

FOSTER'S WALL

WEST HAM are still in the record business—they've now equalled the club's best run by going 18 matches without defeat. But Luton can argue with conviction that figures will prove anything.

What they won't show is that Hammers spent 90 per cent of the match clinging to a draw by their fingertips.

Or, to be more accurate, by the fingertips of goalkeeper Phil Parkes.

Picked

Poor Parkes has enough trouble with his arthritic knees without being forced to leap about a plastic pitch with a galeforce wind in his face, and being treated like an Aunt Sally.

He had to face a constant bombardment but stuck to his task, as did the whole defence on the day when West Ham proved conclusively that the old "softie" image has gone.

By BRIAN MADLEY

Luton 0 West Ham 0

They may have finished the match punchdrunk enough to fail a breathalyser but at least they finished it with a point they never would have picked up in similar circumstances a few years back.

No matter what Luton threw at them, and it was plenty, they soaked it up, rode their luck and came back looking for more.

The fact that Frank McAvennie got through a match without scoring is a sure sign that it was one-way traffic.

Even more significantly, he didn't even have a shot. Whenever the ball reached him he ran into a brick wall called Foster.

Luton had so much of the action that the sort of chances McAvennie relishes were bound to arrive despite the heroism of Parkes and Co.

But if you don't put them

away you can't complain. Parkes made brilliant saves from Harford and from Hill, and North, Preece and Stein saw shots go inches wide. But the nearest Luton went to scoring was when Donaghy headed against the bar.

Luton: Sealey 6—Breacker 6, *FOSTER 8, Donaghy 7, Thomas 7—Hill 7, Nicholas 7, Preece 7—Harford 7, Stein 7, North 6.

West Ham: *PARKES 8—Stewart 7, Gale 7, Martin 7, Walford 7—Ward 6, Dickens 6, Orr 6, Devonshire 6—McAvinnie 6, Cottee 6.

Ref: D Hedges (Oxford) 7.

Devonshire hurt again

WEST HAM's Alan Devonshire was taken to hospital with a possible broken jaw after the draw at Luton.

Devonshire was injured in a late clash with Peter Nicholas and was cut on his chin. Hammers manager John Lyall went with him to hospital.

DEV SHAKER

WEST HAM came to equal their club record run of 18 League matches unbeaten and ended clutching a point that even coach Ronnie Boyce had to admit might have been beyond the Hammers of old.

But they had to pay a heavy price for locking out Luton.

They were battered by the non-stop Hatters, buffeted by the wild winter wind and bloddied—at least that was the fate of midfield man Alan Devonshire.

Accident

He took an elbow in the face from Luton's Peter Nicholas in the last minute and was whisked off in the back seat of a Rolls Royce for emergency treatment in a London hospital.

Nicholas said: "It was a complete accident and I hope he is not seriously hurt."

As Devonshire made the journey back to London with

Luton 0 West Ham 0: by PAUL PARISH

manager John Lyall, Boyce explained: "He has a bad cut from a whack on the jaw and he has gone to see a specialist as a precautionary measure and to make sure that his jaw is not broken."

At least Boyce was satisfied that this Hammers side don't have the glass jaw of some of their predecessors. He recalled: "In the past we have been called a bit soft, but they did very well to hold on."

Hanging on was about all they could do as Luton went hell for leather in search of a league double against the championship-chasing Hammers.

Instead of Luton's Mick Harford and Brian Stein and West Ham's Frank McAvennie and Tony Cottee—a total of 54 goals between them this season—grabbing the limelight, it was their defensive colleagues.

Top scoring McAvennie was made to look almost anonymous by Mal Donaghy while the brilliant Alvin Martin and his partner Tony Gale engin-

eerred West Ham's fifth clean sheet in a row.

Luton's best chances fell to youngster Mark North, making only his second full appearance, but in three second half minutes he squandered three good chances.

When Donaghy saw a header clip the bar Luton must have realised it was not going to be their day.

Home boss David Pleat summed up: "It's all about chances and we didn't take ours. I reckon our goalkeeper Les Sealey could have gone Christmas shopping. Well, almost."

"No one can handle Mick Harford but in the two games we've had this season Alvin Martin has done better than