

Dramatic end as Town snatch a draw at Darlo

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Blue Square Bet Premier

Darlington 1 (0) Luton Town 1 (0)

LUTON Town somehow emerged from the Northern Echo Arena with a point last night against Blue Square Bet Premier crisis club Darlington.

Janos Kovacs' late sending off and Ryan Bowman's penalty after Godfrey Poku's foul put the Quakers ahead with eight minutes remaining, before Ed Asafu-Adjaye clearly brought down John McReady in the box, only to somehow see a spot-kick not awarded.

The ball was then immediately propelled to the other end, and substitute Jake Woolley with his first touch in the league for Luton, crossed and Stuart Fleetwood tucked home from just a yard out.

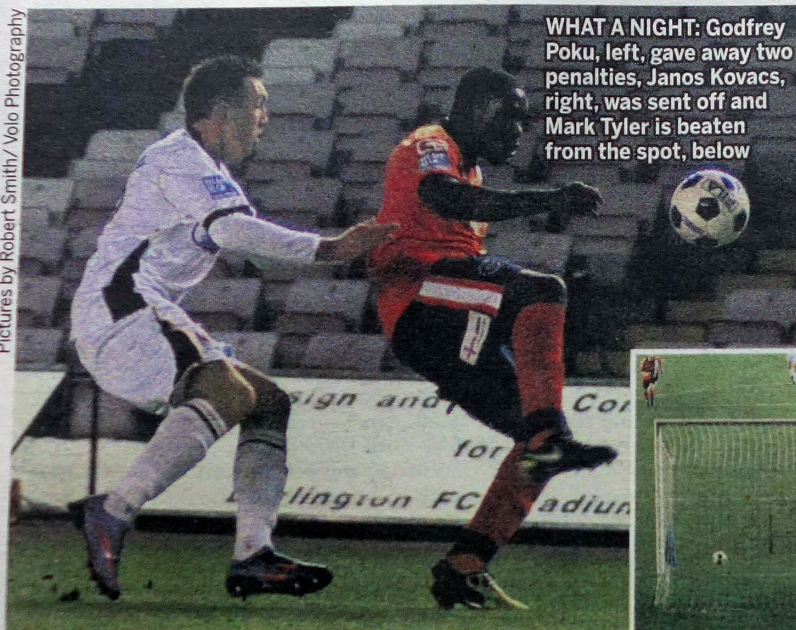
Deep into stoppage time, Poku then gave away his second penalty of the evening with a clumsy challenge, but with the last kick of the game, Bowman saw his effort comfortably saved by Mark Tyler to bring a quite remarkable match to an end.

Earlier, Town boss Gary Brabin made three changes to the side that lost 1-0 at York City on Saturday with Poku making his first league start since April 2011, while Craig McAllister and Robbie Willmott returned from being cup-tied and injured respectively.

Charlie Henry dropped to the bench, with Jake Howells and Keith Keane both suspended after their red cards at the weekend.

Town hadn't won at Darlington since 1968 and boss Brabin sprung a surprise by opting to switch to 4-4-2 formation as Adam Watkins moved to the left wing. Willmott the right, with Poku and Alex Lawless in the middle.

Pictures by Robert Smith/ Volo Photography



WHAT A NIGHT: Godfrey Poku, left, gave away two penalties, Janos Kovacs, right, was sent off and Mark Tyler is beaten from the spot, below



Luton made a positive start with Poku eager to make an impression, busying himself and expertly breaking up play with his incessant energy, a feature that has been sorely lacking from Town's play this season.

McAllister headed an early corner over the bar, before curling an effort straight at Jordan Pickford, while a bad-tempered spell saw the game threaten to spill over.

First, former Town trialist Drew Broughton went in late on Lawless, while Neil Wainwright then slid in with an awful challenge on Watkins. Both picked up yellows as Brabin was left looking mightily unimpressed on the sidelines.

Depites being under the cosh for much of the opening period, the Quakers came closest to scoring when Aaron Brown's deflected free-kick was clawed round the post by Tyler.

The resulting corner was head-

er back across goal where Wainwright's point-blank volley was blocked by a posse of Luton defenders on the line.

Town had a chance on 34 minutes after a bizarre error from Pickford, who confidently claimed Willmott's cross and then slipped over as he tried to clear.

The ball rebounded off referee R Wrigglesworth to Watkins, but his lofted attempt had too much oomph and sailed over the bar.

McAllister had a marvellous chance to break his lengthy goal drought as he latched on to Danny Crow's flick on, but bearing down on goal, the striker tried to round Pickford, only to see the keeper snatch the ball off his toes.

Brabin withdrew Crow at the break, with Fleetwood taking his place as Town positively burst out of the blocks in the second period.

Kovacs was denied by a stunning reaction save from Pickford,

somehow repelling his close-range header, before the defender teed up Watkins, who skilfully beat his man but not the keeper, who flew from his goal to block.

Watkins was then denied again moments later, spinning his man and curling a left-footer destined for the bottom corner but for Pickford's fingertips.

Quakers had shouts for a penalty on 66 minutes when Bowman was clattered by Tyler, but the hosts' appeals were waved away.

Bowman tested Tyler almost immediately afterwards, with the keeper down well to his low drive, while Fleetwood's curler was far too close to Pickford.

Winger Henry was introduced for Watkins on 73 minutes, earning his first league appearance for the club, while Wainwright was lucky to stay on the pitch after scything down Poku as he cleared.

The hosts had a decent chance

Quakers: Jordan Pickford, Paul Aaron Brown (C), Kris Taylor, Clark Drewe Broughton, Ryan Bowman, McReady, Adam Rundle, Neil Wainwright, Dale Hopson (Danny Lambert 65).
Substitutes not used: Jordan Nason, David Ferguson.

Hatters: Mark Tyler, Greg Taylor, Pilkington (C), Alex Lawless, Craig McKelvey (Jake Woolley 88), Danny Crow (Stuart Fleetwood 46), Robbie Willmott, Ed Asafu-Adjaye, Godfrey Poku, Adam Watkins (John Henry 73), Janos Kovacs.
Substitutes used: Curtis Osano, Andre Broussard.

Referee: R Wrigglesworth.
Assistant Referees: J Waters and J Dwyer.

Fourth Official: M Diocico.
Bookings: Broughton 15, Wainwright 45, Poku 45, Brown 89.

Sent Off: Kovacs 82.
Attendance: 1,382 (123 Luton).

Star Hatter: Godfrey Poku, deserving giving away two penalties, it was an impressive performance from the central midfielder.

to win it when Broughton was over, before a shocking decision late on saw Kovacs dismissed and hauling back Bowman.

The Hungarian was somehow adjudged to be the last man on despite Asafu-Adjaye clearly bringing as Luton had their fourth man sent off in three games.

Kris Taylor's curling free-kick was palmed wide by Tyler, but then Broughton managed to head substitute Danny Lambert's cross by a mere yard.

The action then started as Asafu-Adjaye allowed Bowman to wriggle out from the corner, and he was bundled over by Poku in the area, with Bowman sending Tyler the wrong way from the spot.

Fleetwood equalised before Hatters gave away another free-kick but, with Bowman going the same way once more, Tyler left his left to save.