

YOU BET WE'RE TOP HATTERS!

82/83

Luton cash in on safety stakes

Man City 0, Luton 1

A BOOKIE had the shrewdest hunch of his life about Luton's survival chances.

He was asked to take a dressing-room wager from David Pleat's players as they won First Division safety.

Mal Donaghy, defender switched to an inventive midfield that ruled this winner-take-all contest, explained: "We had a whip round to get a bet on us staying up."

"We were the banker team in a treble involving Spurs and Dundee United — it would have paid us something like £3,000. But the bookie wouldn't take the bet."

"Still, we are happy to be staying in the First Division and I'm sure the real rewards will come our way next season."

Certainly, Luton — with infinitely more variety and match-winning threat — proved they deserved to

By PETER FITTON
and ROY BENTLEY

be in the First Division.

They created four times the chances that City did before Raddy Antic moved in ruthlessly for the kill in the 85th minute.

City boss John Benson

admitted: "If we have to go down, I'm glad it is Pleat staying up."

"Sometimes he cares more about football than he does about his own job. He deserves success."

A fitting tribute to Pleat's pleasers. But Luton still have another fight on their hands.

Thousands of signatures were being collected last night in the town to present a petition to the club: Keep our team in Luton.

The rumpus comes from the club's intention to announce soon that plans are in hand to move to a new super stadium at Milton Keynes, 25 miles from Luton.

The present Kenilworth Road ground is threatened by a road building scheme.

City have more pressing problems. They are preparing for a relegation auction to safeguard their future.

Topping the sales-list is England Under-21 Ray Ranson.

MoM: Trevor Aylott (Luton).



MIXED BLESSINGS . . . supersub Raddy Antic leaves Manchester City in a mess as his super strike brings First Division survival for little Luton

RADDY WINS A REPRIEVE

YUGOSLAV Raddy Antic, scorer of the most welcome goal in Luton's history at Maine Road on Saturday, was yesterday rewarded with a promise from manager David Pleat: "I will make sure he is playing for a League club next season."

The 34-year-old Antic—he has played in every position except goal in his career spanning Yugoslavia, Spain and England—is desperately keen for another season in the Football League, writes

ROY BENTLEY.

That's why Pleat said last night: "Raddy's wish is granted. It may not be possible for him to stay with us because we have so many promising youngsters."

Bottom

"Raddy would be an ideal man to keep if we used the sweeper system. But we'll carry on with our attacking ways next season. We might even finish in the bottom group again. Yet nobody will be able to say we don't entertain."



RADDY ANTIC

. . . pledge from Pleat

LUTON'S BOLDNESS PROVES TRUE FRIEND AT LAST

82/83

By DENIS LOWE

Manchester City ... 0 Luton Town ... 1

RADDY ANTIC'S second goal of the season, scored as substitute in the 86th minute of this Maine Road showdown, kept Luton in the First Division and sent Manchester City, second in the table last November, into the Second Division after 17 years in top company.

A draw would have been enough for City to survive at the expense of their visitors, but on the day Luton, superior individually and as a team, deserved to survive.

City, on the evidence of this match and the second half of the season, did not.

Luton, whose adventurous ideas have brought both triumphs and disasters in an eventful campaign, found boldness was their friend after all. Already close to a goal on four previous occasions, they kept going forward to win just when City thought they were safe.

Williams, who earlier had made a fine save from Walsh, Luton's chief threat, could only punch out a tricky right-wing centre from the recalled Stein, and Antic, the Yugoslav midfielder, cracked a fierce low drive through the crowded penalty area.

Attacks on players

If the magnificent support given by City's loyal fans throughout the relegation fight was reflected in the day's best crowd of 42,845, a few of that number disgraced themselves by attacking three celebrating Luton players during a pitch invasion at the end.

Fortunately, Elliott, Hill and Aylott escaped unharmed as a dozen mounted police cleared the ground promptly, and then lined up in front of the main entrance where several hundred people were chanting for the resignation of City's chairman, Peter Swales.

"I can understand disappointed fans calling for my blood, but I am not one for running away," said Mr Swales later. "In any case, I prefer to think about the many more thousands who chant: 'We'll support you ever more' at the end."

While Mr Swales has worked tremendously in City's cause, he and his fellow directors must bear some responsibility for the club's present plight — more, in fact, than John Benson, who became manager in February and inherited a weak squad and a host of problems from John Bond.

Money tight

As Asa Hartford, who battled to the last gasp in midfield, was quick to point out, City will find it difficult to get out of the Second Division with their present set-up. Money has been dreadfully tight, but must be

to sign players of character, class and commitment.

City must also hold on to gifted young men like Caton, Williams, Ranson and Reid, and follow Luton's example in finding quality attackers of the calibre of Walsh, Stein and Hill.

While City, nervous and edgy, mustered only a couple of half-chances for Reeves and Tucart, Luton should have clinched victory much earlier as Walsh, Stein, and Donaghy went near and Reid struck his own crossbar after one of several splendid bursts by right-back Stephens.

Mr Benson hid his disappointment in praising his opposite number, David Pleat, for his beliefs—"David often puts the game before his own job"—and Luton's manager expressed his thanks and relief "after a week in which my world turned upside down."

Mr Pleat added: "I have made some mistakes and learned some hard lessons this season—but I'm delighted I can keep these young players together. City have the resources to come again, but for clubs like Luton, First Division opportunities are rare."

Manchester City.—Williams; Ransom, McDonald, Reid, Bond, Caton, Tucart, Reeves, Baker (Kinsey 86 min.), Hartford, Power.

Luton Town.—Godden; Stephens, Goodyear, Horton, Elliott, Donaghy, Hill, Aylott, Walsh, Turner (Antic 64 min.), Stein.



Antic, of Luton, is buried under his team mates after scoring the goal that sent Manchester City into the Second Division and maintained Luton's First Division place.