

VARDY IS

Fleetwood boss Mellon hails

FIGHTING IT OUT:
Luton's Robbie
Willmott, left, and
Fleetwood's Ryan
Jackson battle for
possession

PICTURES: Graham Owen



MATCH STATS	
LUTON v FLEETWOOD	
4 SHOTS ON TARGET	2
7 SHOTS OFF TARGET	6
9 CORNERS	1
2 OFFSIDE	3
15 FOULS CONCEDED	9
3 YELLOW CARDS	2
0 RED CARDS	0

LUTON (4-4-2): Tyler 6; Charni 6; Kovacs 5; O'Connell 5; Howells 6; O'Connor 6 (Kovacs 75, 9); Lawrence 6 (Morgan 70, 9); Keane 6; Willmott 5 (Morgan 54, 5); Fleetwood 5; Morgan-Smith 6; Subs not used: Hand, 6; Pillingham.

FLEETWOOD (4-4-2): Davies 6; Beeley 7; McNulty 6; Hunt 7; Brown 5 (Jackson 25, 6); Jackson 7; McNulty 6; Milligan 7; Clancy 6 (Brogan 53, 6); Vardy 9; Brodie 6 (Morgan 65, 5); Subs not used: Viera, St Louis-Marchion.



By **Stuart Hammonds**

UNTIL a few months ago, Jamie Vardy's occupation saw him make splints for people who suffer drop foot.

Since Fleetwood paid £100,000 to Halifax and told him to play football for a living, the fleet-footed striker hasn't put one of his own wrong.

Here, against a toothless Luton side who crave a tooth of his pace and prolific goal-scoring record, the 24-year-old gave an organised, resolute Cod Army side the touch of class to give them a firm footing in the side race, scoring a first-half opener before Jamie Milligan's 67th-minute penalty sealed three points.

It's no secret that the way to avoid a spanking at Keelworth Road is to slow the game down, get men behind the ball and frustrate the Hatters' players and supporters.

Cambridge and Wrexham have already done it this season, and Micky Mellon's men perfected their plan from minute one, while carrying that customary composure and cutting edge they showed in winning 3-1 on the same ground last year.

How Luton chief Gary Brabin must hate giving a post-match bottle of beer to his old Blackpool team-mate Mellon, whose side have the best away record in the division with eight wins from ten games, and sit joint-top with Wrexham.

Vardy scored Luton centre-halves Janos Kovacs and George Pilkington to death, while producing flashes of impudent skill including a nutmeg on Keith Keane.

After only 40 seconds he set Sean Clancy clear and within eight minutes his speed of thought and movement lured Luton's usually unflappable captain Pilkington into referee Andy Davies' notebook.

The Hampshire whistler received much of the stick raining down from the stands - Mellon called it "the most hostile atmosphere since I've been at Fleetwood" - and his failure to give a free-kick for a challenge on Amari Morgan-Smith was seen to have led directly to the 11th-minute opener.

The unmarred centre-half Steve McNulty brought the loose ball out of Fleetwood's half, spread it left to Clancy whose first-time pass set Vardy free. A cool finish, lofted deftly over the onrushing Mark Tyler, was

STEP AHEAD

"special talent" after Luton win

the Yorkshireman's 11th goal in as many games for the Cod.

"It's difficult for me to speak about Jamie because I don't want too many people noticing him," smiled Mellon. "He's a very special talent and we are very happy to have him."

Left-back Janos Brown went down and then to hospital with an ankle injury, before Shaun Beeley seemed lucky to escape with just a yellow after an altercation with Stuart Fleetwood.

These breaks in play, not to mention Nathan Pond, and goalkeeper Scott Davies' apparent time-wasting, only served to turn the temperature up to boiling point and after Robbie Willmott, Fleetwood and Aaron O'Connor wasted chances, all hell seemed to break loose as the players entered the tunnel at half-time.

Richard Brodie got merciless abuse as "the pantomime baddie", according to Mellon, in memory of being part of the York side that beat Luton in the 2009-10 play-offs.

But, after O'Connor rattled the bar, it was the on-loan Crawley striker who almost increased Fleetwood's lead with a driving run and

20-yard shot that was inches too high. Midfielder Jamie Milligan soon did after Davies gave them a stone-wall penalty for Morgan-Smith's 67th-minute trip on Ryan Jackson.

"I thought we created the better chances in the first half," said Brabin. "But the most disappointing thing for me is after they got the second goal,

we were deflated and never rolled our sleeves up to have a go in the last 20 minutes."

He was bang on. Hatters didn't have a clue how to break down a defence marshalled superbly by McNulty and Pond, with Jamie McGuire protecting them, and only managed it with the last touch of the game when Kovacs headed home Jake Howells' cross.

"It's a fantastic win for us but we won't get carried away," added Mellon. "People call us big-spending Fleetwood, but we've got some who've come from the North West Counties and Conference North with this club, and they answered a lot of questions today."

STAR MAN: Jamie Vardy (Fleetwood)
AGE: 26
ENTERTAINMENT: *****
REF RATING: Andrew Davies 6/10

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MICKY MELLON, Fleetwood Manager

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GARY BRABIN, Luton Manager



ON THE WAY: Fleetwood celebrate Jamie Vardy's goal