

Morgan-Smith's spot of bother won't faze striker

by Mark Wood

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Blue Square Bet Premier
Luton Town 3 (3) Braintree 1 (1)

INSTINCTIVE striker Amari Morgan-Smith will continue to put himself forward for penalties despite having a spot-kick saved in Saturday's 3-1 home defeat of Braintree on Saturday.

The 22-year-old reacted quickest to net the rebound and his double, plus Jake Howells' strike on the cusp of half time, were enough to see Luton victorious in the first-ever meeting between the two sides.

He said: "It's always nice scoring and more importantly getting the three points for the lads and go up in the table and hopefully get promoted. The gaffer did say before the game they were the surprise package of this league. They started well and we had to start well and attack hard.

"There's always hard teams in this league and hard games and we've got to turn up each week and give it our all and get the three points."

On his first goal, Morgan-Smith said: "It was a brilliant ball by (James) Dance. It was getting away from me and I had enough pace to get it and finish it well."

And on his second, he continued: "As a striker you've got to be instinctive and on your toes and that's what I did, a reaction finish. I was disappointed to see it (the penalty) saved but I will go again and if another time Crowley (Danny Crow) doesn't want to take one, I'll still take another."

Town made three changes from the team that ground out a 1-1 draw at Mansfield on Tuesday night.

Fit-again trio Keith Keane, Alex Lawless and Robbie Willmott all came back into the starting XI with Aaron O'Connor, Ed Asafu-Adjaye and Adam Watkins dropping to the bench alongside new signing from Southport John Paul Kissock.

REBOUND JOB: Amari Morgan-Smith nets on Saturday after his penalty was saved



Pictures by Joanna Cross

brilliantly to beat Matt Paine to a 50/50 ball and despite being floored by a hefty late challenge, the referee played a good advantage as Willmott seized on the loose ball and played in Crow, who took a fraction too long and saw his shot blocked.

Lawless made way for Watkins at the break as Town eased to victory in the second half.

Crow flashed a header across goal and Osano shanked a left-foot effort wide after a mazy run as Luton bossed proceedings.

A lazy McDonald throw was seized on by Crow but his shot was deflected wide, while the bookings began to flow for frustrated Braintree who started to put themselves about.

The energetic Watkins produced some magic to twist one way and then the other in the box on 67 minutes before laying the ball into the path of Dance who forced a good sprawling stop from McDonald.

The Iron continued to look dangerous at the other end as former Town trialist Aswad Thomas fired into the side netting.

Willmott's free-kick forced a fine flying save out of McDonald as the heavens opened while a teasing Wright cross forced Tyler to flap behind.

The woodwork then came to Luton's rescue when Wright's corner sailed to Paine and his powerful header smacked the underside of the bar and came back out.

In search of his hat-trick Morgan-Smith saw a deflected effort loop across goal, with Dance just unable to net at the far post.

Watkins got the ball stuck under his feet when a good late chance presented itself, O'Connor was unable to turn home Osano's cross and Willmott fired over, while Kissock made his debut as a late substitute.

Willmott flashed wide in the late sunshine but it mattered for nothing as Town claimed all three points and continued their unbeaten start to the season.

Manager Gary Brabin opted for a 4-4-2 formation for the first time this season, pairing Morgan-Smith with Danny Crow in attack.

Morgan-Smith continued: "I played a couple of games up front 4-4-2 and playing up front with Crowley is a great thing as he knows where to play the balls and you need to keep on the move.

"The gaffer knows what he is doing, he is a good manager. No matter which formation he plays and players he picks."

Former Luton loan man Ben Wright dragged an early effort across the face of goal and, after Keane had dragged a shot wide, a clever Wright backheel ran kindly for Kenny Davis on the edge of the box, but his low drive was turned behind by Curtis Osano's boot.

Too many misplaced passes were letting the Hatters down, although they took the lead out of nothing when Dance's pass was perfectly weighted for Morgan-Smith to beat the keeper to the ball and roll home.

Wright seemed particularly lively for the visitors and he again tested Tyler from range with a firm drive, before Town should have doubled their lead on 13 minutes.

Willmott skinned Ryan Peters on the left and pulled the ball back

to Crow who could only side-foot wide from eight yards out.

Luton went close again moments later when a free-kick was only cleared as far as Lawless on the edge of the box and he teed up Keane whose curler crept agonisingly wide.

Braintree refused to buckle and levelled the scores on 20 minutes thanks to some haphazard Hatters defending.

Wright refused to give up on a lost cause as having robbed Osano and forced his way to the byline, his acute drive somehow found its way into the net.

Rattled, Luton saw Willmott shoot wide and Crow loop a header over either side of another good Wright effort, before Luton were gifted a penalty three minutes before the break.

Lawless and Morgan-Smith combined beautifully to slip in Crow who was felled by keeper Nathan McDonald.

McDonald then dived to his right to save the spot kick, but Morgan-Smith reacted quickest to squeeze home the rebound.

Town ended the half strongly and made it 3-1 a minute into stoppage time when Willmott and Howells combined and the Welsh U21 international kept his composure to slide home.

It was almost four moments later when Morgan-Smith did