

Barrow blown away as Hatters do the damage

by Mark Wood

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

EXPLOSIVE Hatters showed the damage they are capable of inflicting as they recovered from their worst start to a game this season to blow Barrow away at Kenilworth Road on Saturday.

Jack Mackreth may have stunned the hosts as the Bluebirds took the lead after 77 seconds but from then on it was all Luton.

Returning right-back Curtis Osano said: "At first we didn't start the best. It's the worst we've started this season and it came from nowhere."

"I think some of the boys underestimated the quality of their boys but adapted and took over the quality of the game. We knew the game would tire them out."

"The penalty came at the perfect time. We kept the ball and made them run. To score five goals with the quality we've got and we could have got more than five, just shows the quality going forward and the boys can do some damage in this league."

Luton made three changes from the side that slumped to a 1-0 midweek defeat to Cambridge United. Into the starting line-up came Aaron O'Connor, Adam Watkins and the fit-again Osano, with Danny Crow and Will Antwi dropping to the bench and Stuart Fleetwood missing out through illness.

Barrow, who were without five injured players and three suspended, named just three players on the bench and made the perfect start when Mackreth outpaced Jake Howells before striding into the box and dinking over the exposed Mark Tyler.

Luton proceeded to boss the game with Howells driving straight at the busy Danny Hurst on eight minutes, before the Hatters levelled four minutes later when O'Connor was felled by Kevin Lomax's untidy challenge as he burst into the box from Janos Kovacs' brilliant crossfield



CELEBRATE GOOD TIMES: Aaron O'Connor congratulates Adam Watkins on his goal, main picture, and Town's players celebrate Amari Morgan's strike en masse, inset

ball.

Robbie Willmott stepped up and, although Hurst flung himself to his left as Luton saw a fourth-straight penalty saved, the ball broke kindly for Willmott who forced home at the second attempt.

Amari Morgan-Smith certainly looked in the mood as he bulldozed his way through on 15 minutes but dragged into the side-netting as the home side proceeded to put themselves in trouble with some sloppy passing.

Only a magnificent save from Tyler maintained parity on 31 minutes when he kept out Adam Boyes' point-blank effort after a free-kick had been headed back across goal.

A brave block by Andy Nicholas turned Willmott's stinging effort behind after Morgan-Smith and Watkins had combined superbly before the linesman's flag thwarted O'Connor after he had rounded the keeper.

Watkins had a decent strike deflected, before both he and Osano forced flying stops out of Hurst

and Kovacs headed just wide from a corner.

In complete contrast to the first half it was the Hatters who made a flying start to the second, taking the lead after just 24 seconds.

Morgan-Smith was crowded out from O'Connor's backheel, but Dance did well to retrieve possession and put in a telling cross for Willmott to prod home from inside the six-yard box.

Some great trickery from substitute Dominic Rowe saw him dance his way into Luton's box and roll the ball through Keith Keane's legs and across the face of goal, as the flat-footed Ryan Brooke failed to capitalise.

Luton made them pay a heavy price by netting their third moments later in the 55th minute.

Town cut a swathe through the middle with Morgan-Smith and Watkins linking wonderfully and the latter showed neat feet to work some room before steering the ball beyond Hurst.

Things got even better as Town netted a fourth just past the hour.

O'Connor's incisive run cut Barrow's defence to ribbons and his pass was swept home by Dance for his first goal for the club.

Kovacs was in the right place at the right time to clear Jason Owen's side-footed effort off the line, while Willmott had a rasping effort turned round the post by Hurst and an offside Crow headed against a post.

Morgan-Smith finally got his reward for a sparkling performance when Willmott played a peach of a pass over the top and Town's top scorer got in behind and rounded the keeper to roll home his eighth goal of the season with 15 minutes still to go.

Barrow refused to disappear and substitute Andy Ferrell sent a long range free-kick against the woodwork with eight minutes to go, while an Osano cross clipped the bar seconds later.

Town cracked open the champagne football late on, Morgan-Smith forcing another fine save from Hurst in the last minute and Crow firing a great chance well over in the dying seconds.

Pictures by Jane Russell

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