

TACTICS, GOALKEEPER AND REF SMASH HOME RECORD



● **TURNING POINT:** The moment when even the woodwork played for Leicester, during a sustained spell of heavy pressure by the Town. Brian Stein, grounded in the background, produced a perfect far post cross and Bob Hatton, nearest the camera, met it with a downward header. But goalkeeper Mark Wallington, Leicester's man of the match, had twisted to narrow the angle, and Hatton's header slammed against the post.

Leaders pull clear with late winner at Roker

THE FIRST home defeat of the season dropped the Town two places in the Second Division, to 12th with 13 points, five below the nearest promotion spot and three ahead of the relegation fight.

Stoke, who have lost only once this season, stretched their lead at the top to three points by becoming the first visiting side to win at Sunderland. A goal by Brendan O'Callaghan two minutes from time silenced the day's biggest gate, 25,170 at Roker Park.

Crystal Palace dropped a place, to third, because of their first away defeat. They lost 1-2 at Burnley and Steve Kember, bought back from Leicester for £50,000, marked his second debut for Palace by being booked. Burnley manager Harry Potts was also booked for comments made on the line.

Fulham missed the chance of going into second place when they were beaten 1-2 at Craven Cottage by Blackburn, and West Ham and Charlton took advantage of this slip.

The Hammers beat lowly Preston 3-1 at Upton Park while Charlton, with Derek Hales still on the injured list, won 4-1 at Cardiff, and have now scored 13 goals in their last four games.

Saturday's matches left Stoke clear at the top with 20 points. West Ham and Crystal Palace have 17, followed by Charlton and Bristol Rovers with 16.

The Bristol interest in promotion is based on home form: they are the only club in the Football League with a 100 per cent home record. Two goals by Paul Randall accounted for Newcastle to give the Rovers their seventh consecutive win at Eastville. But they have yet to win away from home.

Another two-goal man was Alan Biley of Cambridge in their 3-1 home win over Orient, with another ex-Town striker Tom Finney getting the other goal.

Oldham, who entertain the Town on Saturday, gave

Division II Review

wards the Third Division with a 3-2 win at The Den. Millwall were in the lead twice, and 2-1 up at half-time, but two headers from corners brought goals for centre-half Keith Hicks to give Oldham the points. It was their second away win of the season, while Millwall have still won only once in 13 attempts.

They have five points and Preston have six, with

Cardiff, Blackburn and Orient all on ten.

Brighton Manager Alan Mullery found the solution to his side's poor recent run—he dropped striker Peter Ward and brought back Malcolm Poskett, who became man of the match at Bramall Lane. He got the only goal to leave Sheffield United only a point ahead of the relegation places.

Match Details

LUTON TOWN 0, LEICESTER CITY 1

Half-time: 0-0

TOWN: Aleksic, Donaghy, Aizlewood, Turner, Price (Carr, 88 mins); Hill, West, Fuccillo; Stein, Hatton, Moss.

LEICESTER: Wallington; Whitworth, Rofe, Williams, May; Kelly, Weller, Ridley, Henderson (White 65 mins), Christie, Hughes.

THE GOAL: Christie header, 86 minutes, from cross by Rofe.

OTHER GOAL ATTEMPTS: Town seven off target, four saved, one hit post; Leicester seven off target and three saved.

BOOKINGS: Ridley for a blatant body-check on Moss; Williams for dissent.

ATTENDANCE: 10,608, second highest of the season, but boosted by visitors from Leicester.

REFEREE: Brian Homewood, Sunbury-on-Thames — He's on the FIFA list, but chickened out over a penalty decision which might have put the Town in front.

ENTERTAINMENT: Much better than the score-line suggests. Good goalkeeping kept the score down, but Town fans might not have felt so sick if it had finished 3-4.

**Report by Brian Swain
Pictures: Steve Templeman**

THE WORST POSSIBLE preparation for last night's cup tie at Villa Park hit the Town when Leicester City professionally relieved them of their unbeaten home record, and also became the first visiting team to keep a clean sheet at Kenilworth Road this season.

It was a game which suggested that cracks are appearing in the previous smooth home form, and Leicester posed a couple of awkward questions about the defence.

Leicester pinched the points with a goal four minutes from time, but the biggest mystery of all was how the score-line was kept down to just the one goal.

Both sides found holes in the opposition's rear-guard, and on chances created it was almost level pegging, with a dozen to the Town and 11 to Leicester. Both goalkeepers made magnificent saves, but Mark Wallington's agility proved crucial.

He was beaten only twice, but Bob Hatton's header hit a post, and David Moss's cross-shot was headed off the line by Tommy Williams.

He made a finger-tip save

to touch a cracking drive by Mark Aizlewood over the bar, grabbed a close-range header from Moss and then did it again to prevent Brian Stein scoring.

Milija Aleksic was left stranded by an early Leicester break when Henderson burst through but shot wide as the goalkeeper rushed out to baulk him, and made a safe catch when the same player headed tamely from six yards after Christie had got round the back of the defence to make the centre.

Late in the first half Aleksic had to be brilliant to reach a header from Christie, and at that stage Leicester seemed to have lost their best chance of winning.

The Town stepped up the pace in the second half, producing the more consistent pressure, and two incidents when Leicester were on the rack turned out to be vital.

The first came when referee Brian Homewood let down his profession by an incredible decision over a foul in the penalty area.

I went home to re-read football law, and am convinced that Mr Homewood was wrong, and chickened out. Eddie Kelly was goal-side of Moss as the Luton player tried to find an opening near the goal-line, a yard or so inside the penalty area.

Kelly tackled Moss from behind, and the Luton player went down. It was a trip, or a push or perhaps a kick. Or perhaps it was no foul at all, just an accidental collision.

Mr Homewood ruled out the chance of it being unintentional by blowing up, so it had to be a direct

free kick, and therefore penalty.

He placed the ball a yard outside the area, until saw that Moss was shot, well inside the box. He then rolled the ball into the area and gave an indirect free kick. It was a decision which could not be made correct because it was most certainly not a case of obstruction, or dangerous play, or illegal charging.

For the next ten minutes the Town poured on pressure, with Hatton and Ricky Hill sparkling in approach. But Wallington and the post kept them out and Leicester battled through to just a deserved 0-0 draw.

But four minutes from time, after Paul Price had been injured in a collision full-back Dennis Rofe surged down the left wing and the marking was nonexistent as Christie headed the winner.

It was a triumph of tactical planning, because Leicester had produced the right antidote to Town's venom in attack.

Rofe and Steve Wallington kept Moss quiet on the flank and in midfield they concentrated on closing down Lil Fuccillo, with the result that he faded badly.

Leicester were incisive on the break, and I met Mal Donaghy the Town's best defender, with Potts showing too much complacency at the back.

But if the result was wrong for the Town and their supporters, it was at least a match full of incident and excitement, as Leicester manager Jimmy Wallace said at the end: "It could well have been 3-3 or 4-3, in which case we would all have called it a classic."



● **UNDER FIRE:** Leicester have six men back in their own penalty area as Ricky Hill gets in a shot early in the second half.