

Antwi strike earns Hatters a late draw

by Mark Wood

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Blue Square Bet Premier

Mansfield Town 1 (1)
Luton Town 1 (0)

CAPTAIN for the night Will Antwi snatched a deserved point for bare bones Hatters as they came from behind to draw 1-1 at Field Mill last night.

Mansfield had taken the lead with a Matt Green cracker but Antwi's late header was no more than Luton deserved for a dogged performance.

Town made three changes from the team that hammered Southport 5-1 on Saturday as out went the injured trio of Robbie Willmott, Keith Keane and Alex Lawless and into the starting line-up came Ed Asafu-Adjaye, Amari Morgan-Smith and Danny Crow.

Brabin, meanwhile, handed the captain's armband for the first time to Antwi, while the Stags were skipped by former Hatters midfielder Adam Murray.

Mansfield made a lively start against a depleted Luton side who defended resolutely before James Dance and Aaron O'Connor launched a quicksilver break, with the latter's deflected effort drifting just over the bar.

A tame Adam Watkins daisy-cutter was easily fielded by Alan Marriott before Town should have broken the deadlock when Watkins' clever pass sent Morgan-Smith clean through but his shot was just too close to Marriott who turned the ball round the post.

Lindon Meikle's wayward effort sailed miles wide of Mark Tyler's goal before Louis Briscoe skinned Asafu-Adjaye but dragged his shot

Picture by Angela Ward



TUSSELE: Adam Watkins challenges for the ball at Mansfield last night

across goal and wide.

Morgan-Smith was farcically booked for handball before he raced down the left and teed up Dance, who warmed Marriott's gloves from range.

Town were shading the encounter, but Crow could only hook Dance's deflected cross wide when well placed and Morgan-Smith overran a clever Crow pass when he should have at least tested the keeper.

Hatters created another great chance midway through the half when Curtis Osano's cross was allowed to run to the back post where Morgan-Smith teased it to the far post, but Dance could only send his header inches over.

The Stags grabbed the lead out of the blue on 26 minutes when

Green was allowed too much time and space outside the box and thundered home an unstoppable drive from 25 yards.

Morgan-Smith fired a long-range free-kick wide but although bossing possession, Town couldn't find an equaliser as they trailed by a single goal at the break.

Mansfield almost doubled their lead just two minutes into the second half when a dangerous free-kick into Town's six-yard box found a host of Stags queuing up but Ben Fletcher could only glance wastefully wide.

Asafu-Adjaye, who had struggled with his passing, was replaced by the fit-again Dan Gleeson for his first appearance of the season and, after Briscoe had threatened, Crow sent an opportunistic dink

straight at Marriott.

Too many passes were going astray for the visitors, but a purposeful Watkins run ended in a left-foot rocket that forced Marriott to tip over the bar on the hour.

Brabin further shuffled his pack by introducing the flying Dan Walker for the largely frustrated O'Connor, but Luton needed the woodwork to come to their rescue on 66 minutes when Joe Kendrick slipped Green through and his cracker from an acute angle clipped a post.

A low Osano effort found the side netting before controversy reigned when Green reacted to a Dean Beckwith challenge and left the centre-half on the deck, but only a yellow card was shown.

Green almost gained immediate

Stags: (4-4-2): Alan Marriott, Joe Kendrick, Martin Riley, Louis Briscoe, Matt Green, Adam Murray (C), Ross Dyer, Luke O'Neill, Anthony Howell, Lindon Meikle, Ben Fletcher.

Subs not used: Shane Redmond, Jon Worthington, Lee Stevenson, Paul Connor, Nick Wood.

Hatters: (4-4-2) Mark Tyler, Dean Beckwith, Amari Morgan-Smith, Danny Crow, Aaron O'Connor (Dan Walker 62), Jake Howells, Ed Asafu-Adjaye (Dan Gleeson 57), Will Antwi (C), Curtis Osano, James Dance, Adam Watkins.

Subs not used: Kevin Pilkington, Matthew Barnes-Homer, Godfrey Poku.

Bookings: Morgan-Smith 18; Crow 41; Osano 63; Green 69; Kendrick 78; Briscoe 79; Dyer 83.

Referee: Sebastian Stockbridge.

Assistants Referees: Andrew Miller and Geoffrey Liddle.

Fourth Official: Craig Grundy.

Attendance: 2,592 (Luton 437).

Star Hatter: Jake Howells. The youngster is truly coming of age.

retribution as his flick header was straight into Tyler's midriff.

A curling Howells free-kick was touched over the bar by Marriott as the seconds slipped away, but Luton grabbed a deserved equaliser with 12 minutes to go.

Morgan-Smith won a free-kick on the right and Howells' dangerous delivery was met by a sweet Antwi header that nestled in the bottom right-hand corner.

The referee started to brandish cards like confetti, while a Green effort dipped just over as the game became stretched with both sides searching for a winner.

With Luton at sixes and sevens Green was allowed space in the box but Tyler beat away his blast while Fletcher headed wide as Town held on for a valuable point.