

DEPUTY DREYER TO THE RESCUE!

89/90

VERSATILE John Dreyer rescued injury-hit Hatters with another outstanding performance as emergency centre-back.

Five times this season the £140,000 signing from Oxford has starred after switching to the centre of defence in mid game.

Dreyer has filled in on three occasions for the unlucky Darron McDonough, once for Graham Rodger and now for David Beaumont, who limped away from Selhurst Park after just 24 minutes.

The 26-year-old shored up a Luton defence rocked by an early Mark Bright goal and in severe danger of conceding another.

Storm

Dreyer's performance — together with a dominant display by keeper Alec Chamberlain — restricted Palace to just a handful of half-chances after Hatters had weathered the early storm.

While admitting the game was far from pretty to watch, Luton boss Ray Harford had special praise for stand-in star Dreyer.

"I thought John was brilliant," he said.

"Every time we've lost a centre-back,

CRYSTAL PALACE 1 LUTON 1 By MICHAEL WEINSTEIN



• JOHN DREYER

Dreyer has come in and played well.

"But ironically we played him at centre-back from the start at Man City — and he was hopeless.

"I think centre-back is his best position but he needs a few games there to settle in."

Harford went to Crystal Palace in search of Hatters' first away league win in 11 months without David Preece or fit-again Roy Wegerle

— relegated to the subs' bench.

The Londoners began like a train and came close through Geoff Thomas, Alex Dyer, Ian Wright and Andy Gray before Bright opened the scoring after 13 minutes.

Physio

Keeper Brian Parkin sent a massive clearance upfield. Bright headed it on, Wright flicked the ball up and Bright leapt high to lob his shot over the helpless Chamberlain.

Bright came close with a header just seconds before Beaumont slipped and twisted his ankle.

Five minutes of intensive treatment by physio Dave Galley failed to repair the damage and the defender made way for Richard Harvey.

Harford's troops



• Oh no — grounded Danny Wilson's header is saved by Brian Parkin.

should have equalised after 27 minutes when Gray fouled Danny Wilson and Steve Williams' pin-point free kick was nodded on by Iain Dowie only for Lars Elstrup to head inches wide with the goal at his mercy.

Record signing Elstrup appeared to have worked an opening on the half hour but Thomas just got a leg

in the way of the Dane's shot.

Dowie had the ball in the net after 34 minutes though the whistle had already blown and shortly after, Elstrup held off three defenders before shooting just wide.

Hard-man Mick Kennedy curled a free kick wide of the upright four minutes after the re-start as Hatters con-

tinued to pile forward.

And the equaliser came after 57 minutes.

Kingsley Black took the ball on his chest and volleyed a crashing shot from fully 25 yards onto the bar.

Naive

Dyer tried to clear under pressure from Wilson but hooked the ball onto the bar and when it dropped, the Luton skipper was there to tap in the easiest goal of his career.

The goal stung Palace back to life but time after time the Londoners' naive attack plunged head first into Hatters' well-marshalled off-side trap — failing to test Chamberlain again.

THE LINE-UP

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

LUTON: Chamberlain, Breacker, Dreyer, Wilson, Johnson, Beaumont (Harvey 24), Williams, Dowie, Elstrup (Wegerle 72), Kennedy Black,

• Attendance: 11,346.