

LUTON SLIDE IS GROUNDS FOR DISMAY



By ANN GRIPPER

MIKE NEWELL says the supporters deserve a new stadium – and that's why they have stood by him at the end of a rocky week.

Last week's Mad Hatter was on his best behaviour after the dual onslaught on chairman Bill Tomlins and female match officials which saw him "severely reprimanded" by the board.

But the long-running stadium issue – which saw Loyal Luton Supporters Club members handing out flyers calling for Tomlins to quit – won't go away until the bulldozers move in.

Newell said: "I have gathered the fans are backing me. I can see that from the emails and the support I have had today. I know what they want and why shouldn't they get it?"

"When everybody else in the country has got a new stadium or plans for a new stadium, why shouldn't they enjoy the facilities that everybody else is going to enjoy? I share their frustration.

"But I think things will progress here. That's why I signed a four-year contract."

But after coming through a week of controversy off the field Newell is going to have to get back to fixing the problems on it.

This was the Hatters' fifth straight league loss, and from a play-off

 CHAMPIONSHIP

Luton 0 Derby 2

position a month ago they have sunk to 18th.

Luton had a spell of pressure in the run-up to half-time, with Derby keeper Stephen Bywater saving from Adam Boyd and Leon Barnett, but for the rest of the match they were outplayed.

The second half was one-way traffic, and Derby took the lead with a cracker from Jonathan Stead, who cut in from the left touchline and beat two defenders before unleashing a low shot from 20 yards.

And it was all over two minutes later when Luton old boy Steve Howard (above) – who joined the Rams in the summer for £1million – lashed home after a cleverly worked free-kick.

Howard, who barely celebrated his goal, said: "I knew what I'd done when I scored but I was never going to celebrate. It wasn't the right time or the right place. It's a bad run they're on but they'll turn it around."