

468 BUT NOT TO TERRY COOPER...

LUTON TOWN 1
BRISTOL ROVERS 0

AFTER A defeat which condemned his side to play in the Third Division next season Bristol Rovers manager Terry Cooper summed up the worries a lot of Town fans felt before the Chelsea success — "We didn't look like a relegation team . . . and Luton didn't look good enough for promotion".

The bottom club set the Town unexpected problems, and although Rovers rarely looked like snatching their second away win of the season it took a debatable penalty and hawk-eyed referee to give the Town the victory they desperately needed.

Rovers were poor in attack, although Paul Randall might have put them ahead in the 29th minute when he cut in past Paul Price and forced Jake Findlay to make a flying save to push the ball away from the top corner of the net.

On a bumpy pitch the Town struggled to put together flowing movements. They looked nervous and frustrated, and soccer entertainment was in short supply. Ricky Hill was the only genuine First Division talent on view, but too often his colleagues were content to play optimistic long passes which gave team-mates no more than an even chance of winning the ball.

Even Raddy Antic fell into that trap in the second half as the Town were frustrated by a Rovers' side which depended on hard work and hopeful running for its limited success.

Significantly, the Town's best scoring efforts came from defenders. Kirk Stephens and Mike Saxby had plenty of opportunities to get well forward and both

came within an inch of breaking their first-half deadlock. Saxby cleverly placed his shot after a half-clearance and hit the post with the goalkeeper beaten, and Stephens clipped the top of the bar with a long-range effort.

The frustration was lifted in the 40th minute when referee Michael Taylor gave a penalty as Brian Stein tried to wriggle around Mark Hughes.

They both fell over and even David Pleat thought it looked more like obstruction than a penalty offence. But Mr Taylor was positive about his view of it and David Moss stepped up to drive the penalty to Tom McAllister's left. The keeper saved, but Mr Taylor ruled that he had moved early — a decision backed up by TV evidence and approved by both managers. Moss put the second attempt to the goalkeeper's right for his 18th goal of the season.

It turned out to be just enough as the Town had most of the possession in a disappointing second half.

TOWN: Findlay; Stephens, Saxby, Price, Donaghy; Antic, Hill, Grealish; Stein, Ingram, Moss. Sub: Fuccillo, not used.

BRISTOL ROVERS: McAllister; Gittes, Hughes, Slatter, Mabbutt; McCaffery, Emmanuel, Geraint Williams (David Williams, 59 mins), Barrett; Randall, Lee.

THE GOAL: David Moss, penalty, 40 minutes. It was twice taken after keeper moved early to stop the first attempt.

OTHER GOAL ATTEMPTS: Town eight saved, ten wide, two hit the woodwork; Rovers three saved and six wide. Corners: 4-3 to the Town.

REFEREE: Michael Taylor. Deal, Kent. The Town liked his performance a lot more than Rovers did.

ATTENDANCE: 9,009. Hardy First Division, but not was the entertainment.