

LUTON IN LIMBO

Luton 1 Oxford 2

85/86

DESPERATE DAN must be proud of his beefcake boys Gary Briggs and Malcolm Shotton. If the two lumbering giants in the middle of Oxford's defence aren't his offspring, they must certainly train on the old cow pie.

It's not often that hard man Mick Harford, touted far and wide for England, is eaten for breakfast. This time frustration replaced aggression and Harford, booked towards the end, was lucky to stay the course.

If Briggs and Shotton can so intimidate the 6ft 2in Luton striker, heaven help QPR's lightweight front men John Byrne and Gary Bannister in next month's Milk Cup Final.

But if the Harford-Shotton-Briggs battle caught the eye, it was two Welshmen, playing hero and villain, who provided the talking points.

Hero

Hero was Oxford's rejuvenated striker Jeremy Charles while the role of villain went to Luton's Peter Nicholas.

Charles, having scored the winner against Villa in the Milk Cup semi-final in midweek, did it again at Kenilworth Road as Luton lost at home for the first time in ten games.

His winner came on the hour as he chased a Rhoades-Brown ball, held off Thomas and Donaghy and slid the ball past the stranded Sealey.

It's not often you feel sorry for Nicholas, a man whose godfathers could well have been Billy Bremner, Peter Storey and Nobby Stiles.

But after putting Luton ahead with a bending free

By HARRY COURT

kick of surprising finesse, he was unluckily pulled up for a penalty.

As an Oxford ball came over from the right at least eight players went scrapping for it.

Referee Colin Downey, who had an appalling game, judged Nicholas to have fouled John Aldridge, Oxford's leading scorer, who put away the penalty for his 24th goal of the season.

Oxford, however, were full value for a win that puts more light between them and the relegation zone.

LUTON: *SEALEY 8—Breaker 5, Foster 6, Donaghy 5, Thomas 7—Preece 6, Nicholas 6, Hill 6—Harford 6, M Stein 7 (inj), Newell 6. Sub: North 6.

OXFORD: Judge 7—Slatter 6, Shotton 7, Briggs 7, Treweek 6—Hebberd 6, Phillips 7, Houghton 7—*RHOADES-BROWN 8, Aldridge 7, Charles (inj) 7. Sub: A Thomas 6.

Ref: C Downey (Hounslow) 5.