

MAKESHIFT MEL BURIES HATTERS

88/89

Sterland's goal takes the points



• LEGS OF STEEL . . . but they weren't strong enough to carry Sterland's penalty home

STRIKER-STARVED SHEFFIELD exposed Hatters' weaknesses up front in a frantic League curtain raiser.

With the Stein brothers departed, boss Ray Harford had all his forward power on show at Hillsborough.

Mighty Mick Harford had to chase all over the field in search of the ball and at times David Oldfield and Kingsley Black showed their inexperience.

It was stand-in Wednesday striker Mel Sterland who stole the show.

The south Yorkshire side off-loaded Lee Chapman, Mark Chamberlain and Brian Marwood before the start of the season, so full-back Sterland joined Colin West up front.

And after missing a first-half penalty, he headed home the winner in the 58th minute.

Hatters, playing a new 4-4-2 formation, rarely troubled Wednesday 'keeper Kevin Pressman.

They battled for everything — with captain Steve Foster a rock in the centre of defence — but created little in front of goal.

Ex-England international Steve Williams — making his bow in a Luton shirt — struggled

SHEFF WED 1 LUTON 0
By MICHAEL WEINSTEIN

to get in the game and was lectured by referee George Tyson inside the first minute.

The controversial referee cautioned five Luton players and delivered a blow that had Hatters reeling in the 32nd minute.

While Tim Breacker and Wednesday's Tony Galvin tussled angrily on the ground, Nigel Worthington sent Sterland galloping through and he went down after a good-looking challenge from debut boy John Dreyer.

Tyson pointed to the spot, but Hatters survived the count as Les Sealey dived brilliantly to his left to turn the ball away.

Ugly

From the resulting corner Sterland flung himself at Sealey and an ugly free-for-all followed.

Hatters' only decent first-half chance came in the 12th minute when another debutant, Roy Wegerle, jinked towards goal before firing wide of Pressman — and the post.

They survived a scare in the 25th minute when Mal Donaghy — who was battered from start to finish and ended the game with a catalogue of injuries — hesitated on the edge of the box.

Eventually he decided to pass back to Sealey but underhit the ball

and nearly let-in Sterland.

The second-half began brightly for Hatters as they forced their first corner and Kingsley Black swept into the box before shooting just wide.

Thirteen minutes after the break Sterland unlocked Hatters' defence with a subtle flick to set Siggi Jonsson free — and the Iceland star's cross was met by Sterland who powered his header past Sealey.

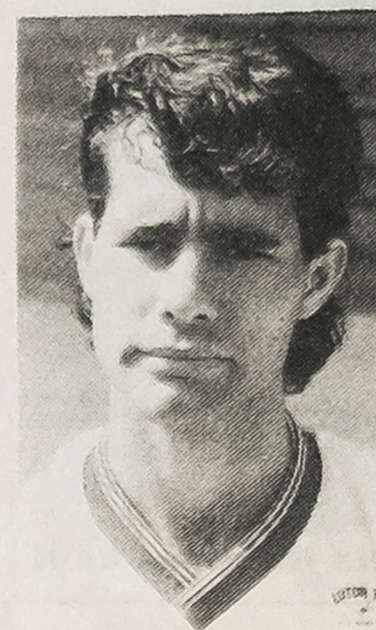
Black was soon back in action — booked for a foul in the 65th minute — then on hand to set-up Mick Harford who could only side-foot weakly at Pressman.

And after Wegerle had made way for Ian Allinson, the tiny Northern Ireland international picked up the ball 45 yards from goal and beat two defenders before firing over from 25 yards.

A trio of Hatters followed Breacker and Black into the book in the last 10 minutes — Harford for high kicking, Foster for dissent and Donaghy for a second handball offence.

It was Wednesday who finished the strongest.

Donaghy knew little about the point-blank West shot he stopped on the line and then Sterland shot between Sealey's legs only for the 'keeper to sit on the ball and force it onto the post.



• Wegerle . . . debut



• Dreyer . . . debut

THE LINE-UP

LUTON: Sealey, Breacker, Dreyer, Williams, Foster, Donaghy, Wilson, Wegerle (Allinson 72), Harford, Oldfield, Black. Other sub: Rob Johnson.

SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY: Pressman, Sterland, Worthington, Pearson, Madden, Harper, Megson, Proctor, West, Jonsson, Galvin (Hirst 78). Other sub: Bradshaw.

• Attendance: 16,433.