

AMARI'S TOO STRONG FOR IRON

11/12

By Mike Simmons

A QUICKFIRE double in the closing stages of the first half ensured title chasers Luton eased to victory over newly-promoted Braintree.

The Iron, making their first ever trip to Kenilworth Road, looked like going into the break on level terms after Ben Wright had equalised Amari Morgan-Smith's opener for the Hatters.

But two goals in the space of a minute, first a rebounded penalty from Morgan-Smith then an effort from Jake Howells, put Gary



LUTON TOWN 3

Morgan-Smith 12, 44
Howells 45



BRAINTREE TN 1

Wright 20

Brabin's men the advantage for which they would never relinquish.

Brabin said: "I was delighted with the three points and the performance, I thought we played really well.

"Braintree are a tough side to beat, but I thought we started the game really bright.

"We switched off a little bit for their goal, we've just got to keep going until the whistle goes and we let them back into the game at 1-1.

"I thought we showed a bit of character and credit to Braintree, even at 3-1, I never completely thought that the game was over. I thought they made it difficult for us

as they're a big strong side."

The visitors began brightly but it was the Hatters who took the lead on 11 minutes when James Dance escaped down the wing and rolled his pass into Morgan-Smith, who slotted past the advancing keeper Nathan McDonald.

Danny Crow missed a great opportunity to double the lead and Luton were punished when Wright wriggled his way through the Hatters defence and tucked a shot under the body of Mark Tyler.

But just when it looked like the Iron would hold on

the break, Crow was upended in the box by McKenzie.

The keeper recovered to saved Morgan-Smith's spot kick, but the striker just about managed to squeeze home the rebound.

Seconds later, it was 3-1 when Robbie Willmott brilliantly played Howells in and he found the bottom corner.

McDonald twice denied Luton a fourth in the second half, first from Dance, then superbly to keep out Willmott's fierce free kick.

Braintree threatened sporadically with Aswad Thomas blasting into the

side-netting, while late on, Matt Paine's header cannoned against the bar.†

Frustrated Iron boss Alan Devonshire said: "We didn't pass the ball at all well. The midfield didn't do as well as they've been doing.

"We started okay, but after that we stopped slowing the game down. We've got to play to our strengths.

"Credit to Luton, but I was disappointed. That's the worst we've played all season."

STAR MAN: Amari Morgan-Smith (Luton) **ATT:** 5,703

ENTERTAINMENT: ★★★★★

REF RATING: R West 5/10

MATCH STATS

LUTON v BRAINTREE

6	SHOTS ON TARGET	1
8	SHOTS OFF TARGET	6
9	CORNERS	5
5	OFFSIDE	2
8	FOULS CONCEDED	13
1	YELLOW CARDS	3
0	RED CARDS	0

LUTON: 4-4-2: Tyler 6, Keane 7, Beckwith 6, Lawless 7 (Watkins 46, 7), Morgan-Smith 8, Crow 8 (O'Connor 83, 5), Willmott 8, Howells 8, Antwi 7, Osano 7, Dance 6 (Kissock 90). **Subs not used:** Asafu-Adjaye, K Pilkington. **BRAINTREE:** 4-4-2: McDonald 7, Peters 6, Thomas 6, Bailey-Dennis 7, Paine 7, Reason 6, Symons 6 (O'Connor 73, 5), Davis 7, Marks 7 (Chilaka 62), Wright 7 (Quinton 80, 5), Yiadom 6. **Subs not used:** Jones, James-Lewis.