

# MUDDY GOOD FUN OFF THE PLASTIC!

87/88

**NOSTALGIA** FOR football's pre-plastic days was rife around Upton Park on Saturday.

Hatters had slithered and squelched their way to perhaps their most thrilling game of the season, in a 1-1 draw with West Ham.

Manager Ray Harford was moved only to admit it was "not a bad game to watch".

But he was forced to concede: "The wet pitch made it a good game, because defenders were always liable to make mistakes."

Though, he added: "It only convinces me that we've got to learn to play on all sorts of surfaces."

It was the slippery ball that helped Hammers

**WEST HAM 1  
LUTON 1  
By DOMINIC  
BIGGS**

draw first blood in a swashbuckling 90 minutes of cut and thrust.

Paul Ince, on for broken ankle victim George Parris, received Mark Ward's pass outside the box and rifled in a 60th minute volley, which squirmed out of Les Sealey's hands and trickled over the line.

## Nostalgia among the thrills

But pint-sized powerhouse Mark Stein came to Luton's rescue 14 minutes from time, with his second goal in two days.

It was Hammers who were celebrating even before the kick-off, when veteran Billy Bonds took a lone bow in recognition of his recent MBE award.

And within five minutes of the start, only the most astonishing series of let-offs for Luton kept the home fans from having something more to cheer.

Hatters were still finding their feet on the soggy pitch, with

standing water in places, when Sealey raced to the corner of his box, only to be rounded by Tony Cottee. The tiny striker chipped over covering players Donaghy and Foster, but the ball rebounded from a post to Stewart Robson, in front of goal.

He contrived to stall until his shot was blocked and fell to Ward — whose blast from a more acute angle also bounced out kindly for Hatters and was hoofed to safety.

Within minutes Ian Allinson had an equally good chance to give Hatters the lead. First he sent Tim Breacker's cross fizzing over the bar.

Then, set up by Mark Stein for an almost open goal, his second effort went the same way.

Paul Milton fared no better when set up by Ward at the other end, but he had the excuse of being a defender asked to play centre forward.

After half an hour,

Parris was stretched off and Ince came on to help torment the visitors.

But Hatters were soaking up the pressure and even responded with Danny Wilson's probing pass across goal and Mark Stein's shot, well saved by Tom McAlister just before the interval.

The goalkeeper brought off a smart save from Mick Harford's 56th minute flying header.

Coveted by Hammers's boss John Lyall, Harford enhanced his reputation with a quality all-round display.

And after Ince's strike, it was Harford who contested the 76th minute corner, flicked on by Brian Stein, which fell perfectly for brother Mark to finish from close range.

That brought jittery West Ham's recent bad run back to haunt them and Hatters might have stolen three points.

The Stein brothers carved out a chance



● **MARK STEIN** . . . two goals in two days.

which only just evaded Harford. And Mark Stein's bullet header called for a fine save from McAlister.

But Hilton squandered a chance to win it for Hammers in the final minute and as Hatters' boss Harford admitted afterwards: "Before our equaliser I would've happily settled for a draw."

Attendance — 16,716.

**LUTON** — Sealey, Breacker, Johnson, McDonough, Foster, Donaghy, Wilson, B. Stein, Harford, M. Stein, Allinson. Subs: Grimes, Weir.

**WEST HAM** — McAlister, Bonds, Parris, Strodder, Stewart, Potts, Ward, Gale, Hilton, Cottee, Robson. Subs: Dickens, Ince.