

DOWN ONE PLACE — BUT STILL IN TOP THREE

WHILE A victory would have put them back on top of the Second Division, the Town's home draw with Leicester on Saturday dropped them by one place in the league table, to third.

In the day's big game, leaders Newcastle came unstuck at Stamford Bridge, with Chelsea sweeping them off the top and taking their place with a 4-0 win in front of 32,281 customers.

The result made Chelsea's goal

difference figure identical to the Town's. Leicester remain in fourth place, just one point behind the Town, and Sunderland have moved up to lead the challenge of the chasing pack after a 4-2 home win over Oldham.

Birmingham dropped back when they

lost 0-1 away to relegation battlers Bristol Rovers, and Queens Park Rangers took a tumble when Notts County beat them 3-1 at Loftus Road.

Burnley's spirited battle against the drop continued with a 0-0 home draw against Swansea, who entertain the Town

tomorrow night. Fulham are bottom, with 15 points, with Charlton on 17.

Burnley, Bristol Rovers, Oldham and Shrewsbury are all on 19 points, one behind Watford.

Top of the table positions:

	HOME Goals					AWAY Goals				
	P	W	D	L	F A	P	W	D	L	F A
Chelsea	25	9	1	2	22	7	6	2	5	22
Newcastle	25	11	1	0	24	8	2	6	5	15
Luton	25	5	7	1	24	12	6	3	3	19
Leicester	25	7	4	2	22	13	4	5	3	18
Sunderland	25	11	2	0	31	11	1	3	8	7
Birmingham	24	8	2	2	17	9	4	3	5	14

Leicester get what they wanted

YOU HAVE TO LOOK down to 13th place in the Second Division league table to find a team with fewer home wins to its credit than the Town. Saturday's seventh home draw of the season was another case of a point that got away, and all the more damaging because once more it was failure to beat a team challenging for promotion.

The best away record in the division means that the Town are on schedule for a return to the top flight, but they still need to give more for home supporters to cheer.

Both managers described Saturday's offering as "magnificent football" and they were right so far as excitement is concerned.

"You don't really need to talk to us," said Leicester's Jock Wallace. "You could all see it was a great game."

"It's going to be a dog-fight all the way for promotion, but if both teams keep playing like this they will both get there."

With respect to Mr Wallace, 42 draws a season would not be good enough. I imagine his pleasure came as much from the valuable point as from the general level of performance in a high-speed encounter.

He was delighted to see his team shake off the crushing indignity of losing in the FA Cup to non-league Harlow, but was not prepared to admit that his team escaped at Kenilworth Road through two huge strokes of luck.

believe the Town should have had two penalties but referee Reg Robinson made a couple of honest mistakes, and really the Town had enough pressure to ensure success without hoping for a lucky break.

Town manager David Pleat was calm enough: "The referee has to make decisions, and we have to accept them, and that's it."

The first incident came in the 18th minute when Mal Donaghy went through and was pulled down by Martin Henderson. It was almost on the line of the penalty area, and the linesman signalled that the offence was inside the box.

The Town's video tape confirms that he was right, and that it should have been a penalty, but Mr Robinson gave the kick just outside the area, and it all came to nothing when Mark Wallington made a good save from Paul Price's header when David Moss curled the kick to the far post.

Leicester reacted to that scare by gaining the ascendancy for a time, and after Henderson and Ian Wilson had brought saves from Jake Findlay, Alan Young mucked up the best chance of the match.

He and Mike Saxby had a niggly afternoon, with

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Young digging in elbows, and Saxby's slip in the 27th minute gave the Leicester striker a clear run at goal.

He dribbled round Findlay, and shot carefully at the unguarded goal, only to see the quick brain of Donaghy intervene — the defender anticipated the danger and got back brilliantly to clear off the line.

Larry May and John O'Neill were holding Bob Hatton and Brian Stein down the middle, particularly when the Town made the mistake of giving the ball too much height, but Moss sparked some impressive Town moves towards the end of the first half.

He hit the far post with a corner, brought a flying save from Wallington, and placed a corner superbly

for Donaghy to get in for a header which Wallington tipped over the bar.

The goalkeeper performed more wonders to beat out a close-range shot by Ricky Hill after Stein got round the back of the defence, and most of the second half saw the Town searching for a route to goal through a robust and hard-working Leicester rearguard.

Hill, Alan West and Tony Grealish won the midfield honours, and the best move they created ended with Moss driving a low cross-shot towards the far corner of the net, only for Wallington to pull off another quality save.

The second "penalty" incident was in the 55th minute, when May used his hand to flick a centre by

Moss away from Hatton. Or at least, I am sure he did, Mr Robinson said he didn't, and the player said the same, with a beaming Mr Wallace claiming that he never argues with referees. He added that May would have owned up after the match if he had handled.

The biggest worry for Town supporters was that Leicester might just have sneaked a winner on the break, and Findlay had to make a couple of saves from Derek Strickland.

It was galling to see the Town have so much pressure, and play so well in all departments, without getting the goals they wanted.

Wallington played well, and his back four battled hard, and when they were caught out Grealish headed

wide from right in front of goal from another pinpoint centre by Moss.

"I really should have put that one away," he said. "It's amazing how many times we can play so well, and not get the result we want."

"But one day someone is going to come here and take a right walloping."

That's one football forecast I agree with, and in the meantime Mr Pleat is not prepared to lose his rag over dropped home points.

"We had to pick ourselves up after losing to Swindon, and I was very pleased with the application we showed," he said. "The players came back to show they do want to win promotion."

"If we can keep playing like that we have no problems."



● FLASHPOINT: The moment when the Town were denied a penalty. Mal Donaghy goes crashing as Martin Henderson brings him down, with the Leicester player just inside the penalty area. But referee Reg Robinson had to make his decision on the spot, without benefit of video action replays or still photographs, and gave the kick outside the area.

Match Details

LUTON TOWN 0, LEICESTER CITY 0

TOWN: Findlay; Stephens, Donaghy, Saxby, Price; Hill, Grealish, West; Stein, Hatton, Moss. Sub: White, not used.

LEICESTER: Wallington; Williams, Welsh, May, O'Neill; Goodwin, Wilson, Kelly (Strickland, 50 mins); Henderson, Young, Smith.

GOAL ATTEMPTS: Town nine saved, five off target, one hit the post; Leicester seven saved, six off target.

ATTENDANCE: 14,141, boosted by a good following from Leicester.

ENTERTAINMENT: Lots of fast and furious action, and only needed a goal or two to make it a five-star show.

REFEREE: Reg Robinson, Suffolk—fluffed two vital penalty area decisions, and missed, or ignored, off-the-ball aggro involving Leicester's Alan Young with Mike Saxby and Mal Donaghy.



LUCKY ESCAPE: Brian Stein, extreme right, gets round the back to put the Leicester defence in trouble. But they got away with the efforts of David Moss and Ricky Hill.