

HAMMERS ALMOST TAKEN TO REPLAY

15-1-72

3020

West Ham United 2 Luton Town 1

UNTIL THEY give the East End goalposts a wash and brush up at Upton Park this week there will remain the evidence of how close Luton came to winning an FA Cup third round replay against the Hammers. It is a brown splodge at the left-hand junction of the posts where Gordon Hindson slammed a 78th-minute shot which would have given Luton a draw.

This happened eight minutes after Luton goalkeeper Tony Read had kept the Town in the game by saving a Geoff Hurst penalty which the England World Cup hero told me later was as good as Gordon Banks's save to his League Cup penalty some weeks ago.

Luton lost this match only because they were stage-struck. After the build-up over the past couple of weeks, they suddenly found themselves faced by 11 famous faces.

Muttered

You could almost see the uncertainty creep in. And when Hurst nodded in a spectacular goal only 91 seconds after the start, Luton's cause looked to be lost.

For half an hour the First Division side looked about five streets ahead in class, ideas and running. And when Burly Bermudan Clyde Best thrashed home number two after Read had pushed out another Hurst header, there looked to be no hope for the Town.

Over their half-time tea and buns, wise old journalists nodded sagely at each other and muttered things like: "Foregone conclusion; it's all over," and "Luton aren't in it".

And I had to agree with them. But Luton survived an early roasting in the second half and began to find their feet.

Where they had been backing off and letting West Ham do the running, they started to do some themselves.

Superb

Keen, who had a memorable match, and Court, Luton's man of the match, collared midfield control by sheer hard work and dogged running, and Luton began to tick.

They both went close with long shots before Givens headed in Hindson's superb centre following a quick free kick from Keen.

That did it. With the Luton contingent outshouting the East Enders, Alec Stock's side gave the fight of their lives.

There was the Hindson

effort, and Nicholl, who gave another superlative show in defence, saw a header flash wide and had a fierce drive deflected round a post by goalkeeper Ferguson's legs.

Hindson's controlled running and the bustle of Halom, the niggling of Anderson, and the guile of Givens, all came into use when Luton wanted it most. And for half an hour the Town had the best of things. But they couldn't score another, and in the end the best team won.

In Luton's defence, John Ryan, who had the lousy job of marking Best in the second half, had one of his best games of the season. While Moore did enough work for two matches as he switched his role to chasing West Ham's spare forward.

Stumbled

He started on Hurst, and when Luton saw this was not working, Nicholl took over as guardian of the England man. Ryan took Best, and Moore was given a free hand. It almost came off.

Redknapp sometimes had the beating of Slough, but the Luton defender gave a brave account of himself. His tackling was packed with aggression, and his overlapping caused West Ham some problems. He was always ready to have a go at goal and it's a pity his shooting was not as accurate as it was last week at Preston.

While he made some agile saves, Read looked uncertain at times as whether or not to leave his line. But no goals came from this and he made up for everything with that penalty save, his second in two weeks.

I'll never know why it was given in the first place. Brookings was on the by-line in possession. Moore tried to get the ball off him, and Brookings stumbled.

It was probably Moore's softest tackle of the afternoon. But referee Mr Burns, a solicitor, would accept no pleas for leniency, and gave West Ham the penalty.

We have all seen Hurst take penalties on TV. He does a

Francis Lee and really hits them. He did with this one. But without moving before the ball was kicked, Read flung himself right and got behind the ball. Best slammed the rebound over with Read well-positioned.

West Ham were hampered by the loss of England skipper Bobby Moore, who was taken to the dressing room on a stretcher after a ninth-minute collision with Halom. He was taken to hospital as a precaution, where the trouble was diagnosed as a kick on an ankle nerve.

He returned to Upton Park after the game, and looked cheerful. He hopes to be back in the game soon.

Moore was replaced by Eustace who did a good job. Bonds and Brookings had good matches for the Hammers while Robson schemed his side's success from midfield.

MATCH DETAILS

LUTON TOWN: Read; John Ryan, Slough; Keen, Nicholl, Moore; Anderson, Court, Halom, Givens, Hindson. Sub: Shanks.

WEST HAM: Ferguson; McDowell, Lampard; Bonds, Taylor, Moore (Eustace, 9 mins), Redknapp, Best, Hurst, Brookings, Robson.

REFEREE: Mr Ken Burns (Stourbridge).

ATTENDANCE: 32,099.

GOALS: Hurst (West Ham, 1 min), Best (West Ham, 25 mins), Givens (Luton, 53 mins).

Wembley warm-ups ruled out

The privilege afforded to Switzerland of pre-match training at Wembley Stadium will not be repeated to other countries unless "in very exceptional circumstances".

The decision was reached at a recent meeting of the FA International Committee, who also decided that visiting teams should be allowed only to visit the stadium and walk about on the pitch for a limited time.

England themselves trained at Wembley before the European Championship game against the Swiss on November 10.



BURLY BEST BOTHERS LUTON

LUTON felt the power of Clyde Best in Saturday's FA Cup-tie with West Ham at Upton Park. The burly West Indian, who is the Hammers' top scorer this season, scored the Londoners' second goal to give them a 2-0 lead.



In the picture above Best shoots home the goal after the brilliant Tony Read had pushed out a cross from Harry Redknapp, who had jinked past Alan Slough and incredibly managed to keep the ball in play.



Left, the Bermudan gets up to a cross but Read is there to punch the ball away, with Chris Nicholl in support.