



LUTON TOWN 2
Randell 36, Gray 47

MANSFIELD TOWN 3



Green (pen) 32, Daniel 44, Meikle 90

STAGS ON LATE CHARGE



By **SAM ELLIOTT**

WELL, at least this time Luton didn't suffer the indignity of failing to beat a team with a midfielder in goal for 70 minutes.

Not that that will be of any comfort this morning to Hatters fans surveying the wreckage of their miserable league season. Watching three points pockmarked by a promotion rival in the dying moments, the fact that they are now as close to the relegation zone as they are the top five, without a manager and - in February - already starting a fourth Non-League season squarely in the face won't produce a pick-me-up.

Having failed to see off ten-man Mansfield and their stand-in keeper Peter Wins on Tuesday night, there was scorching kick where it hurts yesterday.

After losing to York City at Wembley back in May, they did say they must avoid the dreaded play-offs at all cost this time around. Nobody quite had this in mind.

Yes Luton are in chaos but it would be unjust to fail to fully credit Mansfield here and in particular their stellar skipper Adam Murray, of course an ex-Hatter.

Twice Paul Cox's side led but twice the hosts bit back. However, when substitute Lindon Meikle struck late on after being on the pitch for a matter of minutes, there was no way back.

Three huge errors for each goal contributed to Luton's downfall, and stand-in manager Alan Neilson sent a clear message to the boardroom to make their decision on Paul Buckle's replacement - and quickly.

He said: "The club needs a new man in town, a new face to get it going. We've done everything we can but a new manager is required as soon as possible."

Three mistakes have cost us three goals. There's a real disappointment to lose to a sucker punch like that but it's error after error, the story of our season. There's little point talking about the play-offs. It's a case of trying to bring some confidence back."



ALAN NEILSON, Caretaker Luton manager

"It's a big win, no doubt about it. Three points at Luton is always a huge result, but we showed fantastic character"

PAUL COX, Mansfield manager

Meikle seals miserable week for the Hatters

For Mansfield though, they move level on points with fifth-place Forest Green and have two games in hand.

There was an escape for Luton when debutant Wayne Thomas air-kicked and in the process took a piece of Colin Daniel. Appeals aplenty from the Stags, a sigh of relief from the defender. It was only a temporary reprieve though.

A coincidence of errors, starting with poor footwork from Steve McNulty, then a woeful pass from Scott Rendell was com-

pleted by McNulty - another bad touch let Daniel in and the defender hauled him over in the box. Matt Green guided the dead-ball into Mark Tyler's bottom-right hand corner to open the scoring.

To Luton's credit, they didn't mulk. Jonathan Smith's shot deflected perfectly into the path of Rendell who thrashed it into the net for 1-1.

Luton, though, saw the masters at preening the self-destruct button. McNulty was caught in no-man's land,

and Lee Stevenson took advantage as he picked out Daniel, who slid the ball past Tyler.

Just two minutes after the restart Rendell's flick caught James Jennings napping and Andie Gray's pace gave him a huge advantage and baring down on goal the England C forward showed international class to finish with composure.

Luton's interim management team knew a point was hardly beneficial to their play-off chances. On came Stuart Fleetwood as the hosts went with

three up-front with 35 minutes still to go. It eventually backfired in time added-on.

First, McNulty's header had height but not distance, and with Ales Lawless not alert, Tyler did exceptionally well to keep out the initial shot. But he couldn't prevent Meikle from swooping up. On the pitch for three minutes, he won the game in dramatic style.

Cox said: "I've had a good chat with a few of the fans and I think we'll all enjoy a few beers tonight."

"It's a big win, no doubt about it. Three points at Luton is always a huge result, but we showed fantastic character and that is what pleases me."

STAR MAN: Adam Murray (Mansfield) **ATT:** 1, 90
ENTERTAINMENT: *****
REF RATING: Kevin Johnson 7/10

MATCH STATS LUTON v MANSFIELD

4	SHOTS ON TARGET	5
9	SHOTS OFF TARGET	2
4	CORNERS	2
2	OFFSIDE	2
11	FOULS CONCEDED	8
1	YELLOW CARDS	0
0	RED CARDS	0

LUTON: 4-4-2: Tyler 7, Henry 6, McNulty 5, Thomas 6, Howe 7, Turner 6, Martin 6, Stevenson 55, St. Dennis 7, Lawless 7, Nelson 6, Howells 65, Gray 6, Rendell 7. Subs not used: Angus, Mordy, Ibb.

MANSFIELD: 4-5-1: Marriott 7, Bennett 7, Dempster 7, Jones 7, Jennings 6, Shisco 7, Mann 6, St. Clements 7, Murray 6, Stevenson 7, Hutchinson 75, P. Daniel 7, Green 7 (Winger), Wels. Subs not used: Sutton, Pridard.



YOU BEAUTY! Scott Rendell after lashing home a first-half equaliser.



JOB DONE: Lindon Meikle scores the winner for the Stags. Inset: Colin Daniel nets for Mansfield

PICTURE: Gareth Owen



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