

Mick's full of praise

Ex-Hatter Mick Harford was full of praise for his former team-mates.

Harford — in the Derby line-up last Saturday — admitted his new side had been desperately disappointed with their performance.

Mountain

But he added: "All credit to Luton.

"They came here needing to climb a mountain — and they did it.

"It was do or die for Luton. They put us under a lot of pressure and deserved to get their third goal in my opinion.

"Jim Ryan has turned the team round and has done a great job."

NOW I COULD



• Champagne skipper — Danny Wilson douses team-mates and Herald & Post lensman Bruce Raidl with a bottle of bubbly.



• Well done — Mick Harford drops in on his old pals.

YOU'VE all seen Brian Clough's kissing antics in recent weeks.

Well right now I wish I could give him a real smacker.

Cloughie never did me any favours during my time at Nottingham Forest — I only played 10 full games during 12 months at the City Ground.

But there's no doubt about it — he really came good for me last Saturday.

We went to Derby knowing full well that we could win — but we needed Forest to see off Sheffield Wednesday.

Before the game we said if we could choose anybody to face Wednesday with the right attitude on the last day of the season — it would be Wimbledon . . . or Forest.

They are such a difficult team to beat and we knew they would be in the right frame of mind after their 4-0 drubbing of Manchester United earlier in the week.

Our survival is a tribute to Jim Ryan — and to football.

Jim was determined we should play our way out of trouble the way the fans wanted us to — the David



Pleat way if you like.

We didn't feel we were going to loose — even when Derby pegged us back.

So you've got to give full credit to Jimmy.

I know our survival will be a bitter pill for many First Division teams to swallow.

But I can't understand why so many people wanted us to go down.

We play attractive football, we're not a physical side and we don't hump the ball about.

The world and his wife wrote us off in recent weeks but all the criticism just served to spur us on.

Now that we've achieved the impossible I just hope we don't do a 'Charlton' and struggle for the coming seasons.

Hatters make screen epic look a B movie!

AT 2.05pm on Saturday, ITV screen one of the greatest war films ever made, in a bid to temp viewers away from the FA Cup final on the beeb.

One thing's for sure — there won't be many Luton fans tuning in to the screening of The Great Escape.

For last Saturday's sensational events at the Baseball Ground make the star-studded screen epic look like a second-rate B Movie.

A 5,000 travelling audience were biting their nails long before the curtain came up on this do-or-die blockbuster.

Tim Breacker ensured a fairytale start when he disobeyed orders to blast Hatters into a 66th second lead from fully 35 yards.

The full-back was supposed to watch and admire David Preece chip a free-kick into the box but he re-wrote the script when he called for the ball to be rolled square.

"It was a free kick that we have never ever worked on," said boss Jimmy Ryan.

"I was annoyed with Preece for passing to Breacker — though that soon changed!

Breacker added: "I shouted at Preecey to roll it back — and I had a go.

"After all — it was only Shilts in goal!"

The massed ranks of Luton fans were on cloud nine when news leaked through of Nottingham Forest's first goal at Hillsborough.

David Beaumont went into the book after 15 minutes for taking Dean Saunders' legs but four minutes later the Luton fans were celebrating again.

Iain Dowie dummied a curling Danny Wilson cross and Kingsley Black stole in to slot home number two with the outside of his left foot.

But Derby were determined to add an unex-

pected twist to the plot.

Skipper Mark Wright pushed into midfield and on 29 minutes drove home despite the attentions of Alec Chamberlain.

The keeper was in majestic form on 38 minutes when he scooped over a thundering Wright header.

Dowie should have put the game out of Derby's reach three minutes before the interval but he headed wide from Black's pin-point cross.

Derby completed a thrilling comeback in injury time when play was called back for a Wilson foul on Paul Williams and the youngster lashed home following the free kick.

DERBY 2 LUTON 3	
DERBY:	Shilton, Sage, Forsyth, Williams, Wright, Hindmarch, Davidson, Saunders, Harford, Williams, Ramage (Herbberd 45). Other sub: Francis.
LUTON:	Chamberlain, Breacker, McDonough, Beaumont, James (Kennedy 82), Dreyer, Wilson, Rees (Elstrup 60), Dowie, Preece, Black. • Attendance: 17,044.

The midlanders were less of a threat after the re-start as Wright dropped back into defence.

Shilton had to be at his best to parry a fierce Black drive after 72 minutes.

But the England number one had no answer to the Black shot from the edge of the box 15 minutes from time that kept Hatters in the First Division.

Safe in the knowledge that Wednesday were doomed, the fans danced with joy and prayed for the final whistle.

And when it came there were scenes of emotion far more intense than when Steve Foster lifted the Littlewoods Cup.

Ryan: No summer exodus

DELIGHTED boss Jimmy Ryan wants to keep his troops intact.

The man who masterminded Hatters' heart-stopping survival is aiming to keep his squad of heroes together.

Luton are strapped for cash while chairman Roger Smith searches for new financial backers.

But Ryan told reporters: "I would not want to make any changes after the way we played.

"There is a lot of work to be done in the summer.

"Transfers will have to take care of themselves but we are not going out to

By MICHAEL WEINSTEIN

hawk players around."

Ryan's verdict of his managerial baptism of fire was simple.

Moving

"The response from both the young players and the experienced pros to me was quite moving.

"I have enjoyed the competitiveness of it all.

"If you work hard enough you get the reward.

"I don't feel disbelief because we've got what we deserved.

"I was really pleased with our performance at Derby.

"There was plenty of football played and the supporters were absolutely fantastic — you had to see it to believe it."

"I was always confident we would score a third goal and after it came it was just a case of not making any mistakes.

"The bonus is that we survived playing football."



• Fan-tastic — supporters go wild with delight at the final whistle.

KISS CLOUGH

**Big Mac
prayed
for final
whistle**

Words: MICHAEL WEINSTEIN
Pictures: BRUCE RAIDL

MIDFIELD dynamo Darron McDonough admitted the final minutes of Saturday's match were agony for him.

He said: "The last 10 minutes after we scored were the longest of my life — I thought the final whistle was never going to come."

And the man who missed out on Hatters' Wembley glory after a last-gasp training accident added: "If winning the Cup felt half as good as this — it must have been absolutely magic."

"Next year we are in the First Division — and that's where it is."

"There's no way I wanted to come back

**What
those
Luton
heroes
said**

for pre-season training and prepare for the Second Division."

Hard-man Mick Kennedy said: "I won promotion with Portsmouth — but this beats everything."

Fans' Player of the Season John Dreyer said: "I just couldn't imagine us in the Second Division."

And Iain Dowie — whose last-gasp goal against Crystal Palace threw Hatters a lifeline — said: "This is the best day of my life."

"When I came to Luton I dreamed of playing in something this important but now I've actually achieved something."

Doomed Sheffield Wednesday boss Ron Atkinson said: "This is the first time in my life that I've been relegated and it's horrible."

"If they don't want me to stay next season I'd fully understand it."

Forest boss Brian Clough, whose troops condemned Wednesday to the drop said: "I feel very sorry for Ron."



• True grit — midfield hit-man Mick Kennedy shows the battling spirit that helped save Hatters from the dreaded drop.

Better than Wembley

THERE'S no doubt about it — what I experienced last Saturday felt better than winning the Littlewoods Cup.

That's right, I got more pleasure out of keeping Luton in the First Division than collecting my winner's medal two years ago.

Everyone wants to stay in the First Division — it's an old cliché — but League football is our bread and butter.

And hopefully our survival will put an end to speculation about me leaving Kenilworth Road.

None of the transfer talk



came from yours truly.

I've always been happy to stay at Luton and hopefully that will continue to be the case.

I do not want to leave.

In fact, I see what we achieved on Saturday as the basis of a new start at the club.

We've not had support like that since the Littlewoods final against Arsenal and though the fans might not realise it, they gave us a couple of goals!

Talking of goals — I've got to admit there was a certain amount of good fortune about my double!

I didn't make proper contact my first. I didn't get a lot of power behind the shot — but who says you've got to blast 'em?

I didn't hit the second one cleanly either.

I've got to say I picked my spot but it was agonising to watch it hit the post and roll over the line.