

Edging closer, but...

ALTHOUGH the Town crept up three places in the Second Division, to sixth, they are still three points short of the nearest promotion place, with 13 matches to play to the end of the season.

West Ham continue to make the rest look like also-rans. They are seven points clear at the top after their 2-0 win at Shrewsbury.

Notts County held on to second place with a crucial 2-1 home win over Swansea, a result which knocked the Welshmen out of the top three.

Chelsea returned to the promotion frame with a 3-0 home success over Cambridge, with £200,000 signing Alan Mayes, formerly of Watford and Swindon, scoring twice.

Derby moved up into fourth place by beating Grimsby 2-1 at the Baseball Ground. Grimsby were one of several challengers to falter—QPR's surge on the table ended with a 1-0 defeat at Newcastle, and Sheffield Wednesday were beaten by the same score at Ashton Gate by Bristol City.

But Bristol has little to cheer about—Rovers lost at Oldham, and with only one win in 29 attempts are as good as down to the Third Division.

They have 13 points, ten below fourth-from-bottom Cardiff City. Bristol City are 21st, with 22 points, below Shrewsbury on goal difference. Cardiff have 23 points, and Preston and Wrexham 24.

The top places:

	P	W	D	L	F	A	P
West Ham	29	18	7	4	52	23	43
Notts Co	28	12	4	3	27	36	36
Chelsea	29	13	9	7	44	25	33
Derby	29	12	10	7	45	39	34
Swansea	29	11	10	6	43	34	32
Luton T	29	12	3	9	44	34	32
Blackburn	28	11	10	7	31	23	31
Grimsby	29	10	11	8	31	29	31

● HILL CLIMBER: Ricky Hill flies through the air to meet a centre by Godfrey Ingram to head the Town into the lead.

BOSS'S WARNING GETS RIGHT REPLY

A WARNING to his players that they were close to throwing away six months hard work brought about a remarkable transformation at Kenilworth Road as the Town's promotion hopes were re-kindled.

A goal down after a wretched performance in the first half, they took the advice of manager David Plead to heart, and swept fellow contenders Blackburn out of the way with a three-goal reply.

The manager said later: "I told the players before the game that if we lost this one we could say goodbye to the season. At half-time I told them that there was no way they should lose to Blackburn."

"We hadn't put our passes together, but all it needed was for us to play the way we can in the second half and I was sure we would win."

The manager also reminded his players that

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defender Derek Fazackerley and midfielder Marshall Burke were both limping, and that the Blackburn side could easily lose its rhythm.

He turned out to be exactly right. Blackburn player-manager Howard Kendall saw his hopes vanish in the 50th minute when Fazackerley limped off with a knee injury. They were still trying to reorganise when the Town equalised, and Mr Kendall said Paul Price's near-post header would not have been such a simple goal if Fazackerley had still been around.

But he had no complaints over the final result—"It wasn't a case of us playing badly, or making a lot of silly

mistakes. Luton played very well in the second half."

The story of the first half is one to forget. Noel Brotherston threatened to tear the Town apart, and laid on Burke's opening goal in the ninth minute, from a spectacular over-head bicycle kick.

The fans got frustrated at a disjointed Town performance, with only Ricky Hill and Mark Aizlewood looking anywhere near top form, and Blackburn might have wrapped it up in the first 45 minutes. Glen Keeley put an early header wide and Brotherston hammered two shots a yard or so wide of the post as the Town struggled.

But the crowd's half-time jeers vanished when the Town opened up as they attacked the Oak Road end after the break. Blackburn never again looked threatening in attack, and the loss of Fazackerley wrecked their defensive strength.

Mick Speight was pulled back into defence, and was one of several players left trailing as the Town, inspired by Hill and David Moss, took control.

Brian Stein won the corner from which Moss supplied the cross for Price's 53rd-minute equaliser, and eight minutes later Godfrey Ingram set up the Town's second.

He had already delivered one perfect cross from which Alan West had a header saved, but there was no stopping the next effort—Ingram burst past Jim Branagan and Speight on the left wing and Hill met the centre with a thumping header into the top corner of the net.

Speight blocked a Stein effort on the line, but the Town were at last firing on all cylinders. Aizlewood crowned a delightful performance by playing a one-two for Moss to hit the third goal in the 81st minute, and even Tony Grealish, who took a long time to get going, found the range in another late attack, but hit the post.

Blackburn had no answer once the Town hit top gear, and probably the second half dazzlers earned the right to obliterate memories of defensive doubts before the interval.

Match Details

LUTON TN. 3, BLACKBURN ROV. 1
Half-time: 0-1

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

BLACKBURN: Arnold; Branagan, Keeley, Fazackerley (Stonchouse, 70 mins), Rathbone; Kendall, Burke, Speight; Brotherston, Garner, Lowey.

THE GOALS: Marshall Burke for Blackburn, 9 minutes, overhead bicycle kick from pass by Noel Brotherston; Paul Price for the Town, 53 minutes, near post header from David Moss corner; Ricky Hill for the Town, 61 minutes, header from Godfrey Ingram's cross; David Moss for the Town, 81 minutes, after swapping passes with Mark Aizlewood.

OTHER GOAL ATTEMPTS: Town four saved, 11 off target and one hit the post; Blackburn four saved and five wide. Corners: 9-3 to the Town.

ATTENDANCE: 9,350, many of whom were getting decidedly impatient at half-time.

ENTERTAINMENT: Dreadful for the first 45 minutes, but the Town looked First Division class for the second half.

REFEREE: Jeff Bray Hineckley—inconsistent on the advantage rule, but otherwise very good.



● PRICE RIGHT: The Town skipper gets in front of a defender to head the Town's equaliser from a corner by David Moss.



● PICK THAT ONE OUT: David Moss, in the background, turns away as the ball hits the net for his 16th goal of the season, the Town's third against Blackburn.

SKILL TEST—£500 PRIZE—See P59