

SUDDENLY the Town's promotion hopes are alive again, following a brilliant performance against near-rivals Reading, whose prospects of Second Division football next season were surely destroyed in the face of a high-powered display at Kenilworth Road this afternoon.

After some disappointing home displays the Town suddenly found that streak of gold which has appeared in their play from time to time this season, and the goals that have been eluding them recently began to flow again.

What demolished Reading was a spell of three goals in 12 minutes at the start of the second half, during the course of which Malcolm MacDonald completed a hat-trick, boosting his total of first-team goals this season to 25.

MacDonald is one of those for whom things have not been going quite right at close quarters in the last few matches. But there was always the thought in my mind that it would not always be like that, and that he would come good again.

Come good he certainly did today, with a genuine hat-trick of three in succession, and with a bit of luck there could have been an even more liberal output from him.

RUNAWAY

Events of the first half scarcely pointed to such a runaway win, because Reading always willing to take a chance on all-out attacks helped to make the first 45 minutes a real cracker, full of incident, thrills and excitement.

MacDonald's first goal after 11 minutes was the only one before the interval, but there could have been others at either end.

In fact, it required some grand saves by young Alan Starling to keep the Town in front.

Just how well the goalkeeper played was amply proved when he was given a big ovation by the crowd as he left the field at half-time.

Certainly the Town have a real find here.

So, too, I feel have they in Viv Busby, who has barely reached double figures in matches as a professional and yet played with a good deal of aplomb today.

He took his first League goal in the coolest fashion, and that I predict will be the first of many he will score for the Town.

SPARKLING

All in all, this was a sparkling performance by the Town, and they equalled their previous biggest win of the season, which was against Bradford City on December 13.

Now it remains to be seen whether the team can negotiate with success the three tough away matches in succession that face them. Next test comes at Barnsley on Tuesday night, and if they can pick up two points there, and complete the Easter grand slam, then they must be in with a chance of winning the prize.