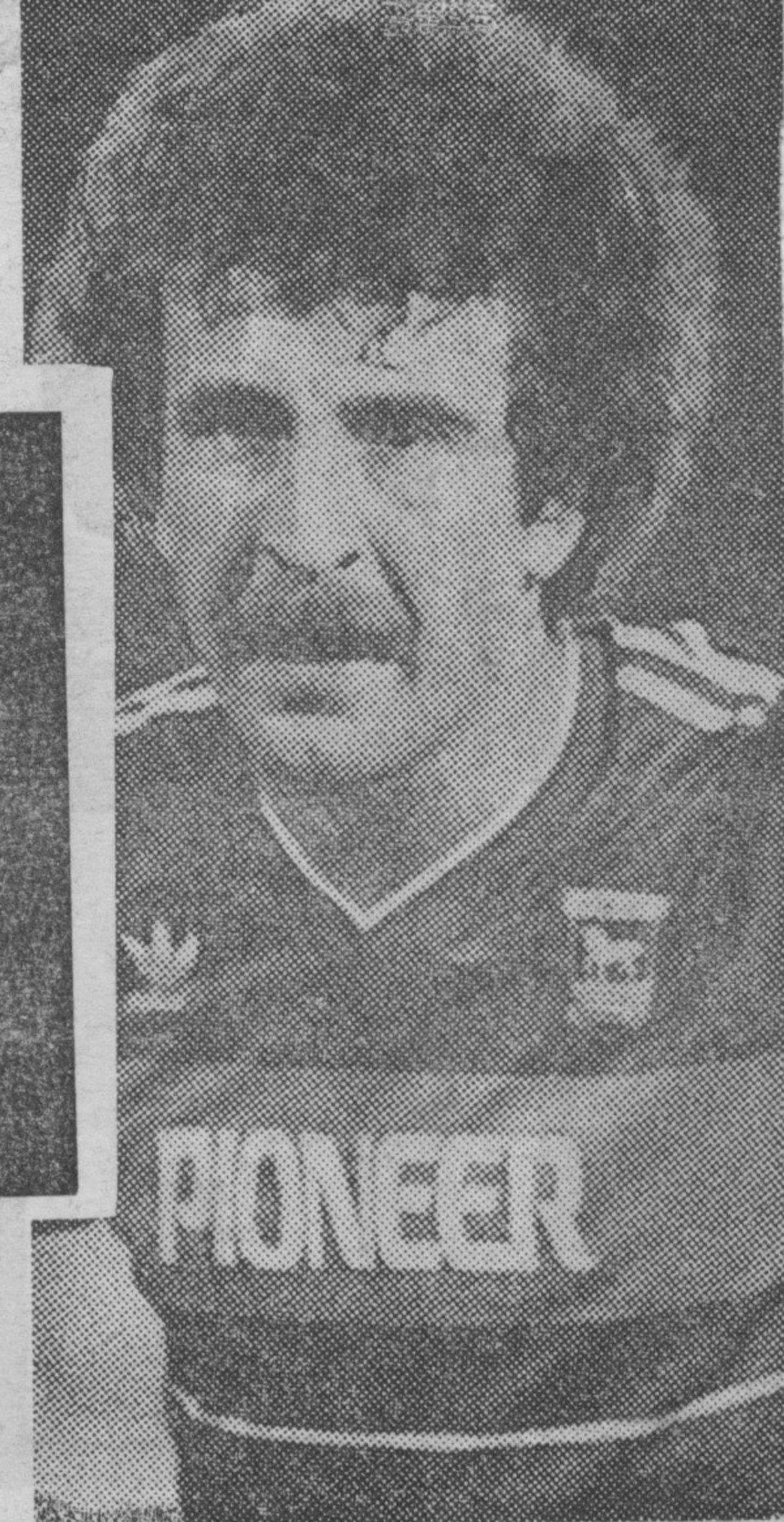




**Luton manager David Pleat has
one word for this Ipswich star**



'NUTCASE'

By BEN BACON

IPSWICH striker Alan Sunderland was called "a nutcase" last night by Luton manager David Pleat.

The amazing accusation came after Sunderland had run half the length of the Portman Road pitch to kick Luton's Mick Harford on the leg.

"Only a nutcase could do something like that," said Pleat.

Referee Allan Gunn allowed ex-Arsenal star Sunderland to escape with a booking for the challenge that was thinly disguised as a tackle.

Ipswich boss Bobby Ferguson said it was retaliation for an off-the-ball clash between the two players seconds earlier that left Sunderland writhing on the ground.

CHALLENGE

Ferguson claimed: "Harford punched Sunderland on the jaw, but the ref didn't spot it."

"It's hard not to retaliate after something like that."

The feud between the pair continued AFTER the match, which finished 1-1.

Harford, 6ft 2in tall, and 5ft 9in Sunderland — who was sporting a black

SUNDERLAND — accused

eye — exchanged angry words in the players' room.

Ferguson admitted it was an "ill-tempered" game. But apart from Sunderland, only one other player was booked . . . Harford.

That was for a late challenge on Jason Dozzell in the first half. Ironically, Harford was also involved in an incident that led to substitute Sunderland coming on after the break.

A clash with Ian Cranson left the Ipswich central defender with concussion and he did not re-appear for the second half.

Last night Luton chief Pleat said of Harford's alleged punch on Sunderland's jaw: "I didn't see the incident, but my lad is as fair as any player in the First Division."

"Not in any way could you describe him as nasty."

TAKE that pal! Rochdale centre-half Joe Cooke was sent off at Stockport for flattening **CLUB-MATE** Barry Diamond . . . who is on loan from Rochdale to Stockport.