

Devonshire gets injury all-clear

By ROGER MALONE

85/86

Luton 0 West Ham 0

ALAN DEVONSHIRE, a key member of the West Ham side challenging for the Division I lead, will be greatly relieved not to have broken any bones when he received an excruciating blow in the face in the last minute of their match at Luton.

The former England midfielder missed last season with a serious knee injury. He has had stitches in the injury he received on Saturday and should be fit to play at Tottenham on Boxing Day.

Peter Nicholas, the hard-tackling Welsh international who won the challenge, said last night: "It was a 50-50 ball, which I won."

"It has been said that I caught Alan with my elbow, but that is not so, although certainly two of their players ended up on the ground. Alan still has electric skills, and I'm glad he is not badly hurt."

Devonshire and the rest of West Ham's attacking players doubtless will want to perform much more cohesively during the holiday matches.

"Our defence pulled us through to a valuable point," admitted Ron Boyce, John Lyall's lieutenant, the manager already having whisked Devonshire away for X-rays.

Harford subdued

A combination of a difficult wind and Luton's greater familiarity with their artificial pitch prevented the uninspired visitors from combining in their normal smooth style.

Foster's control, and the growing feeling that Thomas could become England's left-back understudy to Sansom in Mexico, established the home side's domination of an eventful second half, preceded by scrappy mediocrity.

West Ham survived, to their record of 18 consecutive League games unbeaten, thanks to Martin's subduing of Harford, Parkes' sound handling and because Luton's best chances usually fell to North, the inexperienced stand-in for the injured Nwajiobi.

Yet West Ham could have snatched the goal that would have moved them into second place, ahead of Liverpool. McAvennie's beautiful dummy brought Devonshire a mis-cued first-half chance, and 10 minutes from time Stewart's sweeping pass released Gottee who drove wide.

Luton.—Sealey: Breacker. Thomas. Nicholas. Foster. Donaghy. Hill. Stein. Harford. North. Preece.

West Ham.—Parkes: Stewart Walford. Gale. Martin. Devonshire. Ward. McAvennie. Dickens. Cottee. Orr.