

Promotion-chasers seen off

BOTH managers agreed that the biggest crowd of the season at Kenilworth Road had seen a marvellous match as the Town lifted themselves out of the relegation zone and put a big dent in West Ham's promotion drive.

The Town had dropped into the bottom three the previous night, but the win shoved them up to 16th place, which they held with Saturday's draw at Sunderland.

The West Ham game that had just about everything: splendid attacking action, brilliant goalkeeping, a late penalty, and the first goal of a promising new talent. It was thrilling from first whistle to last, as good a game as we have seen for a long time.

Penalty breakthrough

Goalkeepers Alec Chamberlain and Ludek Miklosko were the men of the match, which producing a staggering total of 33 goal attempts and 19 corners.

The sting was in the tail, with Kerry Dixon having a shot handled on the line by Julian Dicks in the 84th minute. The defender, having served three suspensions this season, expected a red card and a fourth ban, but ref

Luton Town 2 West Ham 0

Gurnam Singh, another star man, settled for the law of common sense instead of FIFA edict. He gave the penalty and a yellow card on the grounds that other defenders were nearby when Dicks made his save.

Town boss **David Pleat** got a ticking off for going onto the pitch while Dicks was being booked. He wanted to tell skipper **Trevor Peake** to check with **Phil Gray** that he was in the right frame of mind to take the penalty, having missed a couple of chances earlier.

The delay while Dicks was booked did Gray no harm: he composed himself and hammered the shot into the roof of the net.

The Hammers, who had looked as capable as the Town of taking all three points until then, had little more to offer, and with two minutes to go **Martin Williams**, one of two subs sent on to inject more pace in place of **Paul Telfer** and **Ceri Hughes**, made it a night to remember for him.

He swapped passes with Gray, cut inside Dicks, and fired in the first league goal of his career.

Match details

LUTON TOWN: Chamberlain; James, Peake, Dreyer, Johnson; Telfer (Williams 73 mins), Kamara, Preece, Hughes (Oakes 73 mins); Dixon, Gray.

WEST HAM: Miklosko; Breacker, Potts, Gale, Dicks; Keen, Butler, Bishop, Allen (Holmes 81 mins); Morley, Speedie. Other sub: Foster.

GOALS: 1-0, 84 mins: Phil Gray, penalty, after Julian Dicks handled Kerry Dixon's shot on the line when the keeper was beaten; **2-0, 88 mins:** Martin Williams, first of his career, sharp shot after playing a one-two with Gray.

OTHER ATTEMPTS: Town six saved and seven wide; West Ham seven saved and 13 wide. Corners: 12-7 to the Town.

REFEREE: Gurnam Singh, Wolverhampton: excellent, although the FA may not be pleased with his decision to give Julian Dicks a yellow card for the penalty handball instead of a red one.

BOOKED: Dicks for the handball, Ian Bishop for kicking the ball away to delay a free kick, and Julian James for a foul on Martin Allen.

ATTENDANCE: 10,959, highest of the season, including a 2,000 full house at the West Ham end.

ENTERTAINMENT: Fabulous. An all-action thriller from first minute to last. It would have been tremendous if it had stayed 0-0, but the result, pushing the Town up to 16th place in the table, added extra pleasure.