

Lambs slaughtered as Hatters hit back

Blue Square Bet Premier
Luton Town 2 (1) Tamworth 0 (0)

TOWN closed the gap at the top of the Blue Square Bet Premier to six points with this workmanlike victory over Tamworth on Tuesday night.

With AFC Wimbledon not in action and new leaders Crawley Town held to a goalless draw at Kidderminster Harriers, goals from Lloyd Owusu and Matthew Barnes-Homer saw Hatters end the deficit on the Red Devils, although they still have a game in hand.

Boss Richard Money said: "It was thoroughly professional, reasonably comfortable. I'm really pleased that we kept trying to play and move the ball as we like to and again there were enough moments of quality to get us a result."

Money sprung a surprise in his starting line-up, as fit-again mid-fielder Alex Lawless returned in place of Paul Carden, who dropped to the bench.

With three points the only option for Hatters, the hosts gave an early indication of their attacking intent in the opening minute as Matthew Barnes-Homer released Claude Gnaka, but his pull-back was out of the reach of Lloyd Owusu.

Gnaka continued to show early signs of promise bursting through the middle, before heading Barnes-Homer's cross into the arms of visiting keeper Liam Mitchell.

The visitors were thrown into disarray after just 12 minutes though when Mitchell was forced to go off after injuring his hand in a nothing incident with Barnes-Homer. With no replacement on the bench, defender Tom Marshall stepped up to don the jersey and take over between the posts.

by Mike Simmonds

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Gnaka was first to test the new custodian on 18 minutes, taking Barnes-Homer's pass in his stride, but the keeper rather uncomfortably saved low down.

The French winger continued his one man assault in the first half, heading Freddie Murray's cross goalwards, but Marshall slapped the ball clear.

A free-kick just outside the box gave Town another chance to test the stopper, but Lawless' effort was deflected over.

At times the first half resembled a training game of attack versus defence as a toothless Tamworth side barely ventured out of their half, with the excellent Lawless showcasing his array of passing, while another cross from the left saw Marshall awkwardly repel Zdenek Kroc's effort.

Despite their complete dominance of possession, Town were finding it increasingly hard to find a way through the visitors' defence, so it came as a huge relief when the deadlock was broken after 38 minutes. A soft free-kick went Hatters way and Jake Howells' delivery was inch-perfect for Owusu to deftly head into the bottom corner.

The hosts thought they had a penalty moments before the break as Owusu headed into the path of the rampaging Murray, who had his heels clearly clipped in the box by Jake Sheridan, but referee Mr Burt waved away the appeals.

After the interval, Hatters looked to kill the game off as Marshall spilled Dan Gleeson's delivery, but recovered to clasp Howells' follow-up header.

Pictures by Jane Russell



DYNAMIC DUO: Lloyd Owusu heads home Luton's first, main picture, and celebrates Matthew Barnes-Homer's second, below, with him

Luton Town: (4-4-2): Mark Tyler, Dan Gleeson, Freddie Murray, Keith Keane, George Pilkington (C), Matthew Barnes-Homer, Zdenek Kroc, Alex Lawless, Jake Howells, Claude Gnaka (Aman Morgan-Smith 57'), Lloyd Owusu (Jason Walker 50'). **Substitutes not used:** Luke Graham, Paul Carden, Kevin Pilkington.

Tamworth: (4-5-1): Liam Mitchell (Tom Marshall 12), Richard Tate, Duane Courtney, Michael Wyke, Jay Smith (C) (Seb Lake-Gaskin 73), Kyle Perry (Jason Bradley 53), Danny Thomas, Jake Sheridan, Daniel Bradley, Scott Barrow, Ben Wilkinson. **Substitutes not used:** Aaron Mitchell, Neil Mackenzie, Releasee S Burt. **Assistant referees:** N Evans, S Pawley.

Fourth official: L Marshall. **Bookings:** Barnes-Homer 15, Wyke 18, Courtney 67, Tate 89. **Attendance:** 5,737 (45 Tamworth). **Man of the Match:** Alex Lawless. A polished display from the returning midfielder.



The second should have arrived on 55 minutes when Howells' cross was touched on by Owusu, before Gnaka, under pressure from Scott Barrow, could only lash over.

Howells also skewed wide from 12 yards but breathing space arrived on 59 minutes when Lawless

wriggled to the by-line and his cross was flicked up by Gnaka before falling to the feet of Barnes-Homer, who drilled home his 16th of the season, with the aid of a slight deflection.

After Owusu's comical overhead attempt, Murray came close to his first Hatters goal, dinking a lovely

effort that the back-peddalling Marshall claimed.

Barnes-Homer kept trying to add to his personal tally, arrowing a drive wide from 20 yards but with the result in the bag, the match fizzled out to a tame finish, with Town comfortably collecting another home victory.