

After the opening two-match-a-week period, the League schedule now more-or-less settles down to a regular Saturday routine. However, the "bread-and-butter" of League soccer is interspersed for many clubs by European competition and the League Cup tournament which keep them occupied for other mid-week dates.

With the tempo of the League slowing down a little after the early rush that gets the teams out of the "starting gate," and about one-sixth of the fixtures already completed, a "pattern of potential" is beginning to emerge.

Naturally enough, those clubs who at present occupy leading positions must already be assessing their championship chances, whilst those less fortunately placed will be concentrating on discovering the reasons why they have not yet begun to "tick."

This is certainly one of the more vital stages of the season; for whatever may be a team's situation, it is now that a good start or a slow get-away can be consolidated or rectified.

As usual, there are the inevitable surprises, and some of the teams less-fancied in pre-season forecasts are up among the leaders, while anticipated title contenders find themselves in the lower reaches of the table.

There are a multitude of reasons for each individual case, but it is certain that much of this is due in the current season to the effects of the "clean up campaign" that has taken place through the directives of the administrators.

It would be possible to continue at great length on this theme, but the recent spate of outbursts at various

levels have provided much food for thought (as well as some amusement!) for those who follow the game closely.

To this end we have collected quotations from various sources, and have used them to fill a couple of pages in this issue of "Hammer." They are to be found on pages 14 and 15, and we feel sure our readers will appreciate the pros and cons of the arguments when viewed from the aspect of those whose words have been quoted.

For some years the Continentals have complained about the "hard" tactics of British clubs. This could be a partial excuse for the successes our clubs have gained, but under the "new approach" it will be interesting to see how the results go in the European tourneys this season.

As far as the Hammers are concerned we are hoping that the "new" legislation will have the desired effect of letting teams "play football" and a return to a better standard of entertainment. We believe it could be to OUR advantage!