

LUTON TARGET IS ANOTHER DOZEN

Wrexham 0 Luton 0
By ERIC HARRIS

LUTON cautiously — and often nervously — kept in close touch with the Second Division leaders by holding Wrexham to a goalless draw in North Wales last night.

Although Raddy Antic could have given them that precious extra point in their search for First Division status, Luton often lived dangerously and finally escaped with a draw after Wrexham striker Mick Vinter missed one of the easiest chances of the season four minutes from time.

The result lifted Luton to sixth place, two points behind third placed Grimsby, thanks to Swansea's 1-0 win at Derby.

There can be no doubting the immensity of Luton's task and manager David Pleat, happy enough with an away point, highlighted that by demanding 12 points from their final seven games.

Target

"I think 51 points will lift us into the First Division," he said. "That means we can afford to drop only two points in our last seven matches."

That demanding target will increase the pressure on the Luton players — pressure that was already evident in the first half last night.

Welsh international keeper Dai Davies didn't have one serious shot to save, but was pleased to see two brilliant long-range efforts from Antic clip the bar and bounce over to safety.

"I did not think we were positive enough in the first half," said Pleat. "We sat back instead of going forward and our passing was terribly erratic."

"I wasn't happy with the first 45 minutes, but we improved after the break against a side who are never

easy to play against despite their poor home record."

At least Pleat had the satisfaction of seeing his team take their first point in Wales since he took over as Luton manager just over three years ago. And the Town are unbeaten away in the League since they lost at Cardiff on November 22.

Yugoslavian international Antic was at his brilliant best against a Wrexham side struggling to stave off the threat of relegation. Pleat employed him as a sweeper in the first half which enabled full back Kirk Stephens free to launch attacks with telling overlaps.

It was a plan which posed severe problems to Wrexham's defence, but Luton did not capitalise because they

Raddy marvellous but nerves show

failed to support the three front runners in sufficient numbers.

Antic was the only Luton player not guilty of woefully poor passing in the first half, when Wrexham surged forward several times to test the visiting defence.

However, Mike Saxby, Paul Price and Mal Donaghy combined with Antic to contain the Welshmen's menace and it was 26 minutes before Jake Findlay was forced to make his first save when he drop-

ped on his knees to successfully gather Steve Fox's low shot.

Before that, Ian Arkwright and Frank Carrodus had been off target.

It was a further nine minutes before Luton seriously tested Wrexham's defence when Steve White lobbed the ball over the top.

Ricky Hill — who had a superb game in midfield — then shot wide from White's pass and Luton almost took the lead two minutes before half time.

Brian Stein took advantage of a defensive error to charge through the middle and evade two tackles. With David Moss free in support on his right, Stein elected to go it alone and shot narrowly over.

MATCH DETAILS

WREXHAM: Davies, Hill (A), Dwyer, Jones (J), Cegielski, Carrodus, Fox, Arkwright, Vinter, Buxton, Jones (S), (Williams).

LUTON T: Findlay, Stephens, Donaghy, Grealish, Saxby, Price, Hill (R), Stein, White (Ingram), Antic, Moss.

REFEREE: R. Chadwick (Darwen). **ATTENDANCE:** 4,157.



RADDY ANTIC — every reason to smile

That miss could have been punished in the next minute when Luton's defence visibly wilted for the first time. They failed to recognise the danger from the unmarked Steve Buxton, who shot weakly wide.

At the start of the second half Stephens reverted to his normal right back role, with Antic moving into the middle. The switch was an immediate success with Antic and White carving an opening for Stein to shoot wide.

But the Town's defence was in trouble again when they left Vinter unmarked. His ferocious shot brought the best from Findlay who diverted the ball to Fox and was grateful to see the follow-up shot deflected to safety.

With that escape behind them, Luton settled. And after 60 minutes Davies watched helplessly as Antic's superb 30-yard shot made the bar wobble before bouncing over.

Seven minutes later the Yugoslav repeated the trick, this time with his right foot, and again grew generous applause from an appreciative Welsh crowd.

Antic was the only Luton player who looked like scoring and 20 minutes from the end Pleat sent on Godfrey Ingram to replace the ineffective White.

The Town created only one more chance when Ingram failed to connect with Moss's cross before the Wrexham fans rose in anticipation of a winning goal four minutes from time.

Buxton supplied unmarked Vinter with a perfect cross which looked all too easy to convert. But the Wrexham striker mistimed his leap and failed to make contact as the ball rolled behind.