



● **POINT-SAVER:** Bob Hatton steers in the Town's equaliser. The falling body in the foreground is Brian Stein, whose run and cross made the goal.

WE CAN STILL DO IT SAYS MANAGER

MANAGER David Pleat insisted bravely this week that the Town's promotion hopes are not yet dead. But his team, proud leaders of the Second Division for a month in mid-season, faces a huge task to stem the decline since the turn of the year.

Burnley, almost certainly doomed to the Third Division for the first time in their history, came to Kenilworth Road and became the 11th team this season to take away at least one point — and on merit.

Bob Hatton's lovely equaliser saved the Town's blushes. But with conditions all against football skills and niceties it seems that in heavy going at least the Town are not First Division class.

The manager talked about work still to be done, and a task that can

THE TOP TEAMS

	P	W	D	L	F	A	P
Chelsea	35	21	4	10	59	46	46
Birmingham	35	19	7	9	50	31	45
Leicester	35	15	12	8	49	35	42
Sunderland	34	16	9	9	54	37	41
Newcastle	35	15	11	9	46	37	41
Luton Town	35	13	14	8	56	40	40
QPR	35	15	9	11	62	45	39
West Ham	33	16	5	12	43	35	37
Oldham	35	14	9	12	45	44	37

● NOT including last night's matches: Chelsea v QPR, Newcastle v Notts County.

still be accomplished to realise the dream of promotion. His problem is that the Town need other

teams to be inconsistent to revive hope.

The Town's target looks to be not much less than 14 points from their last seven matches, three of them away.

It's a tall order. But like the manager said when asked to throw in the promotion towel: "Certainly not. It's crazy to suggest that we have already lost all hope of going up."

The 13th home point of the season to escape went to Lancashire because Burnley gave every indication that there is not a huge gap in class between the top and bottom ends of the Second Division.

They were prepared to grit their teeth, and sometimes defend with all eleven players in their own penalty area.

The Town badly needed an early goal and it almost came when Tony Grealish sent Hatton racing down the right flank. Brian Stein took the Town's individual honours, but his header brought a flying save from Alan Stevenson.

Burnley matched the Town in the atrocious conditions in midfield, and mounted some promising breaks. Jake Findlay had to make a good save from Malcolm Smith when Joe Jakub beat Ricky Hill and supplied a neat forward pass.

PENALTY ?

Stubborn defence in depth in the mud proved to be more than the Town could cope with, and Burnley had the lucky breaks that were going.

Paul Dixon was fortunate to escape penalty appeals when he upended Stein in a tackle after the Luton striker had controlled a pass beautifully in the box, and just before the break Hatton went

round Dixon smoothly and saw his cross sliced narrowly wide of the post by Vince Oyerson.

The frustration grew as the Town battered away again at the start of the second half, only for Burnley to snatch a goal in the 60th minute after another Town attack broke down.

Jakub won the ball in midfield, and Smith carried on the move with a good run down the left wing. Billy Hamilton managed to reach his low cross to score from close range.

Hatton, who went through a lean spell earlier in the season, deserved a goal for his efforts, and

duly obliged eight minutes later after Stein's run into the box left Dixon and Ian Brennan floundering. The low cross was perfectly placed, as was Hatton's shot into the net.

Mike Saxby netted shortly afterwards from a free kick by Paul Price, but the effort was disallowed for a push, and Burnley had another escape when Dixon stopped a header by Hill with a style reminiscent of Mike Brearley . . . I think he got his hands to it but didn't actually make the catch.

To counter-balance that, Burnley's Derek Scott

clipped the top of the bar with a last-minute shot and if that had been a goal the promotion push would be well and truly over.

If the result was poor, with the record now seven matches without a win, it was at least a pleasure to see Hatton and Stein give the Burnley defence so many problems.

And Andy Pearson can look back on his full debut with some satisfaction. The absence of the injured David Moss was a drawback, but I have no doubts that Pearson will become a worthy successor.

Match Details

LUTON TOWN 1, BURNLEY 1

Half-time: 0-0

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

BURNLEY: Stevenson; Arins, Brennan, Overson, Dixon; Scott, Robertson, Jakub; James, Hamilton, Smith. Sub: Rodaway, not used.

THE GOALS: Billy Hamilton for Burnley, 60 minutes, after Town caught on the break; Bob Hatton for the Town, 68 minutes, after lovely close control and cross by Brian Stein.

OTHER GOAL ATTEMPTS: Town 12 off target, seven saved and one disallowed; Burnley four off target, four saved, one hit the bar.

ATTENDANCE: 8,507—lowest this year, and only two league games this season have been lower.

ENTERTAINMENT: Very sporadic, with a mud-bound pitch and swirling wind against good football.

REFEREE: Ray Lewis, Great Bookham—might have given the Town a couple of penalties but played well outside the penalty areas.

BOOKINGS: Stuart Robertson for a foul on Tony Grealish; Leighton James for dissenting gesture at a linesman.

CELEBRATION: Alan West's 250th league match for the Town. How many other clubs would not have made him captain for the day, especially against his only former team?