



● CROWN THEM VICTORIOUS . . . Luton's weary troops sing the victory song on the beloved turf of Wembley, where previous frowns finally turned to smiles when Arsenal were vanquished.

ALL THIS AND EUROPE?



● ON THE WAY . . . Brian Stein guides his first goal home as the hapless Gus Caesar appeals in vain for offside.



● NUMBER TWO . . . Danny Wilson wheels away in delight as his equaliser heads for the back of the net.



● THE WINNER . . . Brian Stein beats Nigel Winterburn to the ball and kills off the Gunners.

ONE OF THE most thrilling Wembley cup finals in memory this week left Hatters proudly holding the club's first major trophy.

And a bonus for their scintillating, last-gasp 3-2 Littlewoods Cup win against Arsenal on Sunday could be a place in Europe next season.

It would be in the UEFA Cup, though Hatters will have to wait and see if English clubs are readmitted to the continental competitions during the summer.

That was still far from their minds, however, as Ray Harford's brave players celebrated a famous victory — taking a first-half lead and then coming back from 2-1 down to win with two goals from Brian Stein and one from Danny Wilson.

In between, stand-in goalkeeper Andy Dibble's spectacular display of heroics, including a penalty save, kept his side in with a chance.

There were only 10 minutes left and the Gunners were winning 2-1, when David Rocastle went down and Luton appeals were waved away as full-back Nigel Winterburn stepped up for the spot-kick.

It was struck firm and low to the keeper's left. But Dibble stunned everyone by swooping to paw the ball around a post. The breathtaking save gave Hatters new heart.

The game had been slipping away from them, despite the perfect start Brian Stein's 13th-minute goal provided.

By DOMINIC BIGGS

The opening exchanges had been fairly even. But when David Preece's free-kick was only headed out as far as Steve Foster, the skipper's subtle lob made it easy for Brian Stein to burst into the space and beat John Lukic from 10 yards.

Arsenal struggled to get back on terms. But the Hatters' defence, with Mal Donaghy and left-back Rob Johnson outstanding, kept the Gunners at bay.

In the last 10 minutes of the half Luton began to express themselves freely — Preece, Ricky Hill and Mick Harford combining in one sweeping move and seconds later Kingsley Black turning in a probing cross from a near-impossible angle.

Hatters ran out full of purpose for the second-half and Black soon centred for Harford to head just wide.

Harford then turned provider in the 50th

ARSENAL 2
Hayes, Smith
LUTON TOWN 3
Brian Stein (2), Wilson
● ATTENDANCE: 95,700

minute, when Brian Stein's goal-bound header was brilliantly parried by Lukic, who also foiled Hill's follow-up attempt.

Hill fired into the side-netting from the ensuing corner and when Black burst past Winterburn to almost set up Harford, Luton were looking the only likely winners.

Gunners boss George Graham turned the tide with the introduction of Martin Hayes for Perry Groves, with half-an-hour remaining.

Four minutes later Harford limped off with

Crossbar

a recurrence of an ankle injury. Mark Stein replaced him and, sprinting through to shrug off the challenge of England's Tony Adams, almost scored with his first touch — but sent his lob over the crossbar as well as over Lukic.

That could have killed off the Londoners. But in the 71st minute they were back on terms.

Paul Davis's lob from a free-kick was met by Foster's head, but rebounded to find Hayes in space for a simple tap-in. It set up a classic finale.

Hatters' hearts sunk three minutes after Arsenal's equaliser, when Foster and Donaghy missed chances to clear outside the box and Thomas found Alan Smith, who rifled past Dibble.

Four minutes later Dibble turned Smith's flashing header onto the bar and Hayes, standing at the foot of a post, contrived to knock the rebound back against the woodwork.

It was hacked away for a corner, from which Dibble had to perform an encore, tipping over Hayes' flick from Adams' header.

Ashley Grimes was ushered on for the tiring David Preece, as the Arsenal bombardment continued unabated.

Smith had yet another chance to settle it when he raced through but Dibble parried his shot from point blank range.

When the ball ran to Rocastle and he won the controversial 80th-minute penalty it seemed certain to secure victory. But Dibble's inspiring intervention set Hatters off on an historic revival.

Seven minutes from time Gunners' centre-half Gus Caesar

Weary heroes enjoy glory

LUTON'S weary heroes reacted with predictable euphoria to the glorious outcome of the Littlewoods Cup Final.

Man-of-the-match Andy Dibble, whose heroics saved the Hatters from going under when the chips were down, summed up the feelings. "It's like a dream come true for me," he said. "If we had gone two down it would have been a mountain to climb."

"But you cannot judge a player by one game," Dibble added that he would need to produce consistency to topple Les Sealey on a regular basis.

Two-goal hero Brian Stein said he asked the referee how long was left and the ref responded by blowing the final whistle.

"I just could not believe it when the match was over," he said. "It was a brilliant day for the supporters — they were fabulous. I think the whole day has been a credit to football."

Skipper Steve Foster said he was so tired that he could not find the energy to celebrate

hesitated in his own penalty area.

Mark Stein robbed him and Black set up Brian Stein for a shot. It rebounded for Brian to centre for Danny Wilson to stoop and head in virtually on the goal-line.

And the full-time whistle was only seconds away when Grimes burst down the right flank and fired in a low cross with his cultured left foot, for testimonial man Brian Stein to stab the winner perfectly between Winterburn and Lukic.

Ray the gambler

BOSS Ray Harford admitted he took a calculated gamble with his Wembley team selection.

But the happy manager said the risks had all paid off after the cup final triumph.

Back came Ricky Hill and David Preece, both lacking fitness after lengthy injuries, and in came young starlet Kingsley Black to take the place of dropped Mark Stein.

"I was delighted," said Harford. "I never had any doubts about Kingsley Black. It was a big gamble to play Hill and Preece together in midfield — I didn't know how fit they were."