

Hammers
widen gap
at the top

PARTIAL failures by most of their rivals left the Town in sixth place in the Second Division table, still two points short of the nearest promotion place.

In the day's crunch confrontation leaders West Ham went to the Vetch Field and beat second-placed Swansea 3-1 to pull six points clear of the pack.

If we accept that the Town won't catch West Ham, it was the night result.

Chelsea haven't scored for six games, but kept third place, a point behind Swansea with a 0-0 draw at Sheffield Wednesday.

The only change of place in the top six saw Derby County move up to fourth with a 2-1 home win over bottom club Bristol Rovers, thanks to an early own goal and a second-half winner by Alan Biley.

Notts County dropped a place when they were held 0-0 at home by Shrewsbury, but are level on points with Chelsea and Derby.

The leading places in the Second Division:

	P	W	D	L	F	A	P
West Ham	26	16	6	4	44	22	38
Swansea	26	11	10	5	40	27	32
Chelsea	26	11	9	6	38	24	31
Derby	26	11	9	6	40	33	31
Notts Co	25	10	11	4	28	24	31
Luton Town	26	11	7	8	39	32	29
Blackburn	25	10	9	6	27	20	29
Sheff Wed	24	11	6	7	32	37	28

Match Details

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

LUTON TOWN: Findlay, Donaghy, Saxby, Price, Aizlewood; Hill, Grealish, West; Stein, Ingram, Moss. Sub: Turner, not used.

CARDIFF: Healey; Roberts, Pontin, Dwyer, Thomas; Hughes, Ronson, Buchanan (Micallef, 62 minutes); Giles, Kitchen, Stevens.

THE GOALS: Peter Kitchen for Cardiff, 10 minutes, well-taken shot after strong run into box; David Moss for the Town, 25 minutes, from Brian Stein's clever lay-back; Paul Giles for Cardiff, 35 seconds into second half, Jake Findlay beaten as Mike Saxby deflected the shot; Paul Price for the Town 62 minutes, header from Saxby's header across goal. Stein got the final touch, but gave the goal credit to Price.

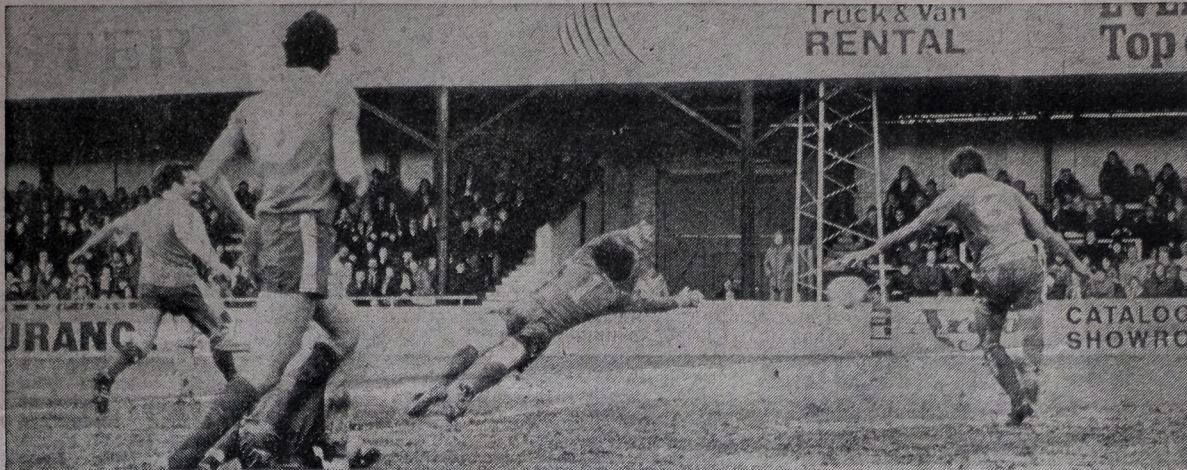
OTHER GOAL ATTEMPTS: Town nine saved and six off target; Cardiff five saved and two wide.

ENTERTAINMENT: Very good from both sides on a wet, slippery pitch and a blizzard in the last few minutes.

ATTENDANCE: 9,013 — also very good for a cold wintry day, but 200 fewer than for the Friday night corresponding match last season.

REFEREE: David Hutchinson, Harrogate. Best we have seen home or away this season.

Town Match Verdict ★★



● **EQUALISER:** David Moss, obscured by Cardiff No 8 Peter Kitchen, extreme left, hammers his 14th goal of the season to cancel out Kitchen's opener.

WELSH JINX STRIKES
FOR ANOTHER POINT

Report by
Brian Swain

Pictures
by John
Shorthouse

A SETBACK, but not a disaster, was manager David Pleat's description of the Town's failure to take both points at Kenilworth Road against a Cardiff City side who are becoming something of a jinx.

They defended stubbornly and counter-attacked effectively, and forced the Town to fight back twice. If either side was lucky to save a point it was Cardiff, but it was hard to begrudge them the draw — if the Town had done it at Ninian Park I would have been well pleased.

The disappointment for Town fans is that a solid push for promotion requires 100 per cent home success in terms of results, and they had enough of the ball to have beaten Cardiff.

Visiting manager Richie Morgan has taken seven points out of eight from the Town since he took over at Ninian Park, and Cardiff's current run is eight league games without defeat as they pull away from the relegation zone.

"I think that was a good game to watch, and that we played it just right," he said. "You couldn't fault either side for effort, and a draw was a fair result."

Mr Pleat complained that his side had not fulfilled its promise, and added that his players believed they could do better than they had. He was particularly concerned at the apparent ease with which Cardiff caught the Town on the break.

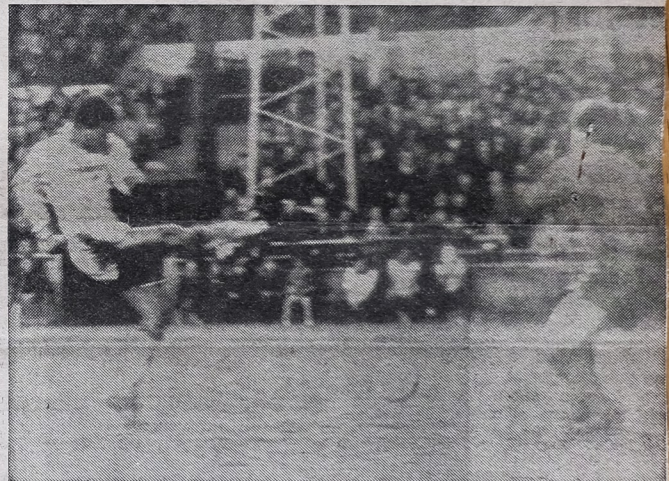
The opening goal came from Cardiff's first forward movement. John Buchanan slipped the ball to Peter Kitchen on the left wing, and defenders obligingly backed off before Kitchen got into the penalty area

and struck a sweet shot into the top corner of the net.

With Tony Grealish and Ricky Hill taking charge of midfield the Town hit back with a wave of attacking moves, and Ron Healey saved his side with vital saves from Hill, Brian Stein and Godfrey Ingram. When he was beaten, Mike Saxby's header from a corner by David Moss was headed off the line by Buchanan.

The tide of pressure brought its reward in the 25th minute when Mal Donaghy, still deputising for the injured Kirk Stephens at right back, broke down the flank. Ingram and Stein battled for a final vital touch, and although Healey thwarted them he was left helpless as Stein cunningly laid the ball back for Moss to hammer his 14th goal of the season.

Cardiff concentrated on playing it tight in defence and looking for the counter-attacks, and slowly their midfield, Wayne Hughes, and Billy Ronson in particular, began to



● **IT'S OURS:** Brian Stein gets in to put the finishing touch to Paul Price's header for the Town's second equaliser. "I touched it, but it was Paul's goal," said the striker later.

match the Town's.

Stein made a thrilling solo run from the half-way line and was foiled by Healey, and Buchanan, who always seems to have a good match against the Town, forced Findlay to a flying save to push a curling drive around the post.

At half-time, it seemed as though the Town might have done the hard part in

getting back into the game, but they were caught by a sucker punch just 35 seconds into the second half.

Paul Giles, younger brother of Swansea's star and Kevin Keegan look-alike, scored the first league goal of his career when he took a pass from Ronson and shot from just outside the penalty area. The ball took a deflection off Saxby, and goalkeeper Findlay said later he would have saved but for that. Mr Pleat called it an own goal, but none of us in the Press box did.

The reverse sparked another wave of fierce Town attacking, and justice was done in the 62nd minute. Moss and Mark Aizlewood worked a short corner, and from the cross Saxby headed the ball back across goal. Paul Price powered his header goalwards and Stein fol-

lowed up to make sure it reached the net.

With 15 goals to his credit already this season, Stein said that he did get the final touch, but added: "The ball was going in anyway, so give the goal to Paul Price."

The Welsh international's first goal of the season could hardly have come at a better time.

Cardiff pulled ten men back to defend in the closing stages, and received some help from a late blizzard sweeping towards the Kenilworth Road end.

The last word should perhaps be about the man on the field who was the day's most consistent performer — referee David Hutchinson from Harrogate. He was absolutely superb throughout and left Kenilworth Road voicing appreciation of two good footballing sides.

ADDITION TO THE
LIST OF SCORERS

PAUL PRICE, acknowledged by Brian Stein as the scorer of the Town's second equaliser, was the 11th player to get his name on the club's scoring list this season. It was his seventh goal in five years, and his first since he got one in a 3-2 home win over Bristol Rovers in January 1979. David Moss's goal was his 14th of the season, including three in cup-ties, and Brian Stein has 15.



● **HOLD THAT:** Godfrey Ingram smashes in a first-half shot as the Town seek an equaliser. He beat his marker, but Ron Healey made a vital diving save.