

Harford provides Luton's light and their shadows

By Clive White

Luton Town.....	2
Everton.....	1

Communications between football managers and the media are so strained these days that the two sides have had to introduce an intermediary language. One of the most popular words of this new dialogue is "aggressive." As far as managers and dictionaries are concerned, it means forceful and assertive.

For the media, however, the word has taken on a different connotation, meaning dirty and violent, which enables them to convey that tone to an audience without getting a violent response from managers.

The word "aggressive" — much in use after Wales's victory over Denmark — should receive quite an airing in reports from Kenilworth Road this morning. Mick Harford, the Luton Town centre forward, repeatedly overstepped the thin line dividing fair and foul play.

But such are the idiosyncrasies of football: it would have been impossible to look beyond Harford as the man of the match, although he should not have played any further part in it after aiming a kick at Watson's head in the 29th minute. Even by then, though, he was the most significant performer, and all for the right reasons.

In a peculiar sort of way, justice was done. Luton should have had a player sent off and Everton should have conceded a penalty following a blatant push by Harper on Brian Stein. But it was hard to feel sorry for the victims, even though both managers turned a blind eye to indiscretion when it suited them. "What kick?" Ray Harford, the Luton manager, asked; "What push?" Colin Harvey, the Everton manager, asked with similar incredulity.

Harvey must still have been stunned by his team's ability to compete with seven first-team players missing. Clarke narrowly failed a fitness test on his

thigh to leave Everton with just one fit forward in their vast first-team squad.

Yet, after just four minutes on the plastic pitch, they were ahead. Pointon finished ruthlessly at the far post after Donaghy had involuntarily helped on a free kick by Harper. Luton must then have feared a long, drawn-out siege on the Everton goal, but the ease with which Harper was caught in possession, and Southall's recovery from injury was subsequently tested by Harford, suggested they would not have to wait long.

Luton equalized after 18 minutes when Harford climbed aggressively — in the *Oxford English Dictionary* sense of the word — above Van den Hauwe to head down for Brian Stein to drive home.

While it is true, as Ray Harford said of his namesake, that "if you took the aggression away he'd lose part of his armoury," the Luton forward's performance gained nothing from the sort of violent reaction he showed to a challenge by Watson that deservedly earned the Everton player a booking. How Allan Gunn, the referee, could judge Harford to be no more to blame when he had already committed several fouls — one of which almost decapitated Reid — defied logic. So did his decision to penalize Heath for dangerous kicking when Donaghy had dipped his head low enough to undo the former's boots with his teeth.

Although they did rely twice upon Sealey's excellent reflexes, Luton's crisper football on the unforgiving carpet brought a fitting reward five minutes after half-time when Van den Hauwe headed a cross straight at the feet of Hill, who drove the ball back through a small gap at the near post.

LUTON TOWN: L Sealey; T Breacker, A Grimes, R Hill, S Foster, M Donaghy, D Wilson, B Stein, M Harford, E Nwajobi (sub: M Stein), D Preece (sub: R Johnson).
EVERTON: N Southall; A Harper, P Van den Hauwe, K Ratcliffe, D Watson, P Reid, T Steven, A Heath, N Adams (sub: I Marshall), I Snodin, N Pointon (sub: D Mountfield).
Referee: A Gunn.