

Fed-up Suckling left out in Palace mystery

PERRY SUCKLING was left out of the Crystal Palace side yesterday, but the reason why remains a mystery.

Palace manager Steve Coppell said: "Perry didn't play because of a long-standing hand injury. He would have played had he been fit and will probably be in contention next week."

But earlier it seemed Suckling had asked not to be included in the side following speculation over his future — and he left the ground at lunchtime.

Palace have been involved in negotiations for Bristol Rovers goalkeeper Nigel Martyn, who is rated a

future England player and will cost £1 million — and that has not pleased Suckling.

Coppell confirmed the Martyn deal is still alive, saying: "We made a bid and the last I heard it hadn't been accepted. I believe it's a question of how rather than how much."

Without Martyn or Suckling, Coppell brought in reserve goalkeeper Brian Parkin, who did well considering the jittery state of the players in front of him.

Since conceding nine goals at Liverpool earlier in the season Palace have kept a blank sheet twice but been beaten three times in three other games and lost 5-0 to

Palace 1 Luton 1 by MIKE ALLEN

Nottingham Forest at the start of the month.

On this showing it is hard to blame Suckling for all this. Even a debut for summer signing Mark Dennis at left-back failed to calm the defensive nerves completely.

But Parkin, a free transfer from Crewe, played an attacking role, too, helping to set up the opening goal with a big drop-kick.

It found its way to Ian Wright, who knocked it on to Mark Bright, and his cool lob beat Alec Chamberlain.

Palace dominated the

early stages and deserved their lead but just as they should have been twisting the knife they suddenly looked blunt.

Luton lost the services of centre half Dave Beaumont and were forced to reshuffle at the back and could have expected to be put under pressure by Palace's speedy Wright and Bright.

Instead, it was Luton who came into the game more and if Lars Elstrup had not been so ponderous he could have had the Hatters ahead by the interval.

As it was, Geoff Thomas dived in to block his best chance.

89/90
But it was no surprise when Luton equalised in the second half. They hit the bar and Danny Wilson followed up to score.

Luton manager Ray Harford said: "We came back well. We have not been beaten in four games and the way everybody is beating everybody else we are Championship material!"

CRYSTAL PALACE: Parkin, Pemberton, Dennis, Gray, Hopkins, Dyer, McGoldrick, Thomas, Bright, Wright, Pardew. Subs: Barber, Shaw.

LUTON: Chamberlain, Breacker, Dreyer, Wilson, Johnson, Beaumont (inj, 24 sub Harvey), Williams, Dowie, Elstrup (w'drn, 72 sub Wegerle), Kennedy, Black.