

West Ham bury Luton under a goal avalanche

By Colin Malam

West Ham 5 Luton Town 0

WEST HAM last night finished off the FA Cup fourth-round job they had begun by drawing on Luton's plastic pitch four days earlier. On their own turf, the Second Division leaders simply buried their lacklustre First Division opponents under an avalanche of goals.

George Parris did not drive home the first until the last minute of the first half. But that trickle became a flood as Luton's defence caved in after the interval and Ian Bishop, Frank McAvennie and Trevor Morley, twice, helped themselves to rich pickings.

West Ham's reward for this comprehensive victory is a home draw in the fifth round against Crewe. Since the Third Division side are dangerously close to the bottom of the table, the London club would not be human if they did not harbour the odd thought about reaching Wembley for the first time since 1980 in this competition.

Another good reason for expecting further progress is that West Ham are unbeaten at Upton Park for over a year. They have not lost there under Billy Bonds, their driving force as a player who has turned round the club's fortunes as manager.

Nevertheless, that record might have ended last night had Iain Dowie been more accurate in front of goal. Preferred to Farrell after Saturday's 1-1 draw at Kenilworth Road, the Northern Ireland international striker failed to take four first-half chances.

Miklosko saved a shot and a header from him, while Gale cleared another shot off the line and another header went narrowly wide.

With both sides intent on playing bold, attacking football, and both defences looking extremely porous, the game ebbed and flowed excitingly all night. McAvennie, playing his first full game of the year for West Ham following injury, might have had at least a couple of goals before the interval.

The former Scottish international shot straight at Chamberlain after bursting past McDonough, then had another shot deflected for a corner by Dreyer at the last gasp. A pity,

though, that McAvennie appeared to get the Luton captain booked by running into him in a 'professional-foul' situation.

Dowie looked finally to have done the trick when he headed Black's short centre past Miklosko three minutes before half-time. A linesman's offside flag cut short Luton's jubilation, however, and Parris deepened their disappointment soon afterwards.

Picking up a half-clearance by Harvey, the midfield player, who had also scored at Luton, claimed his fourth goal in as many games with a low shot into the far corner. Little did we know that the floodgates had been opened.

After Dowie had gone close again early in the second half, Bishop scored West Ham's second after 53 minutes with a far-post header at the end of a well-constructed move he started and which was carried on by Morley and Keen.

McAvennie put the tie beyond Luton's reach, a couple of minutes later, by disposing Dreyer just outside the penalty area, getting away from him and then beating Chamberlain with a fierce, angled shot.

Though Luton, who now have only a battle against relegation to look forward to, rallied briefly with two shots by Farrell that Miklosko saved well, Morley finished them off with two goals in the 68th and 83rd minutes.

His first was a follow-up header after Chamberlain had blocked Keen's shot and the ball had spun up into the air. The second, a fitting *coup de grace*, was a clean shot direct from a free-kick just outside the penalty area.

West Ham: Miklosko; Breacker, Parris, Gale, Bishop, Hughton, Keen, McAvennie, Slater, Potts, Morley.

Luton Town: Chamberlain; James (Johnson 69), Harvey, Williams, McDonough, Dreyer, Elstrup (Farrell 19), Preece, Dowie, Pembridge, Black.

Referee: R Groves (Weston-super-Mare).