

Brabin's reign ended as York win yet again

by Mark Wood

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Blue Square Bet Premier

Luton Town 1 (1) York City 2 (0)

PAINED Janos Kovacs was deeply disappointed to see the Hatters surrender a one-goal lead as they lost to current arch-rivals York City in front of the Premier Sports TV cameras at Kenilworth Road on Friday night.

Andre Gray's fierce drive had given the Hatters the perfect start, but they faded badly and City grabbed two goals in the last 10 minutes through Patrick McLaughlin's deflected effort and James Meredith's sniping to snatch victory as Luton's winless run stretched to seven games.

Fans called for manager Gary Brabin's head afterwards, which was duly delivered the following day.

A despondent Kovacs said: "What can you say? Winning 1-0 against York, I thought first half we played very well.

"Again last 10 minutes, we conceded two goals and lost the game, which is worse against your rivals in a six-pointer game. So massively, hugely disappointing.

"The last few years. The semi-final in the play-off two years ago, the semi-final in the FA Trophy this year, we've played against them almost every second week in the last month.

"It's a big pain but it's just another one on top of everything."

Having taken the lead made the defeat even tougher to swallow, with Kovacs saying: "That's why it's even more disappointing. It's hard to say anything after a game like this.

"But I have to say we conceded two goals after two schoolboy errors - two set-pieces which cannot happen.

"I think we did put ourselves under pressure, especially in the second half. It's hard to saying anything to be fair, massively disappointing."

Kovacs almost had his shirt torn from his back in the first half, but no penalty was awarded and he continued: "It's normal. We cannot blame the referees, we

can just blame ourselves."

Town named an unchanged side from the one that was held to a 1-1 home draw by Grimsby Town last Saturday while York listed much maligned former Hatter Jason Walker in their starting XI.

Luton made a bright start and snatched the lead on five minutes as Gray smashed home his second goal in two games when he raced on to Danny Crow's flick and muscled his way past Chris Smith before drilling home from an almost impossible angle.

Rattled York panicked as the Hatters took the game to them.

Alex Lawless again found Gray, but the on-fire striker could only roll tamely at Michael Ingham before Chris Doig got himself in a pickle as he was robbed by Crow on the edge of the box. Doig recovered to block Crow's effort before Ingham spread himself well to save Gray's follow-up.

A superb Jake Howells pass unlocked the City defence on 20 minutes and Robbie Willmott unselfishly tried to square for Lawless, but his effort was deflected behind.

Kovacs glanced wide from a corner, while Godfrey Poku put in a great challenge to deny McLaughlin a shooting chance after Mark Tyler had fisted clear.

The Hatters were playing some entertaining stuff and went close again on 23 minutes when Crow and Curtis Osano combined, before the right-back dragged his effort just past the near post.

Town were given a real wake-up call just before the half-hour mark when McLaughlin slipped Jamie Reed through but Tyler saved astutely at his feet.

The alarm bells were really ringing moments later when City cut through Town's defence and Lanre Oyebanjo's low drive thudded against the post and out.

York wrested control as their numbers in midfield started to tell and dominated the second half.

Matty Blair headed wide before Town should have doubled their lead on 53 minutes.

Dogged work by Poku saw the ball bounce kindly for Gray but, one-on-one with Ingham, the keeper saved with his legs.

Pictures by Jane Russell



NEW HERO: Andre Gray slams home the opening goal, while above, celebrates with Robbie Willmott and Godfrey Poku



Gray got a hugely warm round of applause as he hobbled off to be replaced by Stuart Fleetwood, before City equalised with 10 minutes to go after Howells was booked for a meaty challenge on Walker. The free-kick was rolled to McLaughlin on the edge of the box and his rasping drive through a crowded box took a deflection as it fizzed in.

A rare Luton free-kick was agonisingly out of the reach of Kovacs and the Minstermen won it with four minutes to go when

Ashley Chambers' thump from the edge of the box was parried by Tyler and Meredith was on hand to stab home the loose ball.

Six minutes of stoppage time were added and Town were inches away from levelling when substitute Craig McAllister's knockdown found Kovacs, who had desperately been thrown into the attack, and his effort ran just wide.

McAllister then volleyed just over as Brabin's reign came to a sour end.