



Tyler: Trophy heroics could change season

BY LAUREN ARCHELL
lauren.archell@lutononsunday.com

THE Hatters put in a dogged and determined performance in the first leg of the FA Trophy semi-final, in yet another feisty and bad tempered affair against league rivals York City.

Despite going a goal down and being reduced to nine men, Luton bravely battled an onslaught from their opponents to keep themselves in the tie.

Red cards were shown to Jake Howells in the first half for a handball on the line, and Keith Keane in the second, for two reckless challenges just minutes apart.

Speaking after the game, goalkeeper Mark Tyler said that this was the kind of game that could change Luton's season.

He said: "We stuck to the game plan, we let them have ball in their own half where they were no danger to us, and rattled them when they were in our half."

"We're not happy with the result but delighted we're still in the tie and the shift that all the lads put in.

"The back four were magnificent, the boys in the front of them worked their socks off and Danny Crow had a thankless task up front on his own, so it was a proper team performance."

Defender Ed Asafu-Adjaye said: "It's surprising what you can get out of nine or ten men when you are put in that position.

"It shows what the squad is capable of and it shows that the boys can dig in and keep going and drag each other through."

Despite showing more passion than was displayed in the dreadful 2-0 league defeat at Wrexham in mid-week, the Hatters found themselves one goal down after 14 minutes.

From a right sided corner, Matthew Blinkhorn's header at the near post was met by Jamie Reed who was loitering in the six yard box. His volley looked to be heading home before Howells stuck out a hand to push the ball off course, and was given his marching orders for doing so.

Reed took the resulting penalty which found the bottom right corner despite an outstretched arm of keeper Tyler.

It was the goalkeeper who single-handedly kept the Hatters in the tie, stopping a long range attempt from Reed with an incredible reaction save and then managing to push the ball away from danger after an acrobatic bicycle kick from Lanre Oyeabanjo.

Despite being a man down, the Hatters had a number of half chances, Greg Taylor and Asafu-Adjaye managed to put decent balls into the area, but a lack of Luton shirts in the box meant the opportunities came to nothing.

But just before half time Crow was able to dink a ball from 12 out to Janos Kovacs who put his header just inches wide, to shrieks from the travelling faithful.

The second half produced more of the same, Luton battled hard to make an impression against a dominant York side, but were put at a further disadvantage as Keane became the second player to be shown a red card.

The midfielder received his first yellow after scything down Reed in a desperate attempt to retain possession, with his second just minutes later for a similarly reckless challenge on Jamal Fyfield.

Tyler again prevented the damage being made any worse, producing two

low saves amid a barrage of shots from the York strikers. Another positive was the starts given to Adam Watkins and Charlie Henry plus an impressive appearance from substitute Jake Woolley, all three displaying a maturity beyond their years in a difficult game.

The Hatters will have to shelve plans to overturn York at Kenilworth Road on Saturday in the second leg as they face a league trip to Darlington on Tuesday.

But with a Blue Square Bet Premier play-off place almost virtually assured, it will be hard to keep minds from wandering towards next weekend's Trophy decider.

Luton Town – Mark Tyler, Greg Taylor, Keith Keane, George Pilkington, Alan Lawless, Danny Crow (Jake Woolley), Jake Howells, Ed Asafu-Adjaye, Charlie Henry (Shane Blackett), Adam Watkins, Curtis Osano, Janos Kovacs
Unused subs – Shane Blackett, P. O'Donnell, Lewis Kidd

York City – Michael Ingham, Lanre Oyeabanjo, (Michael Potts), James Meredith, Chris Smith, Daniel Parslow, Jamie Reed, Scott Kerr, Jamal Fyfield (Danny Pilkington), Jon Challinor, Matthew Blinkhorn, Moses Ashikodi (Ashley Chambers)

Unused subs: Matty Blair, Patrick McLaughlin



REARGUARD: Mark Tyler produces a string of saves to keep Luton in with a shot of reaching the FA Trophy final

photo by Gareth Owen