

Home season ends with trouble

25-4-81

REF BOOBS — AND SO

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UNBELIEVABLE was the word David Pleat used most as he lay in bed recovering from an operation considering Saturday's home defeat against relegation battlers Oldham.

He had been released from hospital the day before, and sat in the stand to suffer with the rest of the home supporters as Oldham, basic but hard-working, blunted the Town's attack, held them in midfield and finally went home with a victory they deserved.

The Town never got going, and frustration on the terraces boiled over two minutes from time when about 100 youngsters invaded the pitch to try to get the match abandoned.

One customer hurled a bottle at Roger Wyld, who had scored both Oldham goals, and the players and officials went off for ten minutes while Police and stewards cleared the pitch. The Town now face disciplinary action from the FA as a result.

Referee Alan Gunn's performance helped to incite the hotheads, even if it didn't justify what they did.

Oldham had pinched a tenth-minute goal and 13 minutes later a tempered Wyld, who had just

been penalised for a foul, flattened Kirk Stephens with his elbow in an off-the-ball clash.

Mr Gunn was on the spot and got out his book. It was a sending-off offence but Mr Gunn let Wyld off with a caution. It produced bad feeling for the rest of the game, and one of the day's unbelievable sights—"Send him off" in bright lights on the scoreboard. Apologies were forthcoming later in the boardroom when Oldham manager Jimmy Frizzell was invited in for a drink.

Incredibly Wyld was involved in another incident four minutes later, with a crude foul on Paul Price. Once again Mr Gunn had a little chat when I thought he might be glad of the chance to put right his earlier mistake and send the player off.

But if the referee was poor, he didn't score the two goals which ended the home season on a low note. Town players were as baffled as the supporters as to why they never showed the sort of football they can play.

They had a good spell early in the

second half, and briefly looked potential winners when Raddy Antic threaded a lovely pass through the middle. Paul Fletcher made his only mistake of the afternoon and Brian Stein swept through to drive in the 55th-minute equaliser.

But Oldham weathered the spell of pressure, and then caught the Town on the break for the winner in the 66th minute.

Match details

LUTON TOWN 1, OLDHAM 2

TOWN: Findlay; Stephens, Donaghy, Saxby, Price; Antic (West, 70 mins), Hill, Grealish; Stein, Ingram, Moss.

OLDHAM: McDonnell; Sinclair, Clements, Fletcher, Blair; Keegan, Heaton, Palmer, Atkinson; Wyld, Steel. Sub: Edwards, not needed.

THE GOALS: Rodger Wyld twice for Oldham, header 10th minute, shot 66th minute; Brian Stein for the Town, 55th minute, his 18th goal of the season.

OTHER GOAL ATTEMPTS: Town ten saved, 13 wide, one early shot by Price hit the bar; Oldham seven saved and seven off target. Corners: 9-5 to the Town.

ATTENDANCE: 10,305 who came to celebrate and went home very frustrated.

ENTERTAINMENT: Reasonable at times, but spoiled by bad temper and ruined by a late pitch invasion which caused a ten-minute stoppage.

REFEREE: Alan Gunn, Burgess Hill, Sussex—should be fired. He helped to fuel the simmering anger on and off the pitch by failing to apply the laws of the game when Rodger Wyld committed a sending-off offence against Kirk Stephens.