



● **NEAR THING:** A cross by Frank Bunn is pushed out by goalkeeper Phil Parkes, but Paul Walsh is beaten to it by a defender.

Lethal Hammers strike

TWELVE MINUTES from time at Upton Park on Tuesday night Paul Walsh set himself for the shot that should have ended the Town's losing run.

But with only the goalkeeper to beat he hacked his drive wide, and two minutes after that equaliser chance was spurned West Ham finished the Town with their third goal.

While there were some bright features for the Town's patient fans to applaud, it was again difficult to see many clear chances being created by an attack which has lost its early-season sharpness.

The crowd at Upton Park enjoyed an entertaining game played at fast pace.

West Ham had the finishing power that makes the difference between winners and losers, and on the night deserved their victory.

Chasing a place in Europe and desperate to erase memories of a home defeat against Sunderland on Saturday, the Hammers fought for everything.

But Walsh had the consolation of ending his

**WEST HAM 3
LUTON TOWN 1
(Half-time 2-0)**

personal goal famine which had stretched over the previous ten games.

The Town's problem was that for all their promise in attack final passes went astray too often, and while they had enough pressure to deserve more goals they never had the coolness in the box to get them.

Garry Parker kept them moving forward from midfield, but it was the defence who had to work hardest for most of the game, and goalkeeper Les Sealey again distinguished himself.

The Town looked a better combination than they had done at Tottenham, but there was no denying



● **BUILD-UP:** Frank Bunn beats off two defenders to get in the cross for Paul Walsh's goal.

West Ham's greater self-confidence in the early stages.

Brian Stein, still some way short of the sharpness that made him an England player earlier this season, had an early shot well saved by Phil Parkes but West Ham's increasing con-

trol brought them the first goal in the 23rd minute.

Paul Elliott did well to keep Dave Swindlehurst quiet, but while he was watching him, Tony Cottee was left unmarked to race through the middle and score after Geoff Pike's through ball had been flicked on by Paul Allen.

The Town tried to fight back and Frank Bunn almost gave Parker a scoring chance.

Walsh produced another when he beat Frank Lampard and crossed hard and low, but David Moss's shot on the turn was pushed round the post by Parkes.

West Ham conjured up a goal of pure skill to halt the Town's attempted revival. Pike broke on the right, pulled the ball back when he was unable to beat Mitchell Thomas, and Allen's delicate diagonal chip was headed in by Alvin Martin.

Both sides lived dangerously after that, and early in the second half the Town began to get their game together better than they have done for some time.

They took risks at the back by pushing forward, but Sealey made two superb saves, one from Trevor Brooking, and the other from Cottee.

And it was West Ham who looked rocky when Walsh scored in the 64th minute. Brian Horton started the move with a winning tackle in midfield;

he passed to Bunn who went down the right flank, leaving Steve Walford stranded, and delivered an inviting low cross.

Stein's miss-hit shot was blocked, but Walsh reacted quicker than anyone to score from close range.

Stein missed a reasonable chance three minutes later; with Sealey keeping the Town in it with saves from Swindlehurst and Cottee.

The Hammers were looking worried and the Town should have equalised in the 78th minute when Stein tricked his way past Billy Bonds.

The ball ran loose, but from an angle, Walsh lashed the chance wide of the near post.

Two minutes later West Ham settled it, thanks to a lucky bounce from a long cross. The ball ran loose to Cottee who helped himself to his second goal to kill off the Town's resistance.

DETAILS

TOWN: Sealey; Stephens, Elliott, Donaghy, Thomas; Parker, Horton; Bunn (Goodyear 74); Stein, Walsh, Moss.

WEST HAM: Parker; Stewart, Bonds, Martin, Walford; Barnes, Brooking, Allen, Pike; Cottee; Swindlehurst, Sub: Donald not needed.

GOALS: Cottee 23 mins, Martin 37 mins, both for West Ham. Walsh for the Town 64 mins. Cottee for West Ham 80 mins.

OTHER STRIKES: Town six saved, five wide; West Ham 12 saved, five wide. Corners 4-3 to West Ham.

REFEREE: Darryl Reeves, Uxbridge.

ATTENDANCE: 15,430.
ENTERTAINMENT: Better than the result.



● **HOWLER:** The miss that cost the Town a point. Paul Walsh shoots inches wide from a ball by Brian Stein.

**REPORT BY BRIAN SWAIN
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