

Harford angered as Wharton takes the mickey

TOUGHEST TEST OF RAY'S CAREER

Picture:
Peter Orme



● A worried Ray Harford (fifth from left) waits for the verdict on concussed Les Sealey (on ground) as Mick Harford (third) from left) and a team mate look on.

Injury worries hit Town in their big cup build up

LUTON Town go into their vital FA Cup semi final against Wimbledon with two major injury worries.

Keeper Les Sealey was concussed in a clash with Wednesday's Lee Chapman early in Tuesday's game and Darron McDonough twisted an ankle.

Sealey's injury stopped play for six minutes while

he received treatment.

The incident happened when Chapman rose to meet a high Mel Sterland cross from the right.

At one stage it appeared that Sealey would have to be substituted but he was allowed to play on.

Until half time the game failed to hit top gear but it soon awoke after the restart.

Within seconds Mick

LUTON 2, SHEFF WED 2

Harford's pass reached McDonough who smashed home a cracking shot from 30 yards.

Six minutes later it was all square as Nigel Worthington crossed for Chapman to head in.

Brian Stein put Luton back in the driving seat four minutes later but Wednesday's Sterland ruined victory hopes with a late equaliser.

HATTERS boss Ray Harford admitted on Monday that he faces the toughest test of his managerial career this week as shell-shocked Luton prepare for Saturday's FA Cup semi-final clash with Wimbledon.

Town have conceded 12 goals on their last three trips away from home and on Saturday Newcastle defender Kenny Wharton mocked them by sitting on the ball during their 4-0 defeat at St James' Park.

"Wharton was totally out of order," said Harford.

"He was completely unprofessional. We never sat on the ball or anything like it when we beat them 4-0 earlier on the season... That's really taking the mickey and it is wrong."

A fracas broke out in the players' tunnel as the players left the pitch, but both teams denied any real punches were thrown. Harford might have preferred to see a bit more punch in the Town attack, though.

With Brian Stein left out to give him a chance to make a full recovery from his broken arm and Ian Allinson on the substitutes' bench, 19-year-old Kingsley Black was given a full game on the left wing.

Stein was not happy with his manager's decision but accepted it while Allinson was only left out because he had been up nearly all Friday night as wife Jean produced their second child.

Harford lashed into his players about their inept performances away from Kenilworth Road.

He said: "We have been disgraceful recently. Our whole season could collapse and I am facing my biggest test as a manager this week because I have got to shake the players out of it."

"We are looking like a very tired team. We don't seem able to defend either collectively or individually. It looks like all our pressure games have taken their toll — the players may have bottled it."

Harford included 'flu victim Mick Harford in the team but the England striker was below par after climbing out of his sick bed to play.

If Luton want to realise their dream of a fourth

NEWCASTLE 4
O'Neill (15, 25, 81),
Goddard (62)

LUTON 0
Attendance: 20,565

Wembley appearance this season in the FA Cup final against Liverpool or Nottingham Forest, they will need to buck up their form.

There was some good news at the weekend — long term injured Ricky Hill and David Preece made their comebacks in the reserves' 3-1 home win over Millwall.

Emeka Nwajiobi also played and helped set up the second goal in his fifth match on the comeback trail.

Hill played 80 minutes and survived a heavy kick on his leg in exactly the same spot where it was broken by Everton's Peter Reid on Boxing Day. He went to the Luton and Dunstable Hospital for precautionary x-rays afterwards and everything was alright.

● Ian Allinson is not the only Town player to celebrate fatherhood this year — captain and player-coach Steve Foster's wife Joanne is expecting twins later in the year. Steve, who married in 1985, already has one young son.

● Luton's Republic of Ireland international left-back Ashley Grimes is one man with plenty to play for at the end of the season. He is on the short list as a member of manager Jack Charlton's squad for the European Championship finals in West Germany and needs to keep his form to ensure himself a place.