

A fan-tastic day out!

What a year for striker Mick

WHEN mighty Mick Harford steps on to the Wembley turf he will have fulfilled his second life long ambition in just one season.

The giant Geordie realised his first in mid February when he made his England debut as second-half substitute against Israel.

And now — barring injury — the 29-year-old super striker will be able to satisfy a burning

By MICHAEL WEINSTEIN

desire to play in a cup final at the home of football.

"Playing for England was the highlight of my career — it was absolutely brilliant — and my father was so proud.

"But it's every player's ambition to get to Wembley — and touch wood — I should have done both by the end of the season," said Harford.

Flying

Sunday's semi-final was the first Littlewoods Cup match this term that Harford has played in but not scored.

But he said: "It doesn't matter who scores as long as we get the right result."

Harford came close to scoring for Hatters with a flying scissors kick after just four minutes.

Yet he said: "As soon as I hit it I knew it was not going in. It looked more spectacular than it was.

"But the two goals we did score were fitting for any game. I thought they were brilliant."

● HERE WE GO, here we go . . . Hatters' fans salute their heroes.

OVER THE MOON!

LUTON 2 OXFORD 0
(Luton win 3-1 on aggregate)
By DOMINIC BIGGS

backwards, to rifle a shot just over the angle of post and crossbar.

In the 18th minute skipper Steve Foster was involved in a clash of heads, following a corner, which left him flat out in agony.

The visitors' only real chance, as Luton continued to press forward, came when Peter Rhoades-Brown opened Hatters' defence with a low cross, which found no one there to take advantage.

In the 33rd minute, Hatters made them pay. Harford knocked a high ball off to Rob Johnson, whose enticing cross hung perfectly over the penalty spot for Brian Stein to force himself ahead of Gary Briggs and power a header past Judge.

Oxford's attempts to hit back early were squashed. And nine minutes after the goal, with half-time only three minutes away, Luton struck their second.

Tommy Caton fouled Harford just outside the penalty area. Full-back Grimes nonchalantly trotted up for the free-kick and his languid left foot curled a shot over the wall, high into the left-hand corner of the net, beyond Judge's despairing lunge.

Then only five minutes into the second half, Danny Wilson almost scored, when one-touch play

Mitchell's so happy

EX-HATTER Mitchell Thomas surveyed Sunday's proceedings almost unnoticed from the back of Luton's main stand. The full-back has been a regular at Kenilworth Road for Hatters' cup games. And as speculation about his return continues, he told the Herald: "I'm just so happy for the lads."



● IT'S THERE . . . Brian Stein (out of picture) heads Luton in front.

from Harford and the Stein brothers found Wilson's shot foiled by one of many fine saves from Judge.

But it was Brian Stein, enjoying his testimonial year having scored in each of the four games against Oxford this season, who ran the length of the pitch onto a return pass from Harford, to almost crown the victory.

Then Hatters suffered in the nervous nineties, when enthusiasm overcame the fans and one ran on to the pitch as others spilled onto the touchline.

LUTON: Sealey, Breacker, Grimes, McDonough, Foster, Donaghy, Wilson, B. Stein, Harford, M. Stein, Johnson. Subs: Black, Oldfield.

OXFORD: Judge, Bardsley, Dreyer, Hill, Briggs, Caton, Hebbard, Foyle, Saunders, Phillips, Rhoades-Brown. Subs: Leworthy, Shelton.

Ally misses out again

LEAGUE Cup nearly man Ian Allinson smiled through his disappointment and joked: "I haven't lost a league cup match in two years.

Allinson had his second successive Wembley torment confirmed when Sunday's final whistle sent Hatters through to the Littlewoods Cup Final, against his old club Arsenal.

Last season Allinson scored a goal that helped the Gunners through to

Wembley, only to be left out of the side that beat Liverpool 2-1.

This season he is cup-tied after playing for Stoke and has had to sit on the sidelines during Littlewoods Cup games, despite being a first team regular in the league.

But he said: "I'm pleased for the lads and it's great for the town of Luton. You could see after the final whistle what it meant to everyone."

Ray's sinking feeling!

THAT sinking feeling set in for Hatters' manager Ray Harford, when he saw the sea of Luton fans celebrating Sunday's victory.

Harford confessed to experiencing a nasty dose of deja vu — as the scenes carried him back to a promotion campaign with previous club Fulham.

"All the supporters thought we were up and they came onto the pitch at Derby, but we didn't get promoted," he recalled.

But this time there was no disappointment and Harford was able to say: "It's important for the

FIVE past three just could not come quickly enough on Sunday for Hatters' midfield dynamo Darron McDonough.

After his terrific holding job against Oxford, he said: "The previous three or four days were a long wait. I couldn't wait to get out there and do what I had to do."

"I feel fantastic — we did the job well. We did not let them play."

McDonough had never reached round five of the competition with his previous club Oldham.

supporters because they've not been to Wembley for so long."

He insisted, the club's priority was still a place in the top six of the First Division.

With good wages paid to top players like Mick

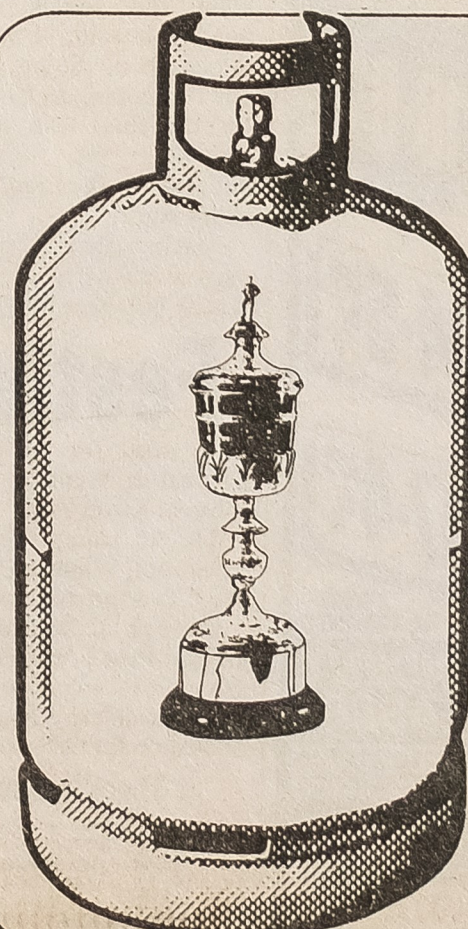
Harford, Ricky Hill, Steve Foster and Mal Donaghy, Luton are ready to kick their "small club" image and should be expected to enforce this by being among the league's best, argued Harford.

"The Littlewoods

Cup final is two months away and anything can happen," he pointed out. And Harford joked: "Anyway, I'd like to go to the FA Cup final more, because that's played on a Saturday."

He warned against a deterioration in league form, adding that the players' attitude, by being able to divorce each game from the last and the next had been "remarkable."

Turning to the semi-final, Harford said: "I thought we settled down very quickly. Once we got the two goals it took the pressure off."



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