Rostron — Taylor breaks the silence

GRAHAM TAYLOR ended a 50-hour silence on Monday night to hit out at Saturday's referee whose action has cost Wilf Rostron a chance of playing in the FA Cup Final.

"First of all there was no way in which I had to be physically restrained or pulled back from the referee when I spoke to him in the tunnel at half time. I never touched him but the referee was given my opinions quite forcibly.

"The facts of the matter are that if the incident involving Wilf Rostron had also involved any other Luton player, they would not have been sent off. But Elliott had been booked already and a further booking meant he would have to go. There was no way the referee sould send Elliott — a home player — off without being accompanied by one of our players.

"Had that match occurred at Vicarage Road, Elliott would have been sent off and Rostron booked. That is the sort of 'justice' we have to put up with and we, in the game, all know it goes on.

"Personally I didn't think either player deserved a booking in that incident. I have seen the referee before and I feel he has the makings of a good referee so I was very disappointed when he bottled it.

"Furthermore, he has talked to the Press and explained his action. Does he need to? Or is he worried simply because one of the players now misses a Cup Final.

"It was a nothing incident. Two combatitive players went into a tackle, went down with their legs entangled and can it really be proved that as they tried to disentangle themselves, they were kicking at each other. No punches were thrown. It was a nothing incident.

"The referee is quoted as saying he will not report me for my outburst in the tunnel because he felt it was a natural human reaction. But I had quite a few minutes to think about what I said. What about the natural human reaction when two competitive players go for the same ball. Where is his allowance for human reaction? He says he is not judge and jury but that is exactly what he is. We have no appeal. A referee is omnipotent. His excuses are the usual drivel you hear from referees who have made a mistake. The trouble is that mistake cost the player what is probably his only exhance of a Cup Final appearance.

"It is also laughable when you hear of senior officials in the game saying that they can't think of a fairer system. That leaves one speechless.

"We have to abide by the law of football. Watford FC do not wish to take the matter outside the game. But lets have the penalties for too many bookings and sendings off restricted to the relevant competitions.

"Ironically Mr Mitford and myself had the usual talk, along with David Pleat before the match. During this he stressed that encroachment on free kicks, was jkust as valid before the whistle was blown as after and that any encroachment after the whistle was blown would, in his opinion, be regarden as perpetrated by a player lookinig for a booking.

"I accepted that, but pointed out to him that knowing the game we faced at the end of the season, and the disciplinary record of certain of my players, there was no way they would be looking for a cautioin.

"He has a good chance of being a good referee but he has to learn to risk the wrath of the home crowd."

Rostron, plainly angry at Elliott's actions, explains the incident in the presence of the referee.

The Watford skipper waits resignedly as the referee enters his name in the book.

Shock shows on Rostron's face as he is told to leave the field . . . so ending his dream of leading Watford out to a Cup Final.

Rostron — 'I don't want to talk about it'

WILF ROSTRON has annouced a self-imposed "gag" on the subject of his sending off. He was told to avoid making comments to the Press over the weekend, but Taylor lifted the gag on Monday evening.

"Wilf Rostron is bitterly disappointed. We cannot imagine how he feels. How does he explain to his wife and his children, his in-laws and his parents that he won't be playing in the Cup Final," said the manager.

"The referee said that he knew what he was doing when he was involved in that clash. Wilf Rostron has been on 18 disciplinary points since January and the referee is trying to say he knew what he was doing. The referee made an emotional judgment on Wilf and sent him off but decided not to report me because I told him the truth.

"Anyway Wilf doesn't want to talk about the incident. He's received a million calls and he wants to avoid getting involved. If he answers one question, he'll provoke another and he just wants to be left alone."

● Said Luton boss David Pleat: "I feel sorry for football. If I was Graham Taylor I would feel particularly sick at losing a player for a Cup Final over an incident like that. It was over in seconds. The referee should have had a quick word and got the game going again quickly.

"The referee spoilt the game. I would do anything to help Watford and Rostron but I don't see what can be done. If a Luton player had swung a punch he would be disciplined by the club. I am puzzled and bitter over the referee's decision. Had he acted differently and neither player deserved being booked, let alone sent off, then we may have avoided some of the unpleasantness that went into the game subsequently. He should have let common sense prevail. I think the heat was too much for him."

● Said Luton's defender Elliott: "It is really sad if a player misses a Cup Final over something like that. It was nothing."

● Watford have been linked with Cardiff's goalkeeper Andy Dibble once again. This time, a national newspaper claimed that Taylor was certain to spend some of his Cup run revenue on the goalkeeper.

"The situation is no different. We have a senior goalkeeper at Watford whose contract runs out in the next few weeks. We may offer him another contract or he may refuse one if offered. With that in mind, we have first refusal on Dibble, whatever that means," Taylor explained.

Rostron — the incident

WATFORD skipper Wilf Rostron and Luton defender Paul Elliott were sent off, allegedly for violent conduct in the 41st minute of Saturday's local derby at Kenilworth Road.

Bristol referee Roger Milford was later quoted as saying: "They were involved in an incident and the rules are quite plain . . . they had to go off."

The two players were in fact involved in an accidental clash as early as the 2nd minute. Rostron went up to contest a ball, colliding with Elliott who fell awkwardly to the ground and, it later transpired, dislocated his shoulder.

The Luton man played on after treatment and in the 22nd minute chased a through ball which Steve Terry cleared with time to spare. Elliott continued his challenge, crashing into Terry in what was an avoidable and unneccessary collision was duly booked.

In the 41st minute Rostron went down the left on an overlap and was tackled firmly by Elliott. The two players fell to the ground — Elliott appeared to 'rake' Rostron as the two players attempted to disentangle their legs. Rostron seemed to push Elliott away and the two squared-up to each other and pushed each other away. The incident was over as ther referee raced across to the players and began talking to them.

The belief that neither would be booked, was fanned by the length of the referee's conversation to the two players, the limited nature of the clash and the fact that a further booking for Elliott would mean that the home player would have to be sent off.

The referee noted the players' names and then sent off Rostron, calling he Elliott to send him off as well.

At the interv[illegible]eckled by Luton spectators as he made his way to the dressing room. Taylor stopped and pointed to the referee, plainly signalling that it was the referee and not his fault that the game had been spoilt for home fans.

Taylor then loped off after the referee who later claimed that the Watford boss had to be restrained. In fact both Taylor and Luton manager David Pleat, angrily criticised the referee for his actions, during the confrontation in the tunnel. Taylor later denied any claims that he had to be restrained or that he was involved in a physical clash.

After the game, the referee came in for more criticism but the waiting press corps were unable to obtain quotes from either Taylor or his players, who left the ground by the back door.

The referee fobbed off pressmen by saying that the reasons for dismissing the players had been submitted to the Luton club secretary. On checking with the secretary, the card did no more than record the fact that Elliott was booked, then he and Rostron had been sent off and Walsh later booked.

Roger Milford made sundry quotes the following day to national pressmen while Graham Taylor went away for two days on a pre-planned break to Stratford-upon-Avon. Wilf Rostron returned home and decided to encourage the view that he was away for the weekend in order to avoid sundry press inquiries.

The weekend was alive with rumours of a possible switch with Nottingham Forest, moving their game forward a week, in order for Rostron to complete his suspension before the Cup Final. While Forest, it is understood, would have been only to happy to help, their hands are tied by League ruling which prohibits such a switch of fixtures.