

SAME OLD STORY

If at first you don't succeed . . .

87/88

THE LAST home game of the season was full of surprises for Hatters fans.

But they had little to do with the action, which petered out into a 1-1 draw with Forest.

The major shock was chairman David Evans' programme announcement that he would, after all, stay on at the helm.

Only days before, the Welwyn-Hatfield MP had been adamant he would stand down. But in an exclusive interview with the Herald after Friday's game, he explained his reason for the change of heart (see page 3).

Another unexpected revelation came at the final whistle, when fans invading the pitch to take souvenir cuttings of the plastic carpet were told it was not being ripped up and replaced, as previously stated, but merely refurbished!

It is understood the club, expecting a Football League announcement on the future of artificial pitches at the end of next season, decided it would be unwise to invest heavily in a brand new surface which may be declared obsolete — and instead to make the most of what they had for the time being.

Trivia

The decision prevented what would have been a worthwhile addition to football's fund of statistical trivia — Forest were also the first team to play on the Kenilworth Road En Tout Cas three seasons ago, when the score was an identical 1-1 draw.

With similar draws from both Hatters' previous two matches and against a young Forest side undeniably talented but with a chance of finishing anywhere other than third in the table, a repeat scoreline was perhaps not surprising.

Chasing their record seventh place from last season, Luton welcomed back big striker Mick Harford for his first game since the Wembley triumph against Arsenal.

And it did the trick after only five minutes, when Harford's head connected with Black's corner from the right

and the ball was blocked on the line but fell to Oldfield — who rolled it back for Mal Donaghy to whack in his first goal of the season.

Donaghy, suffering an injured ankle, left 18 minutes from time to make way for Marvin Johnson to gain more experience of the big time.

But by then Forest were all-square and neither side looked like altering the score.

Forest struck barely a minute after the break, when Clough found the tricky Carr on the right wing. His low cross was reached by Dibble, who lost his hold and ended up clawing the ball to Lee Glover, completely unattended, for the simplest of tap-ins.

Dominate

The visitors continued to dominate the second half, while Hatters had enjoyed the best scoring chances before the interval.

England's Neil Webb took the man-of-the-match award for Forest, as much on reputation as any special contribution, although he did bring a stunning tip-over out of Dibble, from one outstanding 66th minute volley.

Luton 1 Forest 1

... tie again!

Reports by
**DOMINIC BIGGS and
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● Oldfield outpaced England prospect Des Walker on both days.

SUNDAY

● Attendance — 13,106.

FOREST: Sutton, Fleming, Chettle, Walker, Foster, Wilson, Carr (Crosby 45), Webb, Clough, Glover, Rice. Other sub: Parker.

LUTON: Dibble, Breacker, R. Johnson, Cobb (James 72), Foster, M. Johnson, Wilson, Stein, Oldfield, Preece (Black).



● Oldfield rolls back for Donaghy to beat racing keeper Sutton. A moment in time caught by Herald photographer Bruce Raidl.

HATTERS and Forest battled to a 1-1 draw for the second time in 48 hours to close the book on a glorious season for the Kenilworth Road club.

Keeper Andy Dibble and young striker David Oldfield were once again outstanding in a see-saw contest.

After the young Aussie-born forward fired Hatters into a second-minute lead, Luton were forced to soak up no end of pressure.

Yet after the East Midlands side had equalised, it was Luton's turn to pile on the pressure, coming close three times in a five minute second-half spell.

The game was by no means a classic, but for an end-of-season clash with little at stake, it had its moments — the first supplied by Oldfield.

Mark Stein set the 19-year-old away with a subtle through ball. He out-paced Steve Chettle and, with Steve Sutton rushing towards him, showed maturity far greater than his years to shoot home from just inside the box.

From then on Hatters were on the rack. Dibble could only palm away a fierce Franz Carr effort. After 27 minutes he raced out to clear but gave the ball straight to England midfielder Neil Webb whose instant 40 yard lob sailed just wide, with the keeper stranded.

Luton's only other first-half chance came in the 38th minute when Ian Allison finished off a fine move by shooting high into the side netting.

Rob Johnson almost turned a 58th minute Lee Glover cross into his own net, but the alert

Forest 1 Luton 1

Dibble saved well.

And seconds later the Forest youngster fired just over the bar.

But on the hour, Webb made no mistake when he collected the ball from Terry Wilson and bent an unstoppable shot round the helpless Dibble.

Then came Hatters' three chances to sew up the game.

Mark Stein hit a crashing 74th minute shot against an upright after Ian Allison had set him up.

Kingsley Black, on for Preece got in behind Des Walker but miscued when he really should have done better.

Accuracy

Then Oldfield rose high to set Stein up again but his shot lacked any power or accuracy.

Boss Ray Harford said: "I thought we were going to nick something. I would rather have got three points, but it's nice to go away and get something."



● Mark Stein, in his first game since the cup final, showed his form.

FRIDAY

● Attendance — 9,108

LUTON: Dibble, Breacker, Grimes, R. Johnson, Foster, Donaghy (M. Johnson 72 mins), Wilson, Oldfield, Harford, Preece, Black. Sub not used: Allison.

FOREST: Sutton, Fleming, Williams (Foster 53 mins), Walker, Chettle, Wilson, Carr, Webb, Clough, Glover, Crosby. Sub not used: Parker.