

OUR VISITORS TODAY

THE old saying that he who laughs last laughs longest has been exemplified in the success of West Ham United since they returned, after their long exile in the Second Division, to the highest sphere of football. When they won promotion at the end of the 1957-58 season there were some folk who said that they were not good enough for the First Division. These dismal Jimmies erroneously prophesied that the Hammers would have a struggle to keep out of trouble.

Needless to say, nobody at Upton Park held that view, and subsequent events have proved beyond all argument who was correct in their estimation of the Hammers' strength and potentialities. Last year they started off brilliantly, fell away once or twice, but finished with a brilliant burst, despite being sorely handicapped by injuries to **Vic Keeble** and **Phil Woosnam**. Considering the absence of two such splendid forwards, the Hammers did amazingly well to complete the campaign in sixth position. The only "blot" if such it can be classified, on the success of the season was their early exit from the F.A. Cup. They went out in the third round to Tottenham at White Hart Lane, whom they had twice beaten over the Christmas holidays. This cup disappointment was considerably assuaged by the excellence on their subsequent League displays, however.

This season the Hammers have again made a very encouraging start. They opened their programme by beating Leicester City 3-0 at home, drew 1-1 with Preston North End at Deepdale, and then won 3-1 against Burnley at Turf Moor, a ground where few clubs will bag both points judging from the way Burnley have been serving up top-class football so far. The return with Preston at Upton Park saw them successful again, this time by 2-1, and then, a fortnight ago, they were somewhat surprisingly defeated by a similar score when home to Leeds United. Four days later they made the short journey to White Hart Lane to hold Tottenham to a 2-2 draw.

Now Keeble and Woosnam are both fit again and are playing their parts well. So, too, in recent matches, has been young **Andy Smillie**, who has deputised promisingly for inside-left **John Dick**, who was injured in the second game of the season.

Completing the front line are wingers **Mike Grice** and **Malcolm Musgrove**. Grice is the third ex-Colchester player in the Hammers team, the others being Keeble and right-back **John Bond**. The tie-up with Colchester is strong, due to both clubs being managed by brothers.

Bond and his partner, Eire international Noel Cantwell, are no believers in the view that a full-back's duty is solely to defend. Many times they are to be found well up in support of their forwards, and both have powerful shots which put them on the club's list of goal-scorers far more frequently than one usually expects from men in their positions. Both have also figured in the team at centre-forward. They played there last season following Keeble's injury.

Not that they neglect their defensive chores. Far from it, indeed, and their work in the rearguard has had much to do with the small total of goals debited against the side.

The middle line of **Andy Malcolm**, **Ken Brown** and **John Smith** is strong and talented, with Smith having been a resounding success following his switch from inside-forward last season. While his performances have not always received the credit they deserve, Brown's value is well-known to Hammers' supporters. There are many experts from much further afield than Upton Park who rate his claims for representative honours very highly indeed.

Although Smillie is the only member of the younger element who has been given a chance in the League side so far this season, there are others waiting behind the scenes to show what they can do if the opportunity arises. Among them are full-back **Joe Kirkup**, who did well last term during Bond's outings in the front line, former England Youth International **Bob Moore**, who can fill any half-back berth, and Harry Obeney, who averaged a goal every other game in his half-dozen outings at inside-right last season. Also staking a claim for a senior place is Ron Brett, who signed from Crystal Palace in the Close season. Not the least of Brett's capabilities is his value as a utility forward.

The only defensive alteration this campaign from the West Ham team which did duty for most of last season has been in goal, where **Noel Dwyer** has

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