

MARTIN NIPS IN

84/85

A NIGERIAN chemist, unearthed last season from non-League football, seemed to have found the cure for all Luton's ills—until West Ham skipper Alvin Martin came up with a late equaliser.

Gmeka Nwajiobi, 25-year-old former Dulwich Hamlet winger playing only his fourth full game of the season, dazzled West Ham with a stunning goal to put Luton ahead

Luton 2 West Ham 2: by WILLIAM PIERCE

early in the second half.

And it looked like the winner until Martin came up with a last-gasp saver from a Paul Allen corner.

Martin's late effort restored West Ham manager John Lyall's smile after he had seen his side throw away an early lead.

"We had so much of the play, it would have been a disaster to lose. But I was delighted the way we came back again to get something out of the game," he said.

Lyall's delight wasn't shared by Luton coach Trevor Hartley, in charge of the team with manager David Pleat away searching for new players.

'Choked'

Hartley said: "A draw was fair enough, I suppose, but I was a bit choked when the equaliser went in so late. It would have been a nice win for me over John Lyall because I was in West Ham's youth side when he was a senior player at Upton Park."

On the evidence of a tame first half it was amazing that Hammers needed such a desperate escape.

West Ham surged ahead in the ninth minute when Steve Whitton slammed in a free kick for his first league goal of the season.

When Mick Droy limped off with a ham-string injury it seemed odds-on that Luton

would fall to their fourth consecutive defeat.

Nine minutes from half-time, though, they were gifted an equaliser when Hammers full-back Steve Walford messed up a back-pass and Brian Stein smartly chipped over the stranded Tom McAlister.

The second half had hardly started when Nwajiobi left Ray Stewart for dead with a swerve and sent a scorching shot into the far corner.

West Ham made a desperate late surge and Lyall sent on striker Dave Swindlehurst for only his second appearance of the season.

Hammers were almost caught out again when the unmarked Nwajiobi headed down and McAlister had to take the ball off Mal Donaghy's toe. But with five minutes left, Martin muscled his way through the crowd to meet Allen's corner.

There was good news for



ALVIN MARTIN

Lyall from Upton Park where Alan Devonshire celebrated his comeback after almost a year out through injury by inspiring the reserves to a 7-0 victory over Oxford.

"I'm very pleased. The game has done my confidence a lot of good," said a happy Devonshire last night.