

## Escape by two points

STUCK IN the third relegation place before Saturday's dramatic victory at Maine Road, Luton Town finished the season in 18th place in the First Division.

A draw would have left them relegated on goal difference, but Raddy Antic's priceless late strike condemned Manchester City to the drop, and enabled the Town to move above Coventry City as well.

The final table:

|              | HOME |    |    |   |       | AWAY |    |    |    |     |     |
|--------------|------|----|----|---|-------|------|----|----|----|-----|-----|
|              | P    | W  | D  | L | F A   | P    | W  | D  | L  | F A | Pts |
| Liverpool    | 42   | 19 | 4  | 1 | 55 16 | 8    | 6  | 7  | 32 | 21  | 82  |
| Watford      | 42   | 16 | 2  | 3 | 49 20 | 6    | 3  | 12 | 25 | 37  | 71  |
| Man Utd      | 42   | 14 | 7  | 0 | 39 10 | 5    | 6  | 10 | 17 | 28  | 70  |
| Tottenham    | 42   | 15 | 4  | 2 | 50 15 | 5    | 5  | 11 | 15 | 35  | 69  |
| Not'm Forest | 42   | 12 | 5  | 4 | 34 18 | 8    | 4  | 9  | 28 | 32  | 69  |
| Aston Villa  | 42   | 17 | 2  | 2 | 47 15 | 4    | 3  | 14 | 15 | 35  | 68  |
| Everton      | 42   | 13 | 6  | 2 | 43 19 | 5    | 4  | 12 | 23 | 29  | 64  |
| West Ham     | 42   | 13 | 3  | 5 | 41 23 | 7    | 1  | 13 | 27 | 39  | 64  |
| Ipswich      | 42   | 11 | 3  | 7 | 39 23 | 4    | 10 | 7  | 25 | 27  | 58  |
| Arsenal      | 42   | 11 | 6  | 4 | 36 19 | 5    | 4  | 12 | 22 | 37  | 58  |
| West Brom    | 42   | 11 | 5  | 5 | 35 20 | 4    | 7  | 10 | 16 | 29  | 57  |
| Southampton  | 42   | 11 | 5  | 5 | 36 22 | 4    | 7  | 10 | 18 | 36  | 57  |
| Stoke        | 42   | 13 | 4  | 4 | 34 21 | 3    | 5  | 13 | 19 | 43  | 57  |
| Norwich      | 42   | 10 | 6  | 5 | 30 18 | 4    | 6  | 11 | 22 | 40  | 54  |
| Notts C      | 42   | 12 | 4  | 5 | 37 25 | 3    | 3  | 15 | 18 | 46  | 52  |
| Sunderland   | 42   | 7  | 10 | 4 | 30 22 | 5    | 4  | 12 | 15 | 39  | 50  |
| Birmingham   | 42   | 9  | 7  | 5 | 29 24 | 3    | 7  | 11 | 11 | 31  | 50  |
| Luton        | 42   | 7  | 7  | 7 | 34 33 | 5    | 6  | 10 | 31 | 51  | 49  |
| Coventry     | 42   | 10 | 5  | 6 | 29 17 | 3    | 4  | 14 | 19 | 42  | 48  |
| Man City     | 42   | 9  | 5  | 7 | 26 23 | 4    | 3  | 14 | 21 | 47  | 47  |
| Swansea      | 42   | 10 | 4  | 7 | 32 29 | 0    | 7  | 14 | 19 | 40  | 41  |
| Brighton     | 42   | 8  | 7  | 6 | 25 22 | 1    | 6  | 14 | 13 | 46  | 40  |

## Goals all the way

NO SUPPORTERS have seen more goals in the First Division than Town fans who have been lucky enough to see every game. At home they scored 34 and conceded 33, and in away matches they scored 31 and let in 51.

It adds up to 149 goals in 42 games. The average was 1.54 goals scored per match and 2 goals conceded. The home games average works out at 1.61 goals scored and 1.57 let in, and the away figures were 1.47 scored and 2.43 conceded per match.



● **SPARKLER:** The TV coverage, edited to show all of Manchester City's attacks and thus forced to omit some of the Town's, failed to do justice to Paul Walsh's performance. City tried to double-mark him and he still left them standing. Nicky Reid is the victim of Walsh's pace and control in this picture.

# 'WE'VE DONE IT!'



● **HAPPY AND PATIENT:** Luton fans were kept penned in at Maine Road for 40 minutes after the game ended while police moved local supporters out of the area, but the jubilation was unabated.

# HEARTACHE ENDS IN TEARS OF JOY

WITH the team and their supporters high on emotion and elation at Maine Road on Saturday night, Luton Town manager David Pleat was one of the first to start to come down to earth.

No-one enjoyed the occasion more than he after Raddy Antic had struck the winning goal just five minutes before the Town would have been doomed to relegation.

The manager's victory jig across the pitch to greet the final whistle was captured for millions to enjoy on television. The emotion in the voice and the tears in the eyes conveyed the depths of feeling every Luton Town supporter had.

Three times I have cheered the Town to promotion to Division One. Never have I enjoyed an occasion as much as at Maine Road, when the whole season was boiled down into 90 heart-stopping minutes.

The manager and team deserved their reward. Under near-impossible pressure, knowing that nothing less than a win was good enough, they managed to produce the right blend of resolute defence and inventive attacking.

Manchester City are relegated because they couldn't forget that a draw would be good enough for them. They lined up with only two forwards, and one of them, veteran Dennis Tueart, is no longer full of the pace and menace he used to have.

### MEMORY

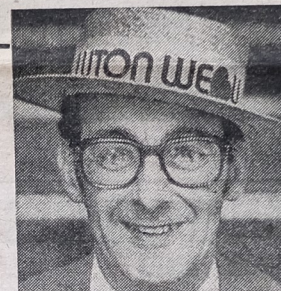
He scored the goal at Kenilworth Road eight years ago which gave City a draw and helped send the Town to relegation. This time he had two real chances to do it again. Once he got clear, but was caught by a marvellous tackle by Clive Goodyear. The second occasion Tueart headed wide when he might have killed the Town's hopes.

It was a day to admire 12 Luton Town men who had the courage, stamina and expertise to make good Ricky Hill's forecast that the Town could and would win.

They were always the more positive side, and City were outplayed much more convincingly than the result suggests.

Every man in orange hit the right level of performance, and the absence of the injured Richard Money and David Moss was covered in spectacular style.

The huge army of Town supporters sweated for a long time as they worried that City might hold out for a goal-less draw. They never looked like beating Tony Godden, who made two inspiring saves in a brief second-half flurry when City looked dangerous for about 90 seconds. But the City goal seemed to have a charmed life,



**Reports:**  
**BRIAN SWAIN**



**Pictures:**  
**MARK RICHARDS**

with shots whistling wide, and crosses just failing to find Luton heads as the home side packed their penalty area.

But the Town kept driving forward, despite being reshaped to cope with the injuries. Kirk Stephens marauded like a demon in defence and attack. Wayne Turner, so often the butt of Luton fans' jibes, blocked out City's right-wing danger, and Paul Elliott was superb, particularly in the air, alongside Goodyear.

Mal Donaghy, Ricky Hill and Brian Horton got the balance right between helping the defence and maintaining attacking pressure from midfield, and the front three of Brian Stein, Trevor Aylott and Paul Walsh were always far sharper than City's sporadic attackers.

Stein, playing his first

game for three months, willingly took the gamble after a pain-killing injection before kick-off, and was suffering agony after the game. But it was worth it, he beamed, enjoying the part he played in one of the most important goals the Town will ever score.

The manager played his final card with 26 minutes to go, taking off Turner and adding Antic to a team which was geared to attack.

Five minutes later we had the feeling fate was against us when a drive by Stephens was blocked by the goalkeeper, hit defender Nicky Reid and rebounded against the bar.

The goal the Town deserved finally arrived amid memorable celebration scenes with just five minutes of the season left.

Horton started it by winning the ball in midfield. It

was moved on to Aylott and he switched the attack to the right wing. Stein's first attempt at a centre was blocked by Tommy Caton. City skipper Paul Power tried to check the second, but Stein beat him and hammered a fierce cross towards the six-yard line. Williams dived, pushed the ball out, and Antic met the clearance first time with his right foot from just outside the penalty area.

Williams, well out of his goal, managed to get a touch as the ball curled past him into the net to set off celebrations which lasted many hours.

### BATTLE

The reprieve, of course, is only one more stage in a never-ending battle for First Division survival. Mr Pleat knows his beloved Luton Town will always be one of the unfashionable outfits trying to beat the odds in that fight.

The other battle is looming off the pitch, with the Football League this week spilling the beans about Luton Town's plans to move to Milton Keynes.

Luton Council has been given the perfect excuse to rethink its miserly attitude to a club that had thousands of Luton people in raptures this weekend. Beating Manchester City may turn out to be the easy part of surviving. Councillors who apparently think Luton Town can be allowed to move out are the next lot to be taken on by the club and its supporters.

And sadly, if the club itself remains obstinate in its determination to go to Milton Keynes to say yaboo to local councils, some of us supporters will have to fight the most bitter battle of all.

Is there no-one in Luton Town Hall, or in Luton Town FC, prepared to pick up a phone and ask if a solution can't be worked out to satisfy all parties?

## Match Details

**Manchester City 0 Luton Town 1**

**Half-time: 0-0**

**TOWN:** Godden; Stephens, Elliott, Goodyear, Turner (Antic, 64 mins); Hill, Horton, Donaghy; Stein, Walsh Aylott.

**MAN CITY:** Williams; Ranson, Reid, Caton, McDonald; Bond, Baker (Kinsey 86 mins), Hartford, Power; Tueart, Reeves.

**THE GOAL:** Raddy Antic, 20-yard first-time, right foot, after Alex Williams palmed out a fierce cross from the right by Brian Stein.

**OTHER STRIKES AT GOAL:** Town eight saved, seven wide, one hit the bar; City three saved, four wide. Corners: 10-5 to the Town.

**ATTENDANCE:** 42,843, the day's highest in the country, the highest to watch any Town match this season, and Maine Road's second highest of the season, exceeded only by their derby clash with Manchester United.

**ENTERTAINMENT:** The loveliest day out Town fans have had since Wembley in 1959—nail-biting for 85 minutes, then heart-stopping for five minutes. It was better than winning the Second Division championship, and a more emotional moment than when Harry Haslam's team won promotion nine years ago.

**REFEREE:** Arnold Challinor, Rotherham—did a difficult job well, tried hard to keep the game flowing, and was right to book Paul Walsh for a niggly show of dissent when it was still 0-0 in the 73rd minute.