### Town Match Verdict



FOILED: Charlton defender Leighton Phillips makes a timely interception to foil Steve White as the Town turn on the pressure.

# MUDDY BATTLE IS A HARD CUP TEST

WANTING A TOUGH TEST to sharpen up his team for Saturday's cup-tie with Ipswich, Luton Town manager David Pleat found almost all his wishes granted at The Valley on Tuesday night. The only disappointment for the big Town following was that a highly entertaining clash in atrocious conditions failed to bring any goals.

Defences at both ends looked less than perfect on a pitch which made mistakes inevitable, but good covering and goalkeeping, mixed with some offtarget shooting, left both teams knowing they could easily have been the winners.

Bobby Robson probably learned less than he had hoped as he watched the Town in preparation for

Saturday. Skipper Brian Horton nissed his first game for the club since signing in the summer, but will be back o add a little more bite to

midfield. And every Town player will be hoping that the Kenilworth Road surface will be a lot drier than the nudpatch they had to contend with at The Valley.

Charlton played four

Charlton played four men across the middle against the Town's three,

Johnson, not used.

CHARLTON:

properly.

### Report by Brian Swain Pictures: Mark Richards

but the clogging mud beat them all. Too often Town attacks

broke down simply because midfield men could not beat the underfoot conditried to tions when the run with the ball.
The Town looked the

better side in the first half, then withstood a spirited Charlton attempt to snatch the points in the second,

**Details** 

CHARLTON ATHLETIC 0, LUTON TOWN 0

TOWN: Findlay; Stephens, Goodyear, Donaghy, Aizle-

wood; Hill, Antic, Fuccillo; Stein, White, Moss. Sub:

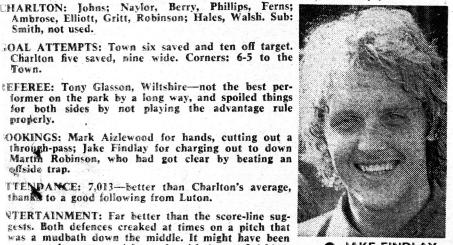
game of seven or eight goals with better finishing.

and I thought the draw was about right, even if the score-line should have been or 4-4.

Both goalkeepers did well, although Jake Find-lay's clean sheet cost him another booking, for a firsthalf "professional foul" on Martin Robinson, who had beaten the offside trap and looked a scorer until Findlay upended him outside the area.

Findlay was happy enough to use the laws of football for the benefit of his team, and so was Mr Pleat, but for the good of game another more suitable penalty needs to be devised for such occa-

Findlay's only other serious work in the first half was a save from Steve Gritt. Nicky Johns did well



JAKE FINDLAY

at the other end to block shot by David Moss, but both keepers were given an easier night than

Johns had more work to do than Findlay, and made two vital saves after the interval, from Brian Stein

should have had.

and Moss. Strangely, Town the looked more likely scorers in that second half, when they had to do more de-fending and look for quick

Better use of the drier parts of the pitch on the flanks might have brought reward for both sides, but towards the end of a night of all-out endeavour and hard work the Town's most satisfying feature was the way the defence steadily knitted into a more reliable

A more sobering thought is that Charlton didn't have an Eric Gates to get round the back of them, or an Alan Brazil to take the halfchances that were bound to crop up on a slippery energy-sapping surface.

## Seven points to spare in race to go up

A GOAL-LESS draw at The Valley on Tucsday night left Luton Town perfectly poised for promotion, seven points clear of their nearest challengers and II points ahead of fourth place in the Second Division.

Oldham had the chance to close the gap at Cardiff last night, but the Town and third-placed Watford both have three games in hand on the Lancashire club.

Watford missed the chance to go second and close the gap on the Town when their home game with New-castle was one of the six in the division to beat the

weekend weather.

But they went down to a surprise defeat, their second at home this season. Newcastle took revenge for Watford's 1-0 victory at St James's Park on the first day of the season with a 3-2 success, with two goals by debut boy Kevin Todd and a late winner by Imre Varadi.

Despite some notable cup performances, and a brave

defeat at Ipswich in the League Cup quarter-finals on Monday night, Watford's Second Division record over the past couple of months must be worrying their sup-

A home win over Blackburn in November has been their only league victory in their last eight league outings
Queens Park Rangers

missed the chance of reclaiming a place in the top three when Wrexham, three when Wrexham, battling to escape from the relegation zone, became the fifth visiting team this season to take away points from the plastic pitch, thanks to a 1-1 draw and a missed penalty by Simon

### PROMOTION BATTLERS

Luton Tn. Oldham Watford



LET-OFF: A lucky first half escape for Charlton as the ball skidded across the face of their god and Brian Stein just failed to get the touch.



TOO HIGH: Ricky Hill beats off a challenge to get in a shot that flew just over the Charlton crossbar.