

In the firing line...

Furious City wildmen attack Luton team and supporters in vicious relegation revenge



Jubilant Hatters fans cheer... and get praise from police



Saved! A priceless place in the First Division is celebrated by Luton defender Kirk Stephens

ONE thousand disgruntled Manchester City fans fought running battles with police and Luton supporters after seeing their team dumped into the Second Division.

At least three Luton fans and four from Manchester were treated in hospital for cuts and bruises after a series of vicious confrontations.

In one astonishing incident a small group of Luton fans was set upon outside the ground by rival fans armed with sticks and stones.

City fans piled out of their coach when it stopped at a junction to join in the attack. Residents from nearby homes were also involved. Twenty police eventually arrived to stop the fight.

The violence started on the pitch and Manchester City now face a Football League Inquiry after their supporters physically attacked Luton players at the end of Saturday's relegation struggle.

City fans erupted in fury when Raddy Antic's priceless goal five minutes from the end had dashed their hopes of a First Division place. They swarmed on to the pitch and attacked the Luton team as the final whistle went and police



CLOSING IN: City thugs seek revenge on Luton



TAKE THAT: Ricky Hill cops a fan's fury

horses were required to drive them off.

Ricky Hill, Luton's mid-field international star, said he was kicked and punched: "It was very nasty. I felt some blows and kept on running till I reached the dressing room."

Evening Post-Echo photographer Tony Ward, who witnessed the scenes of fury on the pitch, said: "It really was quite frightening for a while."

In the battle outside the ground, a police horse was badly cut in the face by a brick thrown by a City fan and rampaging fans over-

turned one police van and smashed the windows in two others. The horse was recovering today.

Ten people were arrested and 45 ejected from the ground during the tense relegation battle.

Inspector Bob Barton of Manchester police said the trouble was caused by "about 1,000 disillusioned City supporters." Only ten arrests were made outside the ground and none of those who attacked Luton players were caught. "It was difficult to pin-point culprits."

He added: "The Luton fans were very well-behaved and gave us no cause for concern at all."

City fans staged a two-hour demonstration outside the stadium demanding the immediate resignation of City chairman Peter Swales.

Meanwhile Luton fans faced another worry: renewed rumours that the Hatters might move their ground to Milton Keynes.

The Evening Post-Echo conducted an on-the-spot straw poll of fans on the terrace at Maine Road,

asking whether they would support the team if it moved to the new city.

Out of 100 people asked, only 18 said they would definitely continue to support the Hatters.

Luton Town shareholder Tom Hunt of Butterworth Path, Luton, said: "Milton Keynes is too far away. There is no direct public transport link."

"I would appeal to Luton Council and local businessmen to ensure we do not move in our centenary year."



Pictures by TONY WARD

Delighted Luton fans cheer the Glory Boys



Kirk Stephens and Wayne Turner celebrate victory

from page 1

would have been a tragedy if we'd gone down after this performance."

Bobbers Travel Club member Diane Pennycook, who claims to have missed just two games in the last eight years, was convinced Luton had left it too late to escape.

She said: "I'd even taken bets that we'd go down. It's a fantastic result but it's a shame Raddy Antic, the goalscorer, will probably be leaving the club."

Luton fanatic Colin Wright from Chelmsford said: "For some of the game I just couldn't bare to look. I was getting sick towards the end because it looked as if we were playing well but were not going to win."

Attacked

Despite their relief at victory Luton fans were angered by an ugly scene at the end of the game when Luton players, who

had rushed towards their fans, were attacked by rioting Manchester City supporters.

Steve Gibbs, of Florence Avenue, Luton, said: "The incident was disgusting. It would never have been allowed to happen at Luton. The police were just standing by the pitch watching the players getting attacked."

At least four Luton players were kicked and punched before mounted police rode onto the pitch to escort them off.

Don Maxwell, of Stockingstone Road, Luton, said he was disgusted by the attack.

He added: "If Luton had gone down I would have stuck with them but I had a feeling we would win."

Several Luton fans were praying for a goal before the winner came five minutes from time.

Dusty Wright, of Lewsey Farm, Luton, said: "I was praying. The tension was unbearable."



Just great: Luton manager David Pleat races onto the pitch

Raddy's the golden laddie!

By ERIC HARRIS

YUGOSLAV import Raddy Antic savoured his moment of glory with a proud feeling of delight after his 85th minute goal kept Luton in the First Division at Manchester City.

The back slapping from his colleagues continued in the dressing room where City, sitting miserably across the corridor, were forced to listen to the jubilant chants of the Luton players.

"Tell the Evening Post readers Raddy is a very good player," said Antic. "Yes, I score important goals because I like football. Today was something special."

Physiotherapist John Sheridan could hardly believe the Town's good fortune. He stood in the dressing room merely shaking his head and saying: "Isn't it glorious?"

While the players revelled in the celebrations



Raddy Antic, scorer of the vital goal

chief coach David Coates calmly packed the kit and said: "I always knew we were too good to go down. Today we have proved it although we left it late."

"We're out tonight, lads," shouted full back Kirk Stephens. "We deserve all the celebrations after today's result."

Keeper Tony Godden, on loan from West Brom after a fractured thumb kept Jake Findlay out of the team for the last 12 games of the season, said: "I feel part of the team and it's great to savour this moment of glory. I'm delighted for all the lads."