

LAST CHANCE AND IT SLIPS AWAY

LUTON TOWN 1
LEICESTER CITY 3

FOR half an hour at Kenilworth Road on Monday I thought the Town were set to wipe out their unhappy memories of the earlier part of the Easter holiday.

In the event, missed chances and defensive errors contributed to their third defeat in four days, and effectively ended their interest in the promotion race.

During the opening gambit, the Town played as well as they have for weeks, stringing their attacks together efficiently and showing such drive and determination as to make one wonder why they surrendered so meekly at Millwall.

All that was missing at the end of this period of supremacy were the goals to

Nish counting as a second "own goal."

Shilton, in fact, demonstrating his considerable class, served Leicester well during their troubled period, making great saves from Busby and MacDonald, but he could do nothing about it when the latter cut in, unmarked from an angle.

It looked a certain goal, but MacDonald, whose recent marksmanship has been less deadly, aimed for the far corner and missed by a couple of feet or so.

A goal here, while it may not have clinched the issue, would have made Leicester's recovery most difficult, but having survived the onslaught, they came far more

of that failure, they were hauling the ball out of their own net.

During a sharp raid, Carlin took a free kick for obstruction and found **FARRINGTON** whose first-time shot beat Read's dive to put Leicester ahead for the first time after 62 minutes.

Just one chance of a reprieve came for the Town, MacDonald heading into Shilton's hands when conceivably he might have been expected to direct it a little more accurately.

However, again there was no time for reflection, because the City came away and a bad mistake by Nicholl let in Partridge whose pass left **BROWN** with a comfortable run in to goal.

That virtually was the end of it although the Town did not give up. They brought on Bannister for Jimmy Ryan, pushed Givens up as striker and Slough into midfield.

However, Leicester were in no mood to yield anything and they brought on their substitute, Stringfellow, for Manley with 10 minutes left.

In a final show of defiance by the Town, MacDonald missed a reasonable chance in the last minute, but the two quick Leicester goals had left them with too much leeway to make up.

Had the goals that the Town's early approach work

early grip they had held on the middle of the field.

Once again, John Ryan took the eye with his forthright methods, and Slough looked more at home at left-back than he had at centre-half on Saturday.

Which brings me to Read and the need to underline the weakness he has shown over the holiday in dealing with high crosses. In my mind, it has gone some way towards undermining the confidence of the remainder of the defence.

ERIC PUGH on Town's Easter Monday drama

emphasise it, and it seemed that these would be forthcoming when, in the second minute, they took the lead.

As on so many occasions this season, John Ryan did the overlap brilliantly before slamming across a dangerous low centre.

With MacDonald behind him, **SJOBERG** simply had to try to clear and, unfortunately for him, the ball flashed off his foot and into the net as Shilton dived.

Except when Read showed uncertainty in his judgment and handling of high crosses Leicester could not effectively force their way into the game and further goals should have come to the Town as they persisted with their pressure.

This was a match that could have brought headlines for Anderson because he had a good chance in each half at a vital time and missed both. In the early stages, MacDonald laid on an opportunity for him but he was on the wrong line with his shot and whipped it wide of the near post.

At this time, Leicester's defence was looking anything but happy and Shilton had to use all his agility to prevent a back-header by

into the game towards half-time.

Under some pressure, Nicholl conceded a corner, and it was from this that Leicester equalised after 37 minutes.

Nish took the kick, and Read, going up in a crowd of players, failed to take decisive action, with the result that **MANLEY**, the replacement for the injured Kellard, sent the ball spiralling into the empty net with a header.

When Town manager Alec Stock was viewing the game in retrospect, he earmarked the concession of this goal, the fourth scored against the Town in three matches from corners, as the turning point of the game.

There were others, of course, and for me a vital one came with just over an hour gone when Anderson, from a long throw-in by MacDonald, was left with the chance of a lifetime.

There he was on the edge of the six-yard box with only Shilton to deny him, but he was perhaps in too much of a hurry and hit the ball tamely straight at the goalkeeper.

Before the Town had time to assimilate the implications

justified really become a reality, we should be acclaiming an exciting attacking display. Unfortunately, the finish was just not there with MacDonald and Anderson the main culprits.

Still bothered by his bruised foot, Nicholl put up a reasonable performance. There was improvement by Moore on his two previous displays, but I thought that Givens and Keen lost the



Town winger Peter Anderson goes up in a vain bid to beat Leicester goalkeeper Peter Shilton to the ball. Peter, who is England's No. 2, is clutching it safely.

LINE-UP

LUTON TOWN: Read; John Ryan, Slough; Givens, Nicholl, Moore; Jimmy Ryan (Bannister), Busby, MacDonald, Keen, Anderson.

LEICESTER CITY: Shilton; Whitworth, Nish; Manley (Stringfellow), Sjoberg, Cross; Farrington, Fern, Brown, Carlin, Partridge.
Referee: M. V. Sinclair, Guildford.
Attendance: 24,405.