

Barren fare on lush grass

LIVERPOOL always found winning difficult on Luton's hated plastic pitch, and they were no more successful on the lush, natural grass that has replaced it. Nor did they have anyone but themselves to blame.

The former champions were deeply unimpressive for most of this unremarkable match, and not just because they had to play almost half of it with 10 men following the sending-off of Steve McMahon shortly after the restart.

Having been forced to add Barnes and Wright to their lengthening injury list, Liverpool functioned without cohesion, authority or conviction against opponents struggling to recover from a 5-0 drubbing at Coventry in midweek.

One good thing to come from that Highfield Road

Luton.....	0
Liverpool.....	0

Colin Malam

embarrassment was yesterday's transfer of Trevor Peake for £100,000—and he is likely to be installed as captain by manager David Pleat.

No one was more disappointing than Dean Saunders, whose £2.9 million fee seems to be weighing heavily on his shoulders. The Welsh international striker did nothing in this match except miss an absolute sitter in the first minute of the second half.

He contrived somehow to lift the ball over the top of an open goal from no more than six yards after Chamberlain had done wonderfully well to parry a close-range shot from

McMahon. Coming on top of that costly penalty miss at Maine Road, it did nothing to make the fee look any smaller.

Soon afterwards, McMahon was shown the red card by Mr Moules after Gray, making his debut in Luton's attack following his transfer from Tottenham, had gone down holding his face. The referee consulted the linesman before dismissing the incredulous England international.

It did not look a particularly serious offence of its kind by McMahon, but as Graeme Souness, Liverpool's new manager, readily admitted: "If you raise your hands you deserve to go off. The sending-off was justified, which disappoints me."

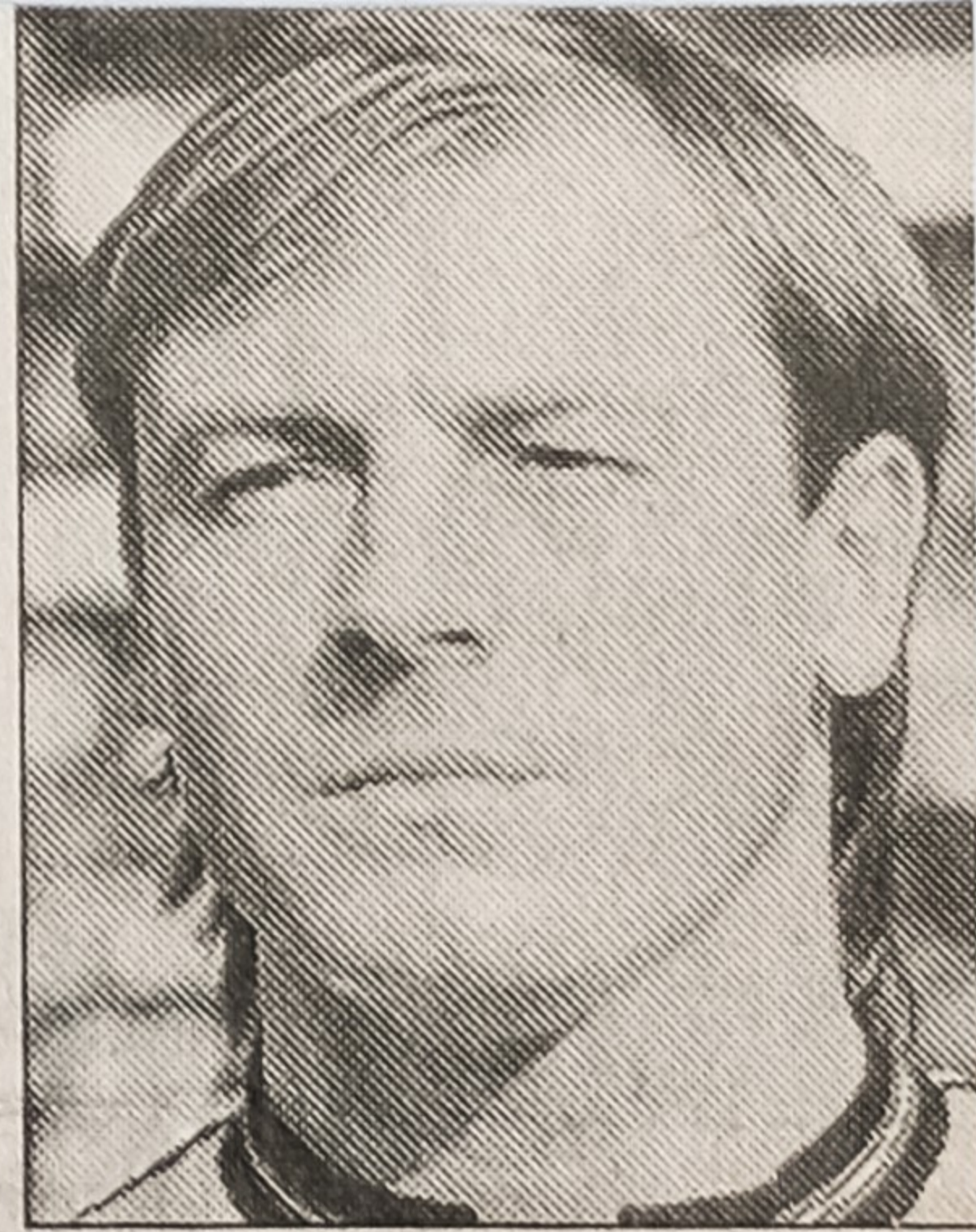
Walters, who cost £1.5m from Glasgow Rangers, was

no more impressive than Saunders as a replacement for Barnes and eventually gave way to Rosenthal.

In fact Liverpool were obliged to look again to their younger, home-produced players for inspiration.

Marsh, so sharp in his brief appearance as substitute against Manchester City during the week, again enlivened Liverpool's play when he came on after only 23 minutes for the injured Whelan.

McManaman again looked full of promise in attack, but it was Burrows who went closest to scoring with a shot from 35 yards that hit the woodwork. The Luton goalkeeper got nowhere near that one, but he did well to tip over a ferocious volley from Marsh in the second half. Grobelaar's only real moment of



Steve McMahon: Sent off for an errant elbow

alarm, by contrast, came when he had to save from Gray with his legs.

Rosenthal's appearance, 11 minutes from the end, was greeted with cheers by a large Liverpool following. He very nearly justified their faith in him, too with a canny lob which almost caught Chamberlain out.