hatters were playing with bundles of confidence and Jake Howells beat two challenges before his low shot was stopped by Young.

Owusu's evening ended on 63 minutes, when he was replaced by Atieno, who took just two minutes to open his account, nodding home Barnes-Homer's expert delivery.

Drury then rather worryingly limped off on 74 minutes as Adam Watkins came on for his first league appearance, while full-back Gleeson had to be stretch-

ered from the field with his leg in a splint after he was caught by substitute Danny Racchi.

Before he left the pitch to a standing ovation, City were further hampered as Jonathan Smith was shown his second yellow card for a strong challenge on Poku, who was lucky to escape a red himself for kicking out at the York player.

Atieno almost added the sixth but saw his shot saved by Young, but it was of little concern as Town made it a fifth consecutive league clean sheet.

Despite the massive win, Luton remain third in the table.

Main rivals Crawley won 2-0 at Bath City to move top of the table, while previous leaders AFC Wimbledon drew 1-1 at Fleetwood Town.

Hatters: Mark Tyler, Dan Gleeson, Keith Keane, George Pilkington (C), Matthew Barnes-Homer (Danny Crow 78), Andy Drury (Adam Watkins 74), Zdenek Kroca, Jake Howells, Claude Gnaka, Godfrey Poku, Lloyd Owusu (Taiwo Atieno 63). **Substitutes not used:** Ed Asafu-Adju, Pavel Besta.

Minstermen: Michael Ingham, Jonathan Smith, David McGurk (Danny Racchi 60), Daniel Parslow, Peter Till (Greg Young 19), Chris Carruthers, Michael Rankine, Levi Mackin (James Meredith 34), Ashley Chambers, Andre Boucard, Chris Smith (C). **Substitutes not used:** Jamie Reed, Leon Constantine.

Yellow cards: McGurk 5, Drury 43, Boucard 62, J Smith 69.

Red cards: Ingham 15, J Smith 83.

Referee: S Bratt.

Assistant referees: M O'Keefe and O Jackson.

Fourth official: A Piggett.

Attendance: 5,997 (126 York).