

HAMMERED — BUT NOT AS BAD AS IT SOUNDS

Promotion-chasing Londoners were flattered by the result says Sports Editor Brian Swain

with West Ham riding their luck when they might have been pulverised in the first half, then teaching the oldest lesson in soccer—taking chances is more important than making them.

They hit the Town with an irresistible double - act twice, scoring two within a minute midway through the second half, then repeating the treatment in the last two minutes.

The 4-1 margin flattered the Londoners as they fight to get back into the First Division at the first attempt but they had the sharper marksmen in the penalty area, and a touch too much class in midfield.

It all added up to tremendous entertainment, and if we must see the Town lose on occasions I would always prefer to see them go down fighting and taking chances at the back in the effort to get back at the opposition.

That policy paved the way for the last two goals, with Chris Turner committed to attack as the Town searched for an equaliser when they were 1-2 down.

Hammers manager John Lyall confessed that the result did less than justice to the Town, and praised both teams for their willingness to make it an open and adventurous game.

And he also admitted that at half-time he would have settled for a point after seeing his defence take a hammering for the first 45 minutes.

At that stage the Town had made eight strikes at goal, against four by West Ham, and the Londoners had been lucky to survive when Bob Hatton hit the bar with a header from Mark Aizlewood's centre.

Phil Parkes, who cost £565,000, a world record transfer fee for a goalkeeper when he moved to Upton Park from Queens Park Rangers last week, had to make desperate saves from Aizlewood and Steve Taylor, and at half-time the Town were looking the more dangerous side.

LEVEL

But crafty West Ham had elected to defend the Oak Road end first, and that may have been a psychological victory when they managed to reach the half-way stage on level terms.

Both sides used fluent 4-4-2 formations, but the West Ham style looked quicker as they got men up

from midfield in support of attacks.

The Town battled well enough in that department, but Alan Devonshire gradually became the dominant force as his team weathered the storm.

David Carr competed well against Trevor Brooking, but the England man's skills were not to be denied. You can keep him quiet for 89 minutes out of 90, but two or three passes in the course of a game can be all he needs to turn the tide.

BACK PASS

The Town contributed to their own problems when they fell behind in the 59th minute. A poor back pass

Town's defence to allow Cross to head another goal, with Findlay stranded on his line.

The Town had the character to fight back, and after Price had seen a drive hacked off the line by Paul Brush, Parkes at last had his first taste of picking the ball out of a West Ham net, after 160 minutes as their goalkeeper.

Alan West's corner was headed into the danger area first by Turner then by Carr, and Steve Taylor made the third header count with his first goal for the Town.

It set the stage for a grandstand finish, but as the Town pushed everyone forward in search of an

equaliser, the Town's defence was again tested. The start of the match was held up for 30 minutes as the ground was still waterlogged. The start of the match was held up for 30 minutes as the ground was still waterlogged. The start of the match was held up for 30 minutes as the ground was still waterlogged.



IT WAS a double first when Steve Taylor headed the Town back into contention against West Ham on Monday night. He is seen above capitalising on West Ham's failure to mark him tightly after a corner.

The ball is on its way into the net, in the 70th minute, and that was Taylor's first goal for Luton Town since he joined them from Oldham for £50,000 in December.

It was also the first goal put past Phil Parkes since his record-breaking £565,000 transfer to Upton Park from QPR a week ago. He had played a major part in the Hammers' 3-0 victory over Oldham on Saturday, and at Kenilworth Road won more praise from his manager, John Lyall, for helping to keep West Ham in the game when the Town bombarded his goal in an all-action first half. PICTURE: STEVE TEMPLEMAN.

THE TOWN'S run of five games without defeat ended when West Ham came to Kenilworth Road on Monday to claim the two points they needed to go into third place in the Second Division.

And although the game proved that the Town are still some way short of First Division class, the result did them less than justice.

It was a thrilling high-speed collision,

West Ham Details

LUTON TOWN 1, WEST HAM 4
Half-time: 0-0

TOWN: Findlay; Stephens, Aizlewood, Turner, Price; West, Silkman, Carr, Hill; Taylor, Hatton. Sub: Donaghy, not used.

WEST HAM: Parkes; McDowell, Brush, Martin, Bonds; Curbishley, Holland, Devonshire, Brooking; Cross, Robson. Sub: Jennings, not used.

THE GOALS: Alan Devonshire for West Ham, 59 minutes, curling drive deflected by a defender; David Cross for West Ham, 60 minutes, header from Trevor Brooking centre; Steve Taylor, 70 minutes, his first goal for the Town, and the first conceded by £565,000 Phil Parkes as West Ham goalkeeper; Cross for West Ham, 88 minutes, from Devonshire's pass; Pop Robson, 89 minutes, header from Brooking centre.

OTHER GOAL ATTEMPTS: Town eight saved, two off target, one hit the bar; West Ham four off target and two saved.

ENTERTAINMENT: A thrilling encounter between two teams more evenly matched than the score-line suggests, with West Ham on the rack for an hour before getting the breakthrough.

ATTENDANCE: 14,205, easily the highest of the season.
REFEREE: Derek Civil, Birmingham — spoiled a good performance by constantly missing linesmen's signals.