

Adam hails clever Crow

by Mark Wood

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Blue Square Bet Premier
Luton Town 5 (1) Southport 1 (1)

CANNY striker Danny Crow was hailed by team-mate Adam Watkins after he helped inspire Luton Town to a 5-1 comeback victory over Southport at Kenilworth Road on Saturday.

Stolid Luton trailed to an eighth-minute strike from Jonathan Brown as they looked jaded for much of the first hour.

But Crow's introduction breathed life into them and, after Adam Watkins levelled with his first-ever league goal for the club, the youngster was then felled by Steve Akrigg to earn the defender his second yellow card.

The dismissal proved decisive as the Sandgrounders proceeded to crumble and conceded four goals in the space of seven minutes.

Town's substitutes then answered boss Gary Brabin's calls to come to the fore and the Hatters eventually won out with late strikes from Will Antwi, Amari Morgan-Smith, Robbie Willmott and Crow – and it could have been many more.

Watkins said: "The manager said we started the game slow and the crowd was unhappy and they've got the right to let their frustrations out. The last 20 minutes we were decent and once we were on top the crowd were brilliant. They've just got to stay with us really when it's not going so well and we will grind out the results."

On what changed the game, Watkins added: "I thought when Danny Crow came on he changed the game for us a little bit."

"We started to gamble off of him and then we started flowing and we were at our best."

Town made three changes to the side that was held to a frustrating 1-1 home draw by Forest Green Rovers on Tuesday night.

Willmott dragged a shot just wide in the opening seconds, but the Sandgrounders snatched the lead on eight minutes when James Smith was allowed too much time



and space on the right and John-Paul Kissock laid the ball off for Brown to squeeze a close-range effort past a statuesque defence and under the body of the exposed Mark Tyler.

Shaun Whalley's long-range strike was straight into Tyler's midriff, while Willmott's cross/shot was beaten away by Tony McMillan.

Luton lacked spark, tenacity, intensity and urgency and a facial injury to James Dance saw him replaced by Crow, which proved to be a blessing in disguise for the Hatters. An Antwi defensive header looped just wide, while Simon Grand twice came to the Sandgrounders rescue to deflect efforts from Watkins and Aaron O'Connor wide of the mark.

Town finally found some inspiration and a brilliant volley on the turn by Crow dipped over before Watkins levelled four minutes before the break when he made space on the edge of the area and squeezed his effort just inside the right-hand upright.

Tony Gray rolled a tame effort at Tyler and Antwi looped a header at McMillan as the two sides went in level at the break.

Early in the second half, O'Connor dragged wide and, while referee A Davies struggled to control Southport's time wasting, Town were not helping themselves with too many long balls.

Whalley did well to get in behind Luton's defence, but could only slide his effort agonisingly across the face of goal.

The game swung in Town's favour though on 67 minutes when Watkins burst on to a loose ball and, as he careered towards goal, Akrigg took his legs from under him and was promptly shown a second yellow card.

Willmott's free-kick was headed behind and Town then had two appeals for penalties before going goal crazy with four in seven minutes.

Willmott whipped in a fine 71st-minute corner, Dean Beckwith flicked on and Antwi was on hand to stab home his first goal for the club from just a yard out.

From there the floodgates

opened as after Morgan-Smith had been farcically penalised for handball when charging down a McMillan clearance, he netted Town's third on 74 minutes.

The substitute beat his man before embarking on a bulldozing run down the left, winning a strong challenge on his way into the box before his heavily deflected effort beat McMillan at his near post.

Town's fourth arrived three minutes later when Morgan-Smith produced more good work before squaring the ball across the box for Willmott to bury an unstoppable drive into the bottom left-hand corner. The avalanche of goals was complete seconds later when Curtis Osano's pinpoint cross was powerfully headed home from close range by a rejuvenated Crow.

Morgan-Smith was denied a clear penalty when he was hauled down by Smith only for the clueless referee to wave away Luton's appeals.

Keane sent a speculative effort well off target, while Crow wastefully headed wide in injury time, but by then goal-hungry Hatters were well satiated.