

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 found from the new shares issue

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 Tueart, 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, Tueart, 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.