

Happy Hammer!

Kevin Keen, soccer son of former Wycombe manager Mike, realised every youngster's dream on Saturday when he made his full debut in the Football League. JIM McCANN was there to witness the magical moment in young Kevin's life.

HAT-TRICK hero Tony Cottee grabbed the headlines but rookie Kevin Keen wasn't complaining.

He had just completed the most important 90 minutes of his soccer career — his full debut for West Ham on Saturday.

And the soccer son of Mike Keen had played his part as the Hammers battled to a 3-2 victory over one of his dad's old clubs, Queens Park Rangers at Loftus Road.

Young Keen had appeared briefly as a substitute last weekend when Hammers got a 5-2 hiding from champions Liverpool.

But on Saturday, with Alan Devonshire sidelined through injury, came the real moment of truth for the 19-year-old starlet.

And nerves did not get the better of him.

"Manager John Lyall phoned me on Friday night and told me I was playing," explained Kevin.

"That helped and I didn't feel too nervous before the game.

"I didn't play well or badly.

"It was not a day for great football. It was really just a battle and I was pleased to be on the winning side."

On a dreadful rainy day and on, Rangers' infamous plastic pitch. Keen certainly held his own in the company of internationals from all four home countries and Eire.

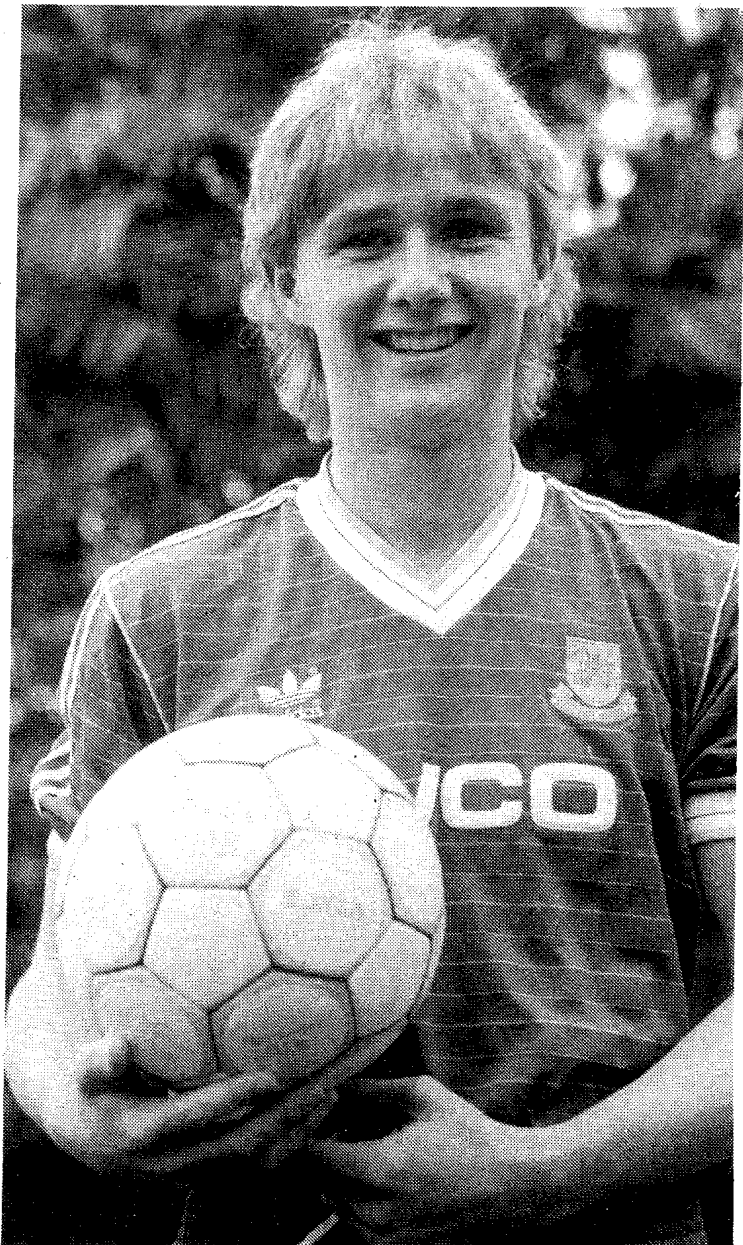
Playing wide on the right of midfield he was involved throughout coping with the pace of a cut and thrust London derby.

He admitted that two quick Cottee goals — Hammers were 2-0 up within quarter of an hour — helped his cause.

"That put me at ease," he said.

"It was really enjoyable and the crowd were great."

The Wycombe youngster, like most professionals, ad-



mits that he doesn't like the Loftus Road pitch.

"I don't think even the Rangers players like it that much because the ball does take some funny bounces," he said.

Devonshire may be fit for a recall on Saturday when West Ham entertain Luton Town.

And Keen knows that he may have to wait in the wings again.

Even if the Wycombe youngster has to bide his time he will never forget his first taste of the big time.

And doubtless, his father, who shut up shop early and excused himself from his job as Marlow manager on Saturday just to see his son's debut will remember it just as clearly as the day he started out on the road to eventual Wembley glory with QPR.

Debut delight for Keen