

KIDS' STUFF! YOUNG SIDE MAKE A POINT

DAVID PLEAT threw together a makeshift Hatters side — and must have been glad they weren't up against one of the First Division's giants.

His experimental team just about matched a very ordinary Birmingham outfit and may even have won had Brian Stein taken two simple chances.

With first teamers David Moss, Trevor Aylott, Frank Bunn and skipper Brian Horton all injured, Pleat's slender squad left him no alternative but to gamble.

Into the team on the left side of midfield came Rob Johnson for his first ever Division One game. And the 20-year-old never kicked a ball last season because of injury.

On the right side of midfield was 17-year-old Gary Parker, playing only his third first team match.

In at left-back was Mitchell Thomas, the former Youth Opportunities Programme youngster still learning his trade.

Pleat's parting shot at the post-match press conference spoke volumes.

"I don't know whether that would be good enough next week against Tottenham," he said.

The newcomers had not let him down but the

LUTON 1

Stein

B'HAM 1

Hopkins

Report by
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First Division is no place to cut your teeth and the deficiencies let Birmingham earn a point when a full strength Luton side would have destroyed them.

Much depended on the experienced men propping up the youngsters and Ricky Hill, playing in the centre of midfield, was an inspiration to the fledglings on either side.

Paul Elliott and Mal Donaghy — skipper for



● Stein's slip-up. Brian puts the ball on to the crossbar after going round keeper Coton.

the day — were brilliant in the centre of Luton's defence.

And Wayne Turner, who began by apeing Moss' role on the left wing, covered miles by dropping back to bolster midfield and then covering for Mitchell Thomas in the full-back position.

All the early pressure belonged to Luton but it was Birmingham who stole away to score after just eight minutes, Hopkins netting crisply after a shot rebounded off Elliott.

Stein missed a wonderful chance of pegging the score back to 1-1 after 12 minutes.

A terrible back pass presented him with the chance to lob Coton. The keeper took the sting out of the shot with his finger tips. Stein raced round Coton to seize the loose ball but clipped it on to the bar instead of into the net.

Four minutes later Stein made amends. Parker rolled a free kick

to Donaghy after Gayle felled Turner. The Northern Ireland international's shot was deflected and Stein steered the ball home.

Stein's second glaring miss came after 52 minutes. He took on Coton but in escaping the keeper's attentions he was forced wide and as he tried to roll the ball into the net from an acute angle Hagan raced back to clear.

But at the final whistle Hatters were surely relieved at having salvaged something from a match against a hard working side that could have exploited their untried line-up.

LUTON: Sealey, Stephens, Elliott, Donaghy, Thomas, Parker, Hill, Johnson, Stein, Walsh, Turner.

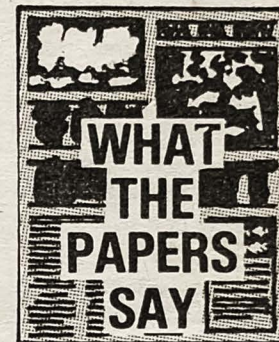
B'HAM: Coton, Hagan, van den Hauwe, Blake, Wright, Stevenson, Gayle, Phillips, Kuhl, Handysides, Hopkins.

Sub: Rodgers.
● Crowd: 11,111.

BRIAN Stein was given a hard time by the Sunday newspaper headline writers for his two dramatic misses.

"The strife of Brian", said the Sunday People, labelling the first spurned opportunity the "miss of the season".

The Sunday Mirror avoided the pun on the Monty Python film title — going for the real thing.



"Life of Brian" was the heading and the story went on to say Stein will have "sleepless nights" about "the two gift chances he missed".

The Milton Keynes argument dominated the News of the World report which chose to ignore the fact MK is a city and headlined its article: "New Town Blues".

But at least Rob Johnson got his picture in the paper on his debut.

"Luton will go a long way" was the Mail On Sunday's headline over an article which also replied heavily on references to the Hatters quitting Luton.

CANON LEAGUE DIVISION ONE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pt
Liverpool.....	13	4	1	1	13	3	4	2	1	10	5	27
West Ham	13	5	1	1	18	7	3	1	2	7	4	26
Man Utd.....	13	5	0	2	14	5	3	2	1	9	9	26
Soton	12	5	1	0	9	2	2	1	3	5	6	23
LUTON	13	4	2	0	15	5	3	0	4	6	11	23
Coventry	13	3	1	2	8	7	4	1	2	12	11	23
Tottenham	13	2	2	2	7	8	4	2	1	13	9	22
Aston Villa	13	5	1	1	11	10	1	2	3	7	9	21
QPR	13	3	1	2	8	4	3	1	3	12	7	20
Ipswich.....	13	4	1	2	15	7	2	1	3	9	9	20
Notts F.....	13	4	2	1	15	7	2	0	4	7	11	20
West Brom	13	4	1	1	8	3	2	1	4	10	15	20
Arsenal	13	3	0	4	12	10	3	0	3	12	7	18
Birmingham	13	4	0	2	7	4	1	3	3	6	11	18
Sunderland.....	13	3	2	2	10	8	2	1	3	5	10	18
Everton	13	3	2	2	4	3	2	1	3	4	10	18
Norwich.....	14	3	1	3	12	11	1	4	2	7	9	17
Stoke.....	13	2	1	3	8	11	0	4	3	6	13	11
Watford	13	1	3	3	13	15	1	1	4	5	9	10
Notts Co	13	1	2	3	4	10	1	0	6	7	14	8
Leicester.....	13	1	2	3	5	13	0	2	5	7	14	7
Wolves.....	13	0	3	4	6	15	0	0	6	2	19	3