

# Hatters cap crazy week for

# the underdog

Paul Buckle's side record the first FA Cup victory by a non-League side away to a top-flight team in 27 years as the hosts

continue their worrying run of form

By Richard Rae  
AT CARROW ROAD

|              |   |
|--------------|---|
| NORWICH CITY | 0 |
| LUTON TOWN   | 1 |
| Rendell (60) |   |

Half-time: 0-0

Att: 26,521

Bradford City having redefined the art of the possible a few days ago, Luton Town duly became the first non-League team since Sutton United beat Coventry City in 1989 to knock top-tier opposition out of the FA Cup.

And the Conference side deserved it, too. Not so much on the balance of play, but on the thoroughly professional way they went about containing a much-changed Norwich team before a decisive break 10 minutes from time saw Scott Rendell – a footballing journeyman if ever there was one – prod JJ O'Donnell's cross past the City goalkeeper, Declan Rudd.

Norwich had their chances, though not many. Leon Barnett hit the post in the first half and Grant Holt, brought on at half-time, forced a fine reflex save from the Luton keeper, Mark Tyler, with a diving header, but otherwise the Canaries created remarkably little.

"It was an incredible performance by the players," said the Luton manager, Paul Buckle, whose side were also the first from outside the League to knock out a top-flight team away from home since Altrincham beat Birmingham City in 1986. "The most pleasing thing for me was that we defended very well and carried a threat of our own throughout.

"We took great strength from beating Wolves 1-0 in the third round, we stuck to the same plan, we tried to deny them space, and the players got it right."

City's manager, Chris Hughton, whose starting XI featured a number of fringe players, defended his selection.

"Yes I made changes, but I made changes in the third round when we beat Peterborough with a very good performance. I have no regrets about the team I picked, they should have been good enough to win.

"Luton came with a gameplan, we found it very difficult to break them down, the good chances we had we didn't put away, and they caught us with what I suppose was a classic counterattack.

"They're a fit side, an organised side, and the one chance they had they put away. It's going to be a tough few days for us, but all of that we're going to have to take on the chin. We didn't deserve to lose on the balance of play, but we're in a downward spiral and we have to lift ourselves out of it, starting on Wednesday, when we play Spurs here."

Luton arrived in Norfolk in good shape, and not simply because they had lost just twice in their previous 14 matches. Hospitably, but perhaps

'We'd dearly love to get a Premier League club in the next round too'

PAUL BUCKLE  
Luton's manager looks to the fifth-round draw

just a touch mischievously, City's rivals Ipswich Town had afforded Buckle's squad two days' run of their excellent training facilities.

That the game was a sell-out was testament to Luton's 4,000-strong travelling support – the largest number of away fans at Carrow Road this season – and to City's policy of keeping prices low, with children getting in for just £1. Luton may not have been delighted about that, given it had a direct bearing on their share of the income, but it certainly helped the atmosphere.

Such has been the rapidity of Luton's decline that it was only six years ago these sides met in the Championship, and judging by the opening exchanges yesterday, the different directions the clubs had travelled wasn't going to be too much of a factor.

Both sides were playing 4-4-2, with Luton pressing higher up the pitch, and while the Norwich midfielders David Fox and Jonny Howson tried hard to spread the play, they were not helped by Hughton's decision to select Harry Kane up front. A 19-year-old forward on a season-long loan from Spurs, his movement was minimal.

Eventually Norwich started to hit long balls, hoping the pace of Simeon Jackson and Elliott Bennett might create an opportunity. It did so after half an hour but, from an angle, the forward's shot was too close to Tyler, and Andrew Surman's attempted follow-up was blocked.

The closest City came occurred shortly afterwards when Barnett, up for a corner – City's first – headed against a post. The rebound appeared to hit Tyler and came desperately close to crossing the goal line before being scrambled clear.

Hughton replaced Kane with Holt at half-time, and the big striker looked certain to score when Jackson's cross reached him at the far post, only for Tyler – who was born in Norwich and on the club's books as a schoolboy – to make a fine reflex save from the diving header.

Luton never panicked, though, and continued to offer a threat themselves. Jon Shaw shot over from 20 yards, and Alex Lawless volleyed just wide when Rendell lifted the ball into the penalty area.

Hughton threw on Wes Hoolahan and Anthony Pilkington in the hope of adding some creativity, but it was O'Donnell and Rendell who made the difference.

"We'd dearly love to get a Premier League club in the next round too," said Buckle. "Hopefully it will give the squad some belief, because we weren't hanging on. It was important to stay in the game, and we did that and slowly but surely worked our way into it."

Norwich (4-4-2): Rudd, R. Martin, R. Bennett, Barnett, Carrillo, E. Bennett, Hoolahan, Tili, Fox, Howson, Surman (Pilkington, 73); Jackson, Kane (Shill, 76).

Luton (4-4-2): Tyler, Henry, Kovacs, Rowe-Turner, Taylor, Lawless, Smith, Mendy (O'Donnell, 68), Howells, Gray (Greenwood, 74), Shaw (Rendell, 74).

Referee: Archie Marriner

Man of the match: Tyler (Luton)

Match rating: 7/10



JOY DIVISION  
Luton players celebrate their stunning FA Cup fourth-round victory over Norwich City at Carrow Road  
GETTY IMAGES