

SPORTS NEWS 1

Town Match Verdict ★★★★★

Prize can be landed tonight

THE Luton Town promotion party should start at about 9.30 tonight. If they beat Shrewsbury at Kenilworth Road, the Hatters are back in the First Division, no matter what heroics other rivals can produce.

And Watford, the rivals we love to hate, helped to make it all possible.

While the Town were gaining a point at Rotherham, Watford were winning this week's crucial Second Division encounter.

They hammered third-placed Sheffield Wednesday 4-0 at Vicarage Road, and Jack Charlton's disaster is Luton Town's delight. Wednesday, with only four games to play, can score a maximum of 77 points, while the Town will be on 78 if they beat Shrewsbury tonight.

Watford and Leicester are the only teams with a mathematical chance of overhauling the Town, and one of them must drop points in at least one match — they meet at Vicarage Road on Saturday week, when the Town are away to Chelsea.

Watford narrowed the gap at the top to two points when they beat Crystal Palace 3-0 at Selhurst Park on Tuesday night.

With the best goal difference figure in the Division, the Town became assured of fourth place at the very least — when they collected their 12th draw of the season at Millmoor.

But they are odds-on favourites to take the Second Division championship for the first time in their history, and almost every manager now believes that the Town and Watford are as good as promoted, with the rest scrapping for third place.

Sheffield Wednesday have been in that spot for the past month, but Leicester have two games in hand and only three points to get to overtake them on goal difference.

Top places in the Second Division:

Division	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pt
Luton Town	37	21	12	4	73	39	75
Sheff Wed	38	21	10	7	68	37	73
Sheff Wed	38	19	8	11	50	45	65
Sheff Wed	38	17	11	8	51	36	62
Sheff Wed	38	19	5	14	55	46	62
Sheff Wed	38	17	9	12	53	37	60
Sheff Wed	37	18	6	13	50	35	60
Sheff Wed	38	18	6	14	56	47	60



● JUSTICE DONE: Alan Judge dives to save Gerry Gow's injury-time penalty at Rotherham.

JUDGE ENSURES THAT JUSTICE IS DONE

AN ASTONISHING final 30 seconds, in which Rotherham missed a penalty that would have won the game, kept Luton Town on course for the Second Division championship at Millmoor, and left old "Crazy Horse" Emlyn Hughes believing he had been robbed.

The former Liverpool and England star, now trying to hoist Rotherham into Division One for the first time in their history, kidded himself after the match that the Town had deserved to be beaten. "On chances created, we deserved to

win," said the Rotherham player-manager, who plays better than he talked. The point he failed to make, but which was confirmed by some of his players later, was that for the Town's visit Rotherham raised their game to turn in their best performance of the season . . . and it still wasn't enough to produce a home victory.

And the injury-time penalty drama almost clouded the fact that the customers had been treated to a top quality contrast of styles between two good sides, and the share of four goals was about right.

I had the bad luck to be sitting in a corner of a tiny Press box with an obstructed view of the area which was the scene of two crucial moments — Lil Fuccillo's opening goal, and the alleged handball by Clive Goodyear 45 seconds into injury time.

BBC TV gave a second chance to enjoy and suffer all over again on Match of the Day. For once Jimmy Hill and his team chose not to put the ref's decision under the slow-motion microscope. Presumably, having again decided that the Second Division offering was better TV than their First Division fare from Brighton v Manchester United, Hill didn't want to be forced to say that an official's crucial decision was wrong.

Injury-time penalty save

Report by Brian Swain
Pictures: Mark Richards

Goodyear said he simply ran into a covering position to put himself between an attacker and the goal. Billy McEwan tried to send the ball goalwards, the ball hit Goodyear on the elbow, and the linesman decided it was an intentional handball.

But Alan Judge, deputising for the injured Jake Findlay, made all the arguments and protests superfluous, diving to his left to hold Gerry Gow's penalty.

It was the crowning moment for a goalkeeping performance which began with a touch of nerves but developed into a very happy afternoon for a player who will be 22 next week and gets few chances in the big time.

Both teams had cause to remember the opposing goalkeepers. Judge's best

efforts kept out worthy goal-bound attempts by McEwan, Gow and Paul Stancliffe.

Ray Mountford's saves were perhaps slightly less difficult, but still important as he stopped three shots by Steve White and two by Brian Stein that might have produced goals.

Rotherham moaned about John Seaman putting a header over from three or four yards, while David Moss, back in the Town side after injury, went through on a dazzling run past Mountford but was forced wide and could not stop the ball going out of play when a simple short cross must have brought a goal.

Rotherham were all hustle and exuberance, looking for quick passes and a succession of aerial

threats into a Town penalty area in which Ronnie Moore had the beating of Goodyear too often for comfort. Two interventions by Moore cost goals.

PROBLEMS

Honours were even in midfield, despite Gow's willingness to rough it up at times, but the Town had major problems with winger Tony Towner.

Richard Money had his least effective game so far where defending is concerned, and Kirk Stephens also suffered when Towner wandered over to the other flank.

Yet both full-backs gave the perfect answer to any possible criticisms about a defence which is just the right side of the break-even line in a four-game run which has seen 13 goals scored.

REWARD

Stephens slotted a clever through-pass into the penalty area for Fuccillo to flick the Town ahead in the 12th minute, which was fair reward for the Town's early cool domination.

Rotherham always tried to move forward, and 16 minutes later Towner destroyed the Town's left flank and Moore headed the equaliser from his centre.

That gave Rotherham the confidence to step up a gear in pace and effort, but with Brian Horton watchful and alert the Town were always classy, defending when they had to, and breaking into counter-attacks which always looked dangerous.

But in the 64th minute Moore rose well to meet another cross by Towner, from the left wing this time, and John Seaman had time and space to drive in a simple goal from the knock-down. It ought to have won the game for Rotherham.

CLEAN

Instead, within a minute Stein turned a throw-in into the path of Money and the full-back drove home as clean a goal as you could hope to see from 25 yards. "The ball just sat up nicely for me," said the defender.

Judge and Mountford each had one more important save to make, from Stancliffe and White, and Stephens cleared off the line before the game drifted past the 90-minute mark and into the final pandemonium as the penalty was given and saved.



● STOP THAT: Richard Money, airborne on the right, lashes in his first Luton Town goal, the equaliser at Millmoor.