



● DECIDER: Brian Stein beats Kilcline to the ball to volley the Town's winner at Meadow Lane.

GAMBLE PAYS OFF IN THE BATTLE OF WITS

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Match Details

NOTTS COUNTY 0, LUTON TOWN 1
Half-time: 0-1

TOWN: Findlay; Stephens, Saxby, Price, Donaghy; Antic, Hill, Grealish; Stein, White, Moss, Sub: Aizlewood, not needed.
NOTTS COUNTY: Avramovic; Benjamin, Kilcline, Richards, O'Brien; Kelly, Masson, Hunt, Hooks, McCulloch, Christie (Harouk), 26 mins).

THE GOAL: Brian Stein, 20-yard volley from clever pass by David Moss as the Town caught County on the break in the 37th minute.

OTHER GOAL ATTEMPTS: Town 13 saved and seven off target; County three saved and seven wide. Corners: 6-1 to County.

ATTENDANCE: 8,075, better than the Meadow Lane average thanks to a good following from Luton.

REFEREE: John Hough, Macclesfield. Certainly no homer and so quick with the book that he pulled a muscle and had to change places with a linesman in the 78th minute.

BOOKINGS: Mike Saxby for a foul, Tony Grealish for hands, Mal Donaghy for a foul.

ENTERTAINMENT: Very good, with the Town in quiet control in the first half thanks to David Pleat's inspired tactical changes, and close to a goal spree in the second with sub-standard finishing and good goal-keeping making the scoreline an unrealistic reflection of play.

A CRACKING goal by Brian Stein earned the Town two points at the expense of promotion favourites Notts County at Meadow Lane. But the real work to keep the Town's lingering hopes alive in the scramble for the First Division had been done in the previous five days at Kenilworth Road.

Manager David Pleat devised a complete change of tactics for the Town, and the gamble paid off as the team made the new system work to perfection.

County, normally so adept at defending in depth and pinching goals on the break, were bamboozled by a Town style which gave several players different jobs to do at different times, and the home side was left clueless.

The greatest delight for the big Luton following was that they could see the strange pattern working a treat, and enjoy the sight of their team putting the opposition defence on the rack.

The only disappointment was that there were not more goals to show for it. Stein and Steve White might both have had hat-tricks, and Raddy Avramovic was forced to play a much more hectic role in events than Jake Findlay.

The Town dropped Godfrey Ingram and Lil Fuccillo and recalled White and Raddy Antic. Mike Saxby and Paul Price took care of County's two front runners and very often full-backs Kirk Stephens and Mal Donaghy were playing in the middle and looking for breaks. Antic operated sometimes as a sweeper and sometimes as a mid-field man going forward, and got through a tremendous amount of work.

The attacking system

SEEKING TACTICS TO TIE UP NOTTS

DAVID PLEAT

● FIRST WITH THE NEWS: David Pleat's plans to produce something completely different were disclosed in Brian Swain's Sports View last week. And the new tactics, with a sweeper and David Moss playing deep behind two front runners worked to perfection. "The players worked hard on it in training," said the manager. "It was a bit of a gamble, but we knew we had to produce something special to beat Notts County. It was win or bust and the team was magnificent in making it work."

created specially for this game completed County's bewilderment. For the first half David Moss played deep, in a role once made famous by Don Revie, with Stein and White operating as twin centre-forwards.

The luckless Tristan Benjamin spent 45 minutes wondering whether to go out of position and follow Moss, or mark space for the ever-likely danger posed when Donaghy, Antic, Ricky Hill or Tony Grealish broke through in support of attacks.

By half-time, with the Town a goal up, County must have been badly in need of words of wisdom from manager Jimmy Sirrell. But if they thought they had worked out the measures to combat the Town's methods, County were thrown into more confusion after the break when the Town went back to the more conventional

style, with Moss a left-winger again.

And with County forced to be more adventurous in the search for an equaliser, the Town took control and made huge gaps in the Notts half of the field.

The Town's goal was well worth victory. For more than half an hour there had been little direct threat to either goal, although David Hunt should have got a header on target after a break down County's right.

In the 37th minute Saxby was adjudged to have tripped McCulloch. I didn't think he did. If he did, I feared it was a penalty, but Mr John Hough, later to give up the whistle with a pulled muscle, gave a free kick on the edge of the box.

The shot was blocked by the wall, and from the rebound Findlay made a simple save. From his clearance Moss got control

in midfield, and with County caught stretched he veered to the left and then lobbed the ball into the centre. Stein hammered it first time on the volley from just outside the penalty area, and with the goalkeeper trying in vain to narrow the angle the ball flew into the net.

Avramovic produced top class saves against Stephens, White and Grealish, and was let off the hook a couple of times by White and twice by Stein.

But if the front runners failed to some extent by not hitting two or three more goals, they earned credit for the skill and speed with which they made the openings despite some uncompromising tackling. The problem, of course, is that if you want to be First Division goal-scoring you need a greater success rate from fewer strikes at goal.

MANAGER David Pleat admits that the Town still have "an awful lot to do" if they are to win promotion this season. The victory at Nottingham pushed them up two places in the table, to ninth.

They are still three points away from third place and promotion needs a good run by the Town, and a string of failures by teams above them.

West Ham moved ten points clear at the top when David Cross's 29th goal of the season gave them a 1-0 win at Newcastle.

Sheffield Wednesday are still third after a 0-0 home draw with Derby, but Chelsea got back into the top four when they scored their first victory and their first goal for three games with a 2-0 home success over Bolton.

Blackburn joined Chelsea and Derby, a point below Sheffield Wednesday, with a 1-1 draw at QPR.

The day's shock result was at the other end of the table: bottom club Bristol Rovers won 3-1 at Cambridge. It was only their third win in 33 games, and their first away from home.

But they are still doomed, and Bristol City, who come to Kenilworth Road on Saturday, also look stranded. They drew 1-1 at home to Grimsby on Tuesday night.

Shrewsbury, held 2-2 at home by Oldham, look favourites for the third relegation place, with Oldham in fourth from bottom place two points ahead of Shrewsbury.

Top places in the Second Division.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pt
West Ham	33	22	7	4	63	26	51
Notts Co	32	14	13	5	37	30	41
Sheff Wed	32	15	8	9	42	31	38
Chelsea	33	14	9	10	46	31	37
Grimsby	33	12	13	8	36	27	37
Blackburn	32	12	13	7	34	26	37
Derby	33	12	13	8	48	43	37
Swansea	32	13	10	9	49	37	36
Luton Tn	32	13	9	10	45	38	35



● PRESSURE: Raddy Antic hammers a shot goalwards as the Town sweep forward in the second half.