

IAN'S A HIT—SO HOWE'S HAPPY!

84/85

IT WAS 14 months ago in the opening game of the 1983 season that Charlie Nicholas, Arsenal's £700,000, 52-goal sensation from Celtic, made his bow against Luton before 40,000 excited Highbury fans. It was a debut heralded by fanfares of publicity and the biggest display of ballyhoo seen in the capital for years.

Yet such are the fickle winds of fortune that yesterday Charlie - boy sat in the stand and watched his all-action replacement, Ian Allinson, lift Arsenal back into the title race.

Said Arsenal's delighted manager Don Howe of his free-transfer, match hero from Colchester: "There is no way I can play Charlie Nicholas in front of Ian Allinson."

Then Howe added with a grin: "Allinson is doing everything at the moment—

Howe, who confirmed he made a bid for Southampton's transfer-listed England midfielder Steve Williams, added: "It was a good, solid performance, but the result was not that important. What was more important was whether I had made the right decisions. . . ."

It looked as if Howe had certainly made the right

Arsenal 3 Luton 1: by ALAN HOBY

decision, however difficult, in dropping his multi-capped veteran 'keeper Pat Jennings—also for the first time in favour of 6ft 4in John Lukic.

In those first desperate moments, Lukic had to stretch to his full height as, running backwards, he tipped over a flying header from Luton's new signing from Villa, £70,000 Steve Foster.

A goal at that time might have been fatal for anxious Arsenal. As it was, only 17 minutes had gone when the dynamic Allinson hit a glorious right-foot volley over the head of Luton's third-choice 'keeper Les Sealey.

Twice more in the first-half Arsenal missed glittering chances from crosses set up by the run-everywhere Allinson—the first when Tony Woodcock miskicked, the second when Brian Talbot

headed straight at Sealey.

In the second-half it was Allinson all the way. One moment on the right, the next on the left, he first hustled Luton's Tim Breacker into making a bad back-pass which Woodcock promptly banged home (61 minutes).

Six minutes later another raking centre found Viv Anderson, who rose dramatically above the Luton defence to head home Arsenal's third goal.

You just couldn't stop the busy little Allinson. He even earned a penalty when Mitchell Thomas brought him down in the box, but Brian Talbot's tame spot-kick was saved by Sealey.

Luton's goal after 75 minutes came via acrobatic Brian Stein's over-head kick from substitute Emeka Nwajobi's cross.