

McMahon bid for England call wrecked

Luton 0 Liverpool 0

by Mark Demuth

STEVE McMAHON shamed Liverpool and blew his chances of an England recall after being sent off yesterday.

McMahon, back from a six-month knee ligament injury, was dismissed early in the second-half for appearing to elbow Luton striker Philip Gray in the face.

The incident took place behind the back of referee John Moules, but he had no hesitation in sending off McMahon after consulting a linesman.

McMahon will now miss England's friendly against Germany at Wembley on September 11 because England manager Graham Taylor has made a point of not selecting players who are suspended at club level.

McMahon only had himself to blame. Moules awarded Luton a free-kick and McMahon caught Gray, a £275,000 signing from Spurs, as the pair walked away.

McMahon's suspension will cause manager Graeme Souness a major selection head-

Luton shame means Anfield ace will miss Germany clash

ache. Ronnie Whelan limped off early on and there are now nine players on Liverpool's injury list.

Ironically, McMahon, together with teenage star Steve McManaman, looked the only players capable of lifting Liverpool from the depths of a lethargic performance.

Reminders

They lacked sparkle before McMahon's dismissal. A 30-yard drive against the bar from David Burrows was the sum total of Liverpool's attacking efforts in the first-half.

It was just like old times at Kenilworth Road. Luton's return to grass, the presence of visiting fans and David Pleat's first match back as manager created a carnival atmosphere.

Unfortunately for Liverpool, there were also reminders of the defensive vulnerability that blighted last season.

Mark Wright, bought from Derby to bolster the defence,

was ruled out through injury and was sorely missed.

The skill of Brian Stein, the former England striker back at Luton for a second spell, caused more than the occasional flutter in Liverpool's defence.

A slip by Gary Ablett let in Luton's midfield prospect Mark Pembroke on the right but he wasted the chance.

Dean Saunders, Britain's costliest striker, was shadowed by former Oxford team-mate John Dreyer and looked strangely out of sorts as he missed an open goal from six yards straight after the interval.

Mark Walters, in for the injured John Barnes, had an equally ineffective match on his full debut although substitute Ronny Rosenthal came close to scoring near the end with a lob that was scrambled away.

LUTON: Chamberlain, Beaumont, Harvey, McDonough, Rodger, Dreyer, Gray, Preece, Stein, Pembroke, Black.

LIVERPOOL: Grobbelaar, Ablett, Burrows, Nicol, Whelan, (inj 23, sub Marsh), Tanner, Saunders, Houghton, McManaman, Walters, (w'drn 80, sub Rosenthal), McMahon. REFEREE: J. Moules (Kent).



MY BALL . . . Luton striker Brian Stein holds off Liverpool's Steve Nicol