

Brabin sees red as Town fail to defeat

Blue Square Bet Premier
York City 1 (0)
Luton Town 0 (0)

by Mark Wood

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A SPICY and ill-tempered clash eventually saw York bully their way to a 1-0 victory over the Hatters on Tuesday night as they kept their play-off hopes alive.

This fiery encounter will certainly heighten the already intense animosity between the two clubs as 10-man York inflicted the first loss of Gary Brabin's reign as manager.

In fact Brabin was sent off and forced down the tunnel just before the break as the game spiralled out of control with a total of nine bookings and two red cards.

Jamie Reed's 65th-minute strike proved decisive and not even the dismissal of Scott Kerr seconds later could help Town force an equaliser.

Brabin once again shuffled his pack, making three changes as he lined up with a 4-3-3 formation.

Zdenek Kroca was rested so Luke Graham started at centre-half against his former club, while Adam Newton and Matthew Barnes-Homer came into the starting XI with Robbie Willmott and Claude Gnaka dropping to the bench, where Dan Walker and Godfrey Poku were named among the substitutes.

York almost got off to the ideal start but were denied by a blinding save from Mark Tyler. Ashley Chambers' corner found Reed a few yards out and his firm header was acrobatically batted away by Tyler with Leon Constantine stabbing the follow-up over.

Another Chambers corner caused all sorts of problems seconds later, while more indecision over the offside rule raised its head

when the linesman flagged Amari Morgan-Smith offside only for the referee to wave play on.

York captain Chris Smith was perhaps lucky to escape with only a yellow card on eight minutes when his two-footed tackle got as much of Newton as it did of the ball and Morgan-Smith could only fire the resulting free-kick from the edge of the box into the wall.

A breathless start then saw the Minstermen go close again moments later when Constantine was unable to properly connect with James Meredith's dangerous cross from just eight yards, before the ball finally fell to Jonathan Smith on the edge of the area and his blast was again superbly beaten away by Tyler.

Reed dragged an effort wide before Town wasted a great chance of their own on 12 minutes. Newton slipped a delightful ball through to Jason Walker but the goal-shy striker could only pull his effort wide of the far post.

Graham picked up a silly booking when he was harshly penalised for handball on the deck, before a sickening clash of heads between Barnes-Homer and Daniel Parslow resulted in a lengthy spell of treatment for both, and the York centre-half being replaced by Chris Carruthers.

Against the run of play Town almost snatched the lead on 26 minutes when a miscued clearance by keeper Michael Ingham put left-back Meredith in all kinds of problems. He was robbed by Morgan-Smith but the Luton attacker's curling effort was excellently clawed away by the keeper.



DISMISSED: Town boss Gary Brabin

A Brabin tirade resulted in a talking to from the referee, while Jason Walker flicked a Keith Keane cross well wide as Luton were kept largely on the back foot.

But the game completely boiled over four minutes before the break. Kerr's late challenge on Keane enraged Brabin and a comment by York assistant manager Darron Gee evidently antagonised the fiery Luton boss who had to be restrained by the fourth official and security.

Kerr was promptly booked before referee Steve Smith sent Brabin to the stands. All hell then broke loose as an outraged Brabin pointed the finger at Gee before he was forcibly pulled into the tunnel by the stewards with concerned substitutes and coaches Alan Neilson and Dmitri Kharine trying to come to his aid.

Worried captain George Pilkington came to the sidelines in a bid to help his manager and was promptly booked by the referee who was quickly losing any sen-

blance of control of the game.

Freddie Murray was then injured by the corner flag while trying to put a cross in and, after writhing in agony for some time, was eventually worryingly stretched off five minutes into stoppage time and was replaced by Gnaka.

In-between Neil Barrett was yellow carded for a foul on Howells as seven minutes of added time were signalled.

Chambers' long range effort forced a good save from Tyler in the sixth minute of stoppage time, but Reed left his foot in as he sniffed for a rebound and drew an angry reaction from the keeper.

An eventful half was topped off two minutes later when Jonathan Smith clashed with Dan Gleeson and became the sixth player to enter the referee's notebook.

Town changed to a 4-4-2 formation at the break and Jonathan Smith's pass gave Barrett a sight of goal six minutes in but he fired wide when under pressure.

Gnaka headed a good chance over from Keane's free-kick before warming Ingham's gloves from range.

A Chambers crack was blocked by Pilkington and drew appeals for handball while Morgan-Smith drilled a good effort just wide after seizing on a mistake from Liam Darville.

Jason Walker spurned a chance to have a pop and instead rolled a pointless ball across the box as York finally broke the deadlock on 65 minutes when Jonathan Smith's pass sent Reed clean through and he swept first time past the despairing dive of Tyler.

Seconds later through York were reduced to 10 men when Morgan-Smith, having already skipped past Darville's two-footed

Minstermen (4-3-3): Michael Ingham, Liam Darville, James Meredith, Jonathan Smith, Daniel Parslow (Chris Carruthers 22), Jamie Reed, Neil Barrett (Peter Till 63), Ashley Chambers, Leon Constantine (Levi Mackin 73), Scott Kerr, Chris Smith.

Substitutes not used: Michael Rankine, André Boucaud.

Hatters (4-3-3): Mark Tyler, Dan Gleeson, Freddie Murray (Claude Gnaka 45+5), Keith Keane, Luke Graham, George Pilkington, Adam Newton, Amari Morgan-Smith (Dan Walker 78), Matthew Barnes-Homer (Robbie Willmott 72), Jake Howells, Jason Walker.

Substitutes not used: Godfrey Poku, Kevin Pilkington.

Bookings: C Smith 8; Graham 14; Kerr 41; Pilkington 43; Barrett 45+1; J Smith 45+8; Kerr 66; Carruthers 85; Willmott 90+1.

Sent Off: Brabin 42; Kerr 66.

Referee: Steve Smith.

Assistant Referees: Matt Pope and James Wilson.

Fourth Official: Paul Cook.

Attendance: 2,955 (Luton 202). **Star Hatter:** Mark Tyler. A couple of fine saves early on kept Hatters in the contest.

lunge, was felled by Kerr, who was dismissed for a second bookable offence.

Another potential injury blow befell the Hatters when Morgan-Smith hobbled off and was replaced by Dan Walker with 12 minutes to go.

Some Gnaka magic took him past three players but he blazed just over with two minutes to go.

Carruthers was booked late on as was Willmott for diving as Town came up short, while York moved within three points of the play-off places.