

Sports News 1

Moving up the table

THE first league win in five attempts — since Watford were beaten on August 19 — lifted the Town seven places up the Second Division table, to eleventh.

With seven points from seven games, they are five points behind top place and four above the bottom.

Blackburn Rovers maintained their record as the only unbeaten side in the division with a home 2-0 win over Grimsby, who were promoted with them and who entertain the Town on Saturday.

West Ham, unbeaten since the Town won at Upton Park on the season's first day, kept up the chase in a five-goal thriller against Watford. Twice behind, they won with a last-minute goal from Trevor Brooking.

Notts County kept up with West Ham, on ten points, with a 1-0 victory over Bristol City at Ashton Gate in a game spoiled by the sending-off of Bristol's David Rodgers and County's Rachid Hassouk.

Fans who were not satisfied with the entertainment at Kenilworth Road might well have had second thoughts after television showed the grim goings-on at Bristol.

It left the West County dropping up the rest of the table — Bristol City are bottom with three points, in their first season after relegation from the First Division, and Bristol Rovers are bottom but one, with four points after losing 1-2 at Cardiff.

Verdict on the Town's week ★★



RADDY ANTIC (right) curls a free-kick over the wall of City defenders for the Town's goal in the 25th minute. Pictures by Mark Richards.

FIRST DIVISION CLASS GIVES CITY THE EDGE

23-9-80
FLC
3435

Match Details

LUTON TOWN 1, MANCHESTER CITY 2
Half-time: 1-2

TOWN: Findlay; Stephens, Donaghy, Saxby Price; Grealish (Smith, 80 minutes), Hill, West, Stein, Antic, Moss.

MANCHESTER CITY: Corrigan; Ranson, Reid, Caton, Booth; Henry, Daley, Power, Palmer; Bennett, Reeves. Sub: Sugrue, not needed.

GOALS: Bennett for Manchester City, 12 minutes, given too much room in the box after pass by Reeves; Raddy Antic for the Town, 25 minutes, 20-yard free kick; Henry for City, 43 minutes, unmarked header from cross by Daley.

OTHER GOAL ATTEMPTS: Town six saved and six off target; Manchester City four saved and six off target.

ATTENDANCE: 10,265 — pathetic. Why make it all-ticket? The Town changed their mind on the day of the match, when it was too late.

ENTERTAINMENT: Only a little short of being a top quality cup-tie, but still good value for money.

REFEREE: Stephen Bates, Bristol—no complaints from the Town boss, but it looked from the Press Box as though he missed a penalty to the Town in the second half.

HOPES of League Cup glory were cut down to size at Kenilworth Road on Tuesday night when Manchester City demonstrated that a struggling First Division club are a cut above the Town's Second Division standard.

City Chief Coach Malcolm Allison, thought to be facing the sack after turning over more than £7 million in transfers to build a side which is still looking for its first league win of the season, confessed that he was not entirely happy with the way his side snatched victory.

Town supporters might complain that the referee chickened out and denied them a penalty which would have brought the equaliser, but I couldn't help feeling that City were worth their win.

ERRORS PUNISHED

The Town were punished for a couple of defensive lapses, and hard though they battled they rarely outplayed City's speed and inventiveness.

Manager David Pleat confessed that the First Division strugglers had shown that super-fit athletes could overcome adversity with hard running and the ability to swing the ball around.

The pleasure for Luton supporters was that the Town, highest transfer fee £200,000 for Mike Saxby, were so very nearly the equals of a City side which included two men who cost over a million pounds each.

Steve Daley in midfield and Kevin Reeves on the attacking flank both looked quality players, but were not that much better than, for instance, Ricky Hill and Raddy Antic.

Allison, a subdued thoughtful man nowadays, said he was disappointed that his side did not do very much better. "It was a battle, and I never felt comfortable," he said. "Luton set us a lot of problems."

He added: "It was a very difficult game for us and I was disappointed in a lot of things. We worked hard, but there was a lack of confidence in possession, and we were not putting enough passes together."

CHANGE NEEDED

Town boss David Pleat put his finger on the major difference between the sides—City had more variety in approach. If moves down one flank faced strong opposition, they had men capable of whacking the ball 40 or 50 yards across the width of the pitch to change the point of attack.

"We needed to change our pattern a little more," he

By **BRIAN SWAIN**
Sports Editor

said. "We dragged opponents over to one side with good moves, but didn't then switch the ball to the other side."

Manchester City, struggling to overcome a poor start to their First Division season, played a 4-4-2 formation in which all players had more than one duty.

When the Town attacked there were usually nine men behind the ball, and when City moved forward midfield men and defenders were quick to get up in support. But if they sometimes looked a yard faster than the average Second Division team, they were in trouble when the Town played flowing one-pass football.

Antic's skills and Brian Stein's tricky control posed plenty of problems for the visitors, but the defence was suspect when Kevin Reeves, one of the million-pound men, got past Mal Donaghy and let in Dave Bennett for the opening goal in the 12th minute.

Donaghy had a hard night, but the Town were very much in with a chance when Antic equalised with his first goal for them in the 25th minute. Alan West was pushed to the ground just outside the box and Antic curled the free kick past Joe Corrigan with a perfect 20-yard free kick around the defensive wall.

KILLER GOAL

The killer came two minutes before half time when midfielder man Tony Henry was not followed as he moved upfield to find plenty of space to head the winner from Steve Daley's cross.

The Town exerted plenty of pressure after the break, but Tommy Caton's apparent trip on Stein was ignored by the referee when a penalty looked likely, and City's only other real worry was when Corrigan stretched full-length to tip a drive by David Moss round the post.

Tony Grealish was out of touch and replaced for the final ten minutes by Herbie Smith. He had scored three times in the last two reserve games, and looked a very good Football Combination player.

Ten minutes in a cup-tie is hardly enough to give a striker a fair crack of the whip, but the Town's overall performance must have given a lot of encouragement to their players.

"I wish we could play them again," said Mike Saxby. "Don't we all!"