

HATTERS ON THE ROAD TO DIVISION ONE

Chelsea 0 Luton Town 2

"GOING UP, going up, going up," sang the Luton fans at Stamford Bridge yesterday after the Town won their third successive game.

And while that victory may have been only the first course of their promotion ambitions, the main meal and dessert could follow if they manage to win their remaining three games.

If they do, First Division status is assured and yesterday's victory put Luton firmly in the driving seat to win the elusive third place spot.

the elusive third place spot

Manager David Pleat continued to play down the possibility of promotion after yesterday's result.

But a glorious Easter, which gave Luton four points from two games, will put them under immense pressure as they prepare to tackle Oldham Athletic at Kenilworth Road this weekend before they complete their season with away games at Swansea next Monday and Bolton a week on Saturday.

Chelsea failed to offer any resistance to the Town's threat yesterday when a goal in each half from David Moss and Ricky Hill gave Luton a thoroughly deserved victory.

It was all too easy for the Town against opposition who looked nothing more than mediocre Second Division material and, at the end of the season, Geoff Hurst will have cause to look back with more anxiety than Pleat if Luton do miss out on promotion.

Luton won well. But there was still a question mark hanging over their ability to compete in the First Division assuming they manage to reach that destination.

"We played well when we had to," said Pleat. "We also defended correctly on the isolated occasions Chelsea threatened to do anything."

"Promotion? I refuse to talk about the possibility until after we have played Oldham, but it would be an absolute dream if we managed it. But I maintain we were playing better at the same stage last season — and then we finally missed out."

"The fans were magnificent towards us today, and I only hope they turn out in force to get behind us against Oldham this weekend."

There was no consolation in defeat for the Chelsea manager who said: "We now accept we are not good enough to play in the First Division. There is no doubt Luton are a good footballing side and I cannot complain about today's result."

DIVISION TWO										
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts			
West Ham	38	25	9	4	74	29	58			
Notts Co	39	16	17	6	44	36	49			
LUTON	39	17	11	11	55	42	45			
Blackburn	39	14	17	8	38	29	45			
Derby	40	15	14	11	56	50	44			
Swansea	38	15	13	10	54	40	43			
Grimsby	39	14	15	10	41	35	43			
Sheff Wed	38	17	8	13	51	44	42			
Chelsea	40	14	12	14	46	36	40			
QPR	39	14	12	13	48	40	40			
Newcastle	40	13	14	13	27	41	40			
Cambridge	39	16	6	17	48	57	38			
WATFORD	39	13	11	15	45	43	37			
Bolton	40	14	9	17	59	61	37			
Orient	40	13	11	16	46	51	37			
Wrexham	39	11	14	14	40	42	36			
Shrewsbury	39	10	15	14	40	43	35			
Oldham	40	10	15	15	35	47	35			
Preston	39	10	13	16	38	58	33			
Cardiff	39	11	16	18	45	60	32			
Bris City	40	7	15	18	28	48	29			
Bris Rovers	39	5	13	21	32	59	23			

"If anyone deserves to join champions West Ham in the First Division, I would pick Luton from the pack chasing promotion."

On scoring chances, Luton should have won more handsomely than their two-goal winning margin. But, in the early stages of the game, Chelsea looked more dangerous without managing to test the Town's keeper Jake Findlay.

The big Scot went through a 90 minute practice session and was never forced to make a serious save against Chelsea's powder puff attack.

But there was an early scare for the Town when Mike Fillery cut in after only eight minutes to direct a low shot straight at the keeper — and that was the sum total of their contribution to on-target efforts.

The vital breakthrough came after 26 minutes when Moss, who had rarely looked like stamping his authority on the match, gave Luton the lead.

He found space on the left and, while a shot was never on, he poked the ball past Borota and into the bottom corner of the net. The Chelsea keeper should undoubtedly have made a clean save and Hurst later criticised his skipper for failing

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Ricky Hill breaks up a Chelsea attack watched by Donaghy

The task that faces Luton

LUTON are three games away from the First Division.

If they win their remaining matches against Oldham, Swansea City and Bolton Wanderers, the Town can book their trips to the likes of Anfield and Old Trafford next season.

Luton's eyes will be tuned into Eastville tonight where Bristol Rovers, who lost 1-0 to the Town at Kenilworth Road on Saturday, entertain Swansea City.

Defeat for the Welsh team would give Luton a tremendous boost before they travel to the Vetch Field next Monday evening after tackling Oldham at home this weekend.

Another of the promotion candidates, Blackburn Rovers, are also in action this evening. They are involved in a Lancashire derby clash at Preston.

The trio is completed by Sheffield Wednesday who are also away — at Shrewsbury.

But Luton's crunch will undoubtedly come early next week when they must beat Swansea to eliminate the threat offered by the Welsh club.

Tonight, the Reserves are at home to Reading in a Football Combination game

to do exactly that.

Antic, who had stubbornly refused to move from defence with his usual strong runs, suddenly looked capable of adding the second when he shot marginally wide from Moss's free kick. But a second goal was always

on Luton's cards — and it arrived after 76 minutes.

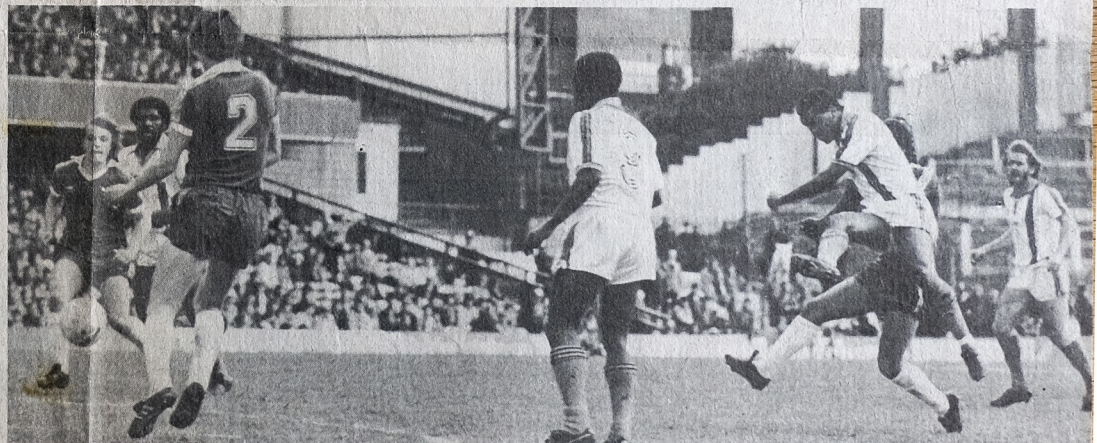
Saxby, arguably Luton's Man of the Match, was responsible for the damage with a penetrating pass to Hill who took the ball in his stride before lashing it past Borota with his left foot.



It's there . . . Petar Borota is beaten by David Moss (out of the picture) for the Town's first goal



Mal Donaghy leaps to repel a rare Chelsea attack



Thump . . . Brian Stein attempts to increase Luton's lead with a full-blooded shot

Pictures: IAN BROWN

MATCH DETAILS

CHelsea: Borota, Pates, Rofe, Bumstead, Nutton, Chivers, Locke, Fillery, Lee, Mayes (Rhodes Brown), Hutchings.
LUTON: Findlay, Stephens, Donaghy, Grealish, Saxby, Price, Hill, Stein, Ingram, Antic, Moss, Sutcliffe, West.

REFEREE: A. Robinson (Waterlooville).

ATTENDANCE: 12,868.

GOALS: Moss (26), Hill (76).

BOOKINGS: Donaghy (hands), Lee (foul on Antic), Rofe (foul on Stein).

■ Luton v Bristol Rovers — report and pictures page 11.