

HOME FINALE FIZZLES OUT

LUTON'S CROWD left Kenilworth Road on Monday wondering whether they had seen the last of Paul Walsh's silky skills.

The final home game of the season left little else to ponder as Hatters went through the motions and battling Stoke got the result they deserved.

Walsh showed in patches and flashes the exceptional close control that has made him the target of spaghetti soccer and football giants closer to home.

After the game manager David Pleat gave his first public clue to Walsh's departure when he admitted: "We probably will do something this summer."

Monday's match turned round a controversial fourth-minute goal when winger Ian Painter, looking more than a shade offside, shot past Sealey while the defence stood and waited for a whistle that never came.

Even after he put the ball in the net Painter had an anxious look at the linesman before doing the ritual jig of delight.

Stoke, to their credit

considering their precarious position in the league, never sat back on that lead. Certainly they defended in depth at times but were always willing to scamper forward.

Luton often threatened to get back at Stoke but never quite managed it. There was always an out-stretched foot as Luton pinged the ball around the edge of the Stoke box.

And for all the Hat-

ters' possession Stoke keeper Peter Fox was untroubled apart from his anxiety that his team should hang on to their lead.

Pleat played the same team that earned a draw at Coventry two days earlier which meant a place once more for Raddy Antic.

And the most memorable part of the day from Luton's viewpoint was the presentation of

LUTON 0 STOKE 1
Painter
By GRAHAM PUNTER



● Stein in action against Coventry — see report below.

flowers to the Yugoslav as he prepared to play his final home game for the Hatters.

Antic will always have a special place in the hearts of Luton fans for that goal at Maine Road last season that kept the Town in Division One.

The game itself provided little to excite the 9,867 crowd. Paul Walsh showed his skill but not the ball to the

Stoke defence but his final cross was wide of Stein's diving head.

Mitchell Thomas cut inside to hit a curling centre that looked an easy chance for Stein. But the striker saw the ball late as it emerged from behind a posse of wrong-footed defenders.

At the other end Chamberlain drove the ball against Sealey's legs

after a blistering run from inside his own half that left Donaghy and Thomas in its wake.

A wonderful movement saw Walsh collect a long clearance, ghost past his marker, and two more defenders before the chance was put wide by Parker.

A power-drive from Walsh then cannoned off Bunn shortly before the midfielder was replaced by Emeka Nwajiobi.

Stoke's enthusiasm to hold onto their lead brought two bookings. O'Callaghan for pushing Walsh and Painter for clambering all over Donaghy.

David Pleat had no complaints about the result, attributing the defeat to a "lack of guile".

LUTON: Sealey, Stephens, Goodyear, Donaghy, Thomas, Parker, Horton, Bunn, Stein, Walsh, Antic. Sub: Nwajiobi.
STOKE: Fox, Bould, Berry, O'Callaghan, Hampton, James, McIlroy, Maguire, Painter, Russell, Chamberlain. Sub: Maskery.