

HAMMERS BUBBLE IN BAPTISM OF FOG

By ALAN ENGLISH

Munster Sel. 0
West Ham Utd. 1
FLOODLIGHTS came to Priory Park last night, but the six thousand who turned up may remember the fog more than the football. A flash of inspiration from Liam Brady separated the sides. Just how many of the fans will remember this is questionable, for it came in the 83rd minute, when a peasouper fog was descending on the pride and joy of the LDMC.

Standing on the touchline with a minute to go, the Munster manager Dave Mahedy offered the opinion that his boys had done "super". He was right. They compensated for their technical inferiority (rarely obvious) with a performance of guts and determination.

West Ham's football, of course, was always more pretty than passionate. Nobody likes to see the lovable Hammers languishing in the Second Division. West Ham "belong", it is suggested, in the First. Just what new boss Lou Macari thinks of the club's reputation for refinement is still unclear. Cynics have suggested that in the Scotsman's scheme of things, promotion takes precedence

to purity by some distance. Last night, this line of thinking was borne out by the big boot so often employed by Colin Foster — a Macari signing — in the first half. But the presence of Liam Brady and Alan Devonshire in midfield was enough to reassure the purists that entertaining football is still a priority at Upton Park.

Smile

Of the two team managers, Mahedy and Macari, the Limerick City boss had far more reason to smile at the end. Using 16 players from 8 clubs, four of them local junior sides, his team had far more pattern and understanding than he could have hoped for. Understandably, tactics were of a blitzkrieg nature. His players hustled the expensive East Enders off the ball.

It was billed as an exhibition game. This supposedly meant that the silky skills of these supreme artists from the English league would provide an enthralling, eye-opening, one-sided exhibition of real football. The fans, already dazzled by the floodlights, would be further blinded by the pace of winger Ward and the delicate touches of Brady. Not so.

The crowd was there to see some vintage football. The Munster boys were there to

win the match. They refused to let West Ham play, closed them down, ran at them. It was straight out of the Jack Charlton textbook. Brady once found himself on the ball near the touchline. Two Munster players were crowding him off it; his adoring fans nearby were waiting for a bit of sorcery. He tried an impudent backward flick. It didn't work. It was that kind of match.

Munster could even have won it. Joe Hanrahan, who can play at West Ham's level with no difficulty, obviously relished this match. He was consistently his side's creative influence. He signalled his intentions in the fifth minute, beating two West Ham defenders with ease and drilling a low shot wide.

There was unmistakable unease in the heart of the Hammers defence. Early on, the much-maligned McKnight did not seem to inspire the confidence of his central defenders. Munster attacks were generally repelled by a big boot into the foggy skies. Definitely not vintage claret and blue.

The junior players in the starting line-up - O'Connell of Mungret/Regional and McCarthy of Fairview - received encouragement from the more experienced performers. They scarcely needed it. McCarthy in particular was a revelation in midfield.

It was a pretty even contest throughout. Munster were anything but overawed by the West Ham reputation. Mark Ward, the winger who wants away, and has been linked with Liverpool in a £1m move, would cost Kenny Dalglish £993,750 more than the impressive Peter Hanrahan cost Billy Hamilton. This is bizarre.

The Hanrahan brothers are developing a decent understanding, exemplified in the 32nd minute when a superb touch from Joe set Peter up with a chance he failed to take.

Before the deciding goal, there were two clearcut chances, one for either side. A header from Tony Gale late in the second half caused all sorts of alarm in the Munster box. They were saved by the crossbar, keeper Butler and the referee, who ignored a passionate appeal from Devonshire after the ball had been thumped off the line by

Daly. Soon after, Peter Hanrahan was unlucky to see a header cleared off the West Ham goal line.

Janesboro's Christy Reddan seemed to fancy his chances of settling the issue. The second half substitute fired a fine left foot shot at McKnight from all of 25 yards. McKnight was equal to it. Christy used his trusty left peg again minutes later, determined to make a name for himself, but was unlucky again.

Brady sealed a lucky Hammers win seven minutes from time. One flash of inspiration from the centre of midfield sent Stuart Slater away. He had Fairview's Paul Heneghan to beat. He didn't do it the first time, but rolled the ball into the net when it came back off the keeper.

Inevitably, Lou Macari described the game as "a work-out". "We would have liked to have won more comfortably, but there was a good team out against us and they worked hard. I was impressed by all of them. They went out there and they wanted to win — desperately. I felt they played in a similar way to the Republic of Ireland — wholeheartedly, with a great desire to win. They were a credit to the province and gave us problems. But the biggest problem was the fog. It was a problem for the fans as well. They were guessing as much as us at times."

Munster Selection—Butler (Newcastlewest), Daly (Limerick City), Long (Cork City), Freyne (Cork City), O'Connell (Mungret/Regional), O'Halloran (Limerick City), Coyle (Limerick City), McCarthy (Fairview Rangers), P Hanrahan, (Limerick City), Cassin (Waterford Utd), J Hanrahan (Limerick City). Substitutes: Tuite (Limerick City, for Freyne, 55), O'Riordan (Wembley Rovers, for O'Connell, 55), Glynn (Newcastlewest, for O'Riordan, 60), Reddan (Janesboro, for Cassin, 70), Heneghan (Fairview Rangers, for Butler, 75)

West Ham United—McKnight, Parris, McQueen, Gale, Foster, Devonshire (Dicks, 70), Kean, Brady, Ward, Kelly (Allen, 70), Dolan (Slater, 46)

Referee: P. Walsh (Limerick)



At the West Ham Utd. v. Munster Selection at Priory Park: Gerard Murray and his son, Gerard, and John and Tony Colbert, all from Prospect.

Harty Cup on Wed.

Two Limerick colleges, Limerick CBS and Hospital De La Salle, will be in Dr. Harty Cup action on Wednesday.

CBS meet North Monastery at Charleville, while Hospital clash with Shannon Comprehensive, last season's beaten finalists, at Cappamore. Both games start at 2.30.

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BIG OCCASION FOR YOUNG STARS

By FULL-BACK

EARLY arrivals to Musgrave Park for the meeting of Munster and the All-Blacks were treated to two superb under-12 mini-rugby exhibition matches on Saturday last.

There were upwards of 10,000 people in the ground when Young Munster faced Crosshaven, while Thurles lined out against Constitution.

Both matches were played simultaneously and while the standard was very high, the players were a little nervous and, on occasions, did not do themselves justice.

However, the crowd enjoyed the two contests and were most generous with their applause at the final whistle.

Crosshaven proved too strong for Young Munster, who never produced the form of which they are capable, conceding two early tries before Gordon Keane pulled one back for the Limerick side.

Although they had the

better of the opening of the second half, Young Munster were unable to improve on their score, while Crosshaven added two late tries to win 16-4.

In the second match Thurles were most unlucky to go down 8-4 to Constitution.

After the two matches were completed, the four teams lined up before the stand and were presented with special New Zealand souvenir shirts and gear bags by a number of the All-Black players. A marvellous gesture that was appreciated by the players and received prolonged applause from the sporting crowd.

Thomond 8
Bruff 0

On Sunday it was the turn of the Thomond and Bruff under-12's to provide the curtain raiser at Thomond Park.

Again, there was a large crowd present when the match began at 2.15. Both clubs had qualified through the blitz competition and the standard displayed was above average.

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