

MATCH REPORT | LUTON TOWN 1-1 BARNSELEY

Berry's opener cancelled out by Halme's late strike as game ends level...

The Hatters suffered late heartbreak as they were made to settle for a 1-1 draw with Barnsley after Luke Berry's first-half strike was cancelled out by Apo Halme's strike six minutes from time.

Berry's superb finish in the 13th minute looked to be the only goal of the game until the Tykes struck back late in the match to level proceedings.

Whilst both teams gave their all to find a winner, neither could find it and the points were shared, a result that leaves Town four points adrift of safety with four matches remaining.

Nathan Jones made four changes to the starting line-up following Saturday's defeat against Reading, with James Bree, Martin Cranie, Danny Hylton and Berry back in the eleven.

The game started with a very high intensity from both sides who equally needed a positive result this evening.

Simon Sluga was alert twice early on to deny Barnsley, first tipping over Conor Chaplin's header and moments later Jacob Brown's effort from the edge of the box.

Hylton had Town's first attempt on goal but his low header from Pelly-Ruddock Mpanzu's cross was gathered with comfort by Jack Walton.

The Hatters were not to be denied for long though, taking the lead in the 13th minute courtesy of a fine finish from Berry. Hylton played a neat ball through to Elliot Lee, who struck the post with his effort, but Berry was on hand to provide an inch-perfect finish, his first of the season.

Barnsley grew into the half as play continued and Chaplin squandered a good chance, slicing his half volley over the bar from close range, just before the first drinks break ensued.

Sluga was called into action on a few more occasions throughout the first half, getting down well to save Woodrow's low drive and doing even better to superbly tip the forward's goal-bound header onto the bar three minutes before half-time.

There was little between the two sides in the second half and few chances created until the last ten minutes when the away side got their equaliser.

Sluga saved well from substitute Elliot Simoes but the consequent corner was turned in by Halme during a scramble in the six-yard box.

The Tykes were pushing for a winner and came close when Brown's shot was deflected just wide of the post.

Though the best chance of the dying embers came to substitute Harry Cornick, who was played through by Berry, but Walton saved his golden chance one-on-one.

The Hatters now turn their attention to Friday's away trip to Huddersfield Town knowing a positive result is a must to continue their hopes of survival.

TOWN: Sluga; Bree, Carter-Vickers, Bradley (C), Potts; Cranie, Berry, Mpanzu, Lee (Shinnie 45); Hylton (Cornick 72), Collins.
Subs not used: Shea, Tunnicliffe, Pearson, McManaman, Moncur, Butterfield, Kioso.

Goal: Berry (13)

Yellows: Sluga, Potts, Berry, [& Cranie]

BARNSELEY: Walton; J.Williams (Styles 80), Sollbauer, Andersen; Ritzmaier, Mowatt (C), Bahre (Simoes 59), Ludewig; Woodrow (Schmidt 83); Chaplin (Halme 83), Brown.

Subs not used: Collins, B. Williams, Thomas, Oduor, Wolfe.

Goals: Halme (84)

Yellows: Sollbauer, Andersen

Referee: Dean Whitestone

NATHAN JONES | "IT'S ANOTHER POINT TOWARDS OUR TOTAL, WHICH IS ALL WE CAN CONCENTRATE ON"

Boss says players are "giving everything" for the Hatters' cause

Hatters boss Nathan Jones was disappointed with this evening's 1-1 draw with Barnsley but admitted concentration must be placed on the point earned.

Barnsley substitute Aapo Halme netted an 84th-minute equaliser to cancel out Luke Berry's early opener for the Town, and Jones said: "I'm really disappointed because first-half we started really well and then we allowed them too much of the play, we didn't go on and get the second, and that's what I was disappointed with as well.

"Second half I thought we were much better, started really well. We allowed them in certain areas but we always had a threat. The disappointing thing is to concede late because I didn't see them scoring. We controlled it. We were disciplined in our shape and what we did.

"I thought we controlled the game until that point, so to concede so late, momentum can shift.

"Then we had a glorious chance straight after. If we could score that, then it's a wonderful night but it wasn't to be and we have to take the point because this is another point towards the total."

There was debate as to whether Simon Sluga got a fingertip to Simoes Inacio's shot that led to the corner from which Halme's equaliser came.

"We were just annoyed because there was a big delay in terms of when the referee gave it," said Jones. "We've had things lately where if the referee doesn't do it, if the referee doesn't know, then he gives it to the defending team.

"But look, he's given it and we have to defend it better, because we defended set-plays well all night. It's just frustrating because of the lateness of the goal and then the chance after, but we will take the point. It's another point towards our total which is all we can concentrate on."

Jones couldn't criticise his players, saying they are giving their all in this period of matches that has brought one win and three draws from five games since the restart.

"We want to be better, but this is a nine-game league and we've had to claw back effectively a seven-point deficit and have had very little time to work with the players," he added. "They are giving me everything, they really are. This group are giving me everything.

"I would have liked to have been a bit more on the front foot, controlling the game and in possession slightly more, but off the back of long away journeys and a tired performance at the weekend, I thought we got a reaction today. They worked so hard, they gave me that energy.

"It was great to see Luke Berry back and we looked a threat and with chances, we could have nicked it right at the end."

https://issuu.com/lutontownfc/docs/barnsley_e-programme - programme

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Se4eK4kPag> – Nathan Jones interview

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4BfC9IK_pqA – match highlights

Heartache for Hatters as Tykes equalise late on in basement battle

Championship: Luton Town 1 Barnsley 1

Luton Town's attempts to save their Championship status were dealt their second crushing blow in the space of three days as they conceded a late equaliser to fellow strugglers Barnsley this evening.

With seven minutes to go, it looked like the Hatters were on their way to seeing out what would have been a crucial victory to boost their survival hopes going into the final four games of the campaign, leading 1-0 through Luke Berry's strike, only to concede a hotly disputed corner, with Tykes substitute Aapo Halme scrambling in a leveller.

Luton's own replacement Harry Cornick then had an even better opportunity himself moments later, racing clean through on goal, but, as has happened so often this term, he couldn't take his chance, shooting straight at visiting keeper Jack Walton.

Although the outcome did move Town a point closer to safety, they are now very much relying on results elsewhere going their way ahead of Friday evening's trip to Huddersfield, which now takes on an absolutely must-win significance.

Boss Nathan Jones made four changes from the side that were embarrassed 5-0 by Reading on Saturday, Danny Hylton, Martin Cranie, James Bree and Berry in, with Matty Pearson, Cornick and Ryan Tunnicliffe dropping to the bench, Izzy Brown absent through injury.

The visitors went close early on, as the diminutive Conor Chaplin somehow won a header inside the area, forcing Simon Sluga to tip over the bar, while ex-Hatter Cauley Woodrow flicked the resulting corner into the side-netting.

Sluga was called on to make a more meaningful stop moments later, impressively turning Jacob Brown's stinging drive over the bar.

Hatters started to gain a foothold though, Pelly-Ruddock Mpanzu's hanging cross met by Hylton, his downward header pounced on by Walton.

Town made the most of their spell of pressure, Bree, who had his best game of the season, foraging forward from right back to pick out Hylton, whose pass sent Lee clear.

When his low shot hit the outside of the post, there was Berry to simply hammer into the top corner on his left foot for an opening goal of the campaign and first since the 2-1 League One win at Bristol Rovers in March 2019.

Luton's defence then switched off as Sluga came sliding out of his goal to concede a free kick on the edge of the box, Alex Mowatt hitting the wall, while Berry looked to add to his tally at the other end, sending his own set-piece over.

Despite moving ahead, Town still lacked full convictions in their actions at times, with confidence still clearly knocked from Saturday's defeat it seemed, as the visitors came on strong, as the hosts were on the back foot for large chunks of the half.

Chaplin lashed over the bar, before Woodrow volleyed against the legs of Bradley and then Sluga reacted quickly to keep out Woodrow from close range.

It looked for all the world that Woodrow would make it 1-1 just three minutes before half time, getting up well to loop a header that appeared destined to drop in at the far post, but for the fingertips of Sluga, who did superbly to tip it against the woodwork and away.

After the break, Jones brought on Andrew Shinnie for Lee, who immediately got involved, sending a dangerous cross just out of the reach of Town's forwards, as the hosts started to finally exert some control on proceedings.

Berry was still looking one of Luton's most potent threats, arrowing narrowly wide on 70 minutes from the edge of the box after Collins did well to tee him up.

Barnsley appeared to be running out of ideas, no longer carrying the attacking threat they had done in the first but, but boss Gerhard Struber used his bench to good effect.

Elliot Simoes, on after the hour, started to cause trouble for the visitors, his flashing drive across goal deemed by official Dean Whitestone to be tipped behind by Sluga, much to the obvious annoyance of Jones.

When the set-piece wasn't cleared, Simoes turned it back into the danger area for Halme, who had just been sent on, to poke home with his first touch.

Barnsley should have had seconds later, Brown's effort deflected behind and from the corner, they glanced a great chance wide too.

However, Luton had a glorious chance with three minutes to go, Cornick springing the offside trip, but when he fluffed his lines, Town's chances of victory went, and they now face a nervous wait to see exactly how much that will hurt them before travelling to the Terriers on Friday.

Hatters: Simon Sluga, James Bree, Dan Potts, Sonny Bradley (C), Cameron Carter-Vickers, Martin Cranie, Pelly-Ruddock Mpanzu, Luke Berry, Elliot Lee (Andrew Shinnie 46), Danny Hylton (Harry Cornick 71), James Collins.

Subs not used: James Shea, Callum McManaman, George Moncur, Jacob Butterfield, Peter Kioso, Matty Pearson, Ryan Tunnicliffe.

Tykes: Jack Walton, Jordan Williams (Callum Styles 80), Mads Andersen, Jacob Brown, Cauley Woodrow (Patrick Schmidt 83), Mike Bahre (Elliot Simoes 59), Conor Chaplin (Aapo Halme 83), Kilian Ludwig, Marcel Ritzmaier, Michael Soullbauer, Alex Mowatt (C).

Subs not used: Ben Williams, Luke Thomas, Clarke Odour, Matty Wolfe, Brad Collins.

Booked: Sluga 15, Potts 42, Soullbauer 54, Andersen 63, Berry 63, Cranie 90.

Town boss left frustrated by refereeing decision as Barnsley hit back to claim a late point

Luton chief thought officials made the wrong call during 1-1 draw

Hatters boss Nathan Jones couldn't hide his frustration with referee Dean Whitestone after Town were held to a 1-1 draw by Barnsley at Kenilworth Road this evening.

With six minutes to go, Luton were looking like they were going to take a crucial three points in their battle to stay up, until Whitestone signalled for a corner when Elliot Simoes flashed a drive across goal.

Keeper Simon Sluga didn't appear to get a touch, and when the set-piece wasn't cleared, Simoes turned it back into the box for fellow sub Aapo Halme to net with his first touch, earning the Tykes a point and dashing Luton's chances of making significant inroads in the gap to safety.

Speaking afterwards, he said: "We felt the ref gave the corner and we felt he guessed at it really.

"We had one the other day where the referee said 'I didn't know, so I gave it to the defensive team.'

"We would have liked that, we felt it wasn't a corner, but that's decisions that go against you.

"It's one of those things, we're disappointed as it was a pretty even game in terms of chances and it's such a big game.

"It's just we're leading going into the 84th minute, you want to hold out and make sure you win the game.

"I thought we were a lot better second half and I'm just disappointed we didn't hold out."

Despite taking the lead through Berry, Town struggled in the first period, with Barnsley's wastefulness and one excellent Simon Sluga save keeping them ahead.

They were much better in the second period, and even after Halme equalised, should have claimed all three points when Harry Cornick went clean through, only to be denied by Jack Walton.

Jones added: "I'm disappointed because of the lateness of their goal and how it came about, because I couldn't see them scoring.

"You always fear the worst as a manager but I couldn't see them scoring, I really couldn't.

"First half we gave them a little bit too much space and we didn't get close enough to them to meet balls in our box, but second half I thought we were excellent.

"Tactically we were really good, it's just late on, it came from a corner that's the really frustrating thing and then having the best chance of the game straight after to win it, you're just frustrated then."

Jones left to rue Cornick's late miss as Luton are held in six-pointer

Town attacker fails to convert yet another one-on-one opportunity

Hatters boss Nathan Jones was left to rue Harry Cornick's inability to score from yet another one-on-one chance as his side were held to a 1-1 draw against Barnsley last night.

The 25-year-old, on after 71 minutes for Danny Hylton, was sent clear by Luke Berry's threaded pass in the final moments, springing the offside trap as he went clean through.

Bearing down on goal, Cornick could only fire disappointingly straight at onrushing keeper Jack Walton, who then gathered the rebound, echoing his misses against Preston and Bournemouth already this term.

The former Cherries winger is Town's second top scorer with nine goals and had been the hero last Tuesday, with a wonderful finish into the top corner at Leeds United.

After seeing Reading forward Yakou Meite show how it's done at the weekend, scoring all three of his one-on-ones, Jones knows if Cornick can start converting opportunities like last night, it will take him to the next level, as he said: "If he just adds that then we've got some player.

"We know his pace, we were tempted to bring him on earlier because he's arguably our most potent player.

"When he goes through like that, because he's running one hundred miles an hour, that's when he needs to just slow and make his mind up and slot it, or go round him, or lift it.

"He just needs something other than hitting the keeper.

"But Harry's been brilliant for this club all season and he's turned into a fine player.

"We brought him on for that particular thing and it's just a shame we couldn't take the chance."

Team-mate Berry who had put him through said: "He's done well this season so you can't really criticise him there, but it was a good chance."

Had Cornick taken his opportunity, it would have been just reward for a much-improved second half performance by the Hatters, as although they led through Berry's goal in the first period, Barnsley had by far the better of proceedings.

Town brought on Andrew Shinnie at the break though and had a far better control of the game, until it became an end-to-end affair in the closing stages once Aapo Halme brought the Tykes level with six minutes to go.

Jones added: "We started really well and then we needed to be a little bit braver in our starting positions, because we gave them too much space and they were able to penetrate a little bit.

"Second half, we changed tactics a little bit and looked extremely solid and I thought we defended excellently.

"We were really tactically aware and I'm just devastated that we didn't take that chance at the end or hold out for the win."