

GOOD SENSE PREVAILED AFTER A NEAR BRAWL

By CHILTERN

LUTON TOWN 0, MANCHESTER UNITED 0

THOSE who like their football tough, with few inhibitions, probably enjoyed themselves hugely at Kenilworth-road on Saturday, particularly in the last quarter of an hour of the first half, when some of the more peace-loving fans must have wondered if they had wandered into an all-in wrestling show by mistake.

Things went on during that period that have no place in the First Division which, after all, should be the showpiece of English football and it certainly would not have been surprising had someone been sent off the field.

To my mind, it could all be traced back to the unnecessarily rough way in which Goodwin treated Cummins, on whom there were half a dozen fouls, most of them when there was no danger at all, in a very short space of time.

All the response these brought from the referee were a couple of finger-waving admonishments that had no deterrent effect.

Long before the final trouble developed, this game needed much stronger handling than the referee, apparently, was able to give it, and as a result, he found himself with all the makings of a first-class brawl on his hands.

As the interval neared, Bingham retaliated for a foul by Carolan, and a most unseemly scene followed, during which the gesticulations of the referee seemed to indicate that the winger had received his marching orders.

Fortunately, this was not the case, and after some seconds of arguing, the upshot was that Bingham and McGuinness had their names taken, though I am far from certain why the latter came into it.

Even United's desperate need of two points to maintain their challenge to Wolves could not start to excuse some of their tackling.

Definitely there was a danger of serious injury being the result, but as it happened the only casualty, Pacey, who split the side of his head, did so accidentally.

Had the United been content to play their football, and could they have found the finishing power that they so sadly lacked in the absence of Charlton, I feel that they could have taken those points comfortably enough.

TOWN RILED INTO ACTIVITY

Certainly, they were the more purposeful side in the first half, when Pearson missed a glorious chance of putting them ahead, but the second half was an entirely different affair.

I fancy that the rough handling they had received had the effect of riling the Town players into activity, and for much of the time after the interval they were the more dangerous side.

The better scoring chances came the way of the Town, and Barry Hawkes shot over from a good position, and then Brown, closing in menacingly, had his shot smothered by Gregg.

However, Brown was dead out of luck with a tremendous drive that struck the bar, and Pacey, too, considered he was hard done by when he was penalised for offside four minutes from the end as he drove the ball into the far corner of the net.

In the end, I made the United a little fortunate to get away with a point and, if they had been beaten, it would have been their own fault, entirely.

Even without Owen, the Town defence was a most compact affair, with Kelly doing a splendid job, despite the handicap of

having a cut over the eye reopened.

First Pacey, then when he switched to centre-forward, Morton, kept close tabs on Quixall and Groves had a comfortable enough task against Pearson, a poor deputy for Charlton.

For those who like the immaculate, there was just this in the displays of goalkeeping put on by the Internationals, Baynham and Gregg, and the handling of each was pure class.

As for the forwards, they were much more lively in the second half than in the first and Pacey was so dangerous in the middle that the Town must have filed this fact away for future reference.

Cummins, who again captained the side, was always in the thick of things and Brown's thrusts made him a danger after the interval. Most danger came, though from the centres of Bingham which always looked as if they might produce something.

LUTON TOWN: Baynham; McNally, Hawkes (K); Groves, Kelly, Pacey; Bingham, Brown, Morton, Cummins, Hawkes (B).