

'They found a knife in the goal after the game'

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Luton Town host Millwall in the FA Cup tomorrow for the first time since March 1985, when football hooliganism which changed the face of the game took place. Witnesses tell **Jeremy Wilson** about a night of terror

John Motson BBC commentator It was a Wednesday night and I was covering the game for *Sportsnight*. I arrived early, about 4pm, and I vividly remember being greeted by John Smith, who was the Luton chief executive. He was wandering down by the BBC vans, looking extremely concerned. I said, 'What are you doing here, John', and he said: 'We are worried we might have some security problems'. What followed was the worst outbreak of hooliganism I ever saw on a domestic ground.

Nick Owen, Luton chairman and former TV-am presenter There had been a big build-up - both clubs were just one match from the FA Cup semi-final. Driving there, I recall seeing a van-load of Millwall fans stopped under a bridge on the motorway, relieving themselves on the embankment. There were loads of people about town before the match and there was a very menacing atmosphere.

The majority of Millwall fans travelled on football special trains. Roofs were smashed in and seats ripped out during the journey, with one British Rail worker saying it looked "like a bomb had exploded" in a carriage. Luton had a pay-at-the-gate policy for away fans and many simply stormed the turnstiles, with an estimated 10,000 cramming into a space for 5,000. With fans brandishing weapons, they spread onto the pitch and into other parts of the ground. George Graham, the Millwall manager, urged them to return to the stands.

Andrew Woods, from the book 'No One Likes Us, We Don't Care' It was only when he [Graham] appeared on the sidelines that we finally returned to the Kenilworth Road Stand. After 14 minutes, the game was halted as we began to riot again. After 15 minutes, we invaded the pitch. We were having running battles with the police. The referee took both teams off for 25 minutes before bringing them back on to complete the half. Les Sealey [the Luton goalkeeper], who stood in front of the Millwall fans in the second half, was hit on the head by a missile. They also found a knife in the goalmouth after the game.

David Pleat, Luton manager One thing I'll never forget was the billiard balls being thrown into the area where families were sitting. Heavy

things. We were worried about family and friends. It was mayhem. It was a police force without horses and they had to get horses. I think from Northampton or Buckinghamshire. Eventually they managed to get horses there but it was too late.

Mick Harford, Luton striker (pictured below) It was a scary evening. We were taken off three or four times and there were all sorts of objects that shouldn't have been there. It was the first time I ever saw police dogs fighting. I have never witnessed anything like it. You try to be professional - Brian Stein scored and we won 1-0 in the end. The referee was fantastic. He gave us a nod and a wink, telling us: 'After this corner we are going off, so get ready'. He did a great job getting the game finished - you wouldn't have wanted a replay. We got off the pitch but there was more trouble to come.

Andrew Woods We made for the Bobbers Stand again and started to rip out seats as fences were torn down. The seats were thrown onto the pitch at the police. The police had some serious casualties. One, a sergeant named Colin Cook, was hit on the head by a concrete block. He stopped breathing but another resuscitated him while being punched, kicked and hit by the same concrete block. Finally we left the ground, moved to outside the stadium and rampaged through Luton. We had created havoc for 10 hours. On the afternoon before the game - riot. In the stadium - riot. Through the town centre after the game - riot.

James Murray, journalist at the ground As a lifelong Millwall fan, I felt like crying. Children around me clung to their parents in fear; women and pensioners vowed never to go to a football match again. It was impossible not to feel shame, not to feel sorrow for the game of football. And not to despair at how low life had sunk; for these were not fans, they were not people, they were animals.

Nick Owen I was on TV-am the next morning and the top story was the Luton v Millwall game. There were very dramatic pictures and it led all the news bulletins. Our chairman was David Evans, who became MP for Welwyn Hatfield. He introduced the membership scheme, which Margaret Thatcher was a great advocate of, and he banned away fans for the next four years. We were thrown out of the League Cup the following season because we wouldn't have away fans. It was a defining moment. It changed the face of the game.



Mick Harford David Evans was quite a revolutionary in his own way, with the plastic pitch, banning away fans and having ID cards. Whatever you say about it, at least he tried to do something.

David Pleat One third of supporters who had tickets for the game, we were told, never came back. They deserted the club because they were so shocked and frightened. It was not Millwall supporters as such, it was organised groups of people who had decided to have a fight. Luton was my life and I was so upset that this had happened to the club. The game was just a blur, but that night is a massive memory.

John Motson The police came into the BBC video department in the weeks that followed. They studied the footage extensively to try to

discover who these hooligans were. There was one guy in a white anorak kicking a policeman in the head. My memory tells me they never identified who this guy was.

Forty-seven people were injured that night, including 33 police, but only 31 fans were arrested. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher demanded talks with the FA at Downing Street. When asked by Thatcher about football's hooligans Ted Croker, the FA secretary replied: "Not our hooligans, Prime Minister, but yours - the products of your society."

A Millwall fan speaking anonymously People took notice of who Millwall were that night. We were in the streets, dragging people out of cars, dragging people out of their houses, going through pub windows with

chairs. We were just like animals that night. It was probably the best tear-up I've ever had.

Gary Sweet, present Luton chief executive I was at the game in 1985 and, as scary as that was, I think we've moved on as a society, let alone moved on in football. Millwall have also moved on as a club. Nobody should have any fears about this weekend. I can categorically tell people that the way we will go about managing this game will be professionally and with the highest category of security.

The clubs have played each other 13 times in the league at Kenilworth Road since the match in 1985. Tomorrow's fifth-round tie is all-ticket, with Millwall bringing 1,500 fans, and will kick off at 12.45pm.



Night of shame (clockwise from top): Millwall fans riot on the pitch at Luton, nearby residents suffer damage too, seats in the stands at Kenilworth Road are ripped out and used as missiles and stewards help an injured policeman. Luton went on to win the tie 1-0



Millwall vow to tackle racism 'head on'

By Alex Shaw

Kenny Jackett, the Millwall manager, has promised to tackle the issue of racism at the club "head on" after sections of their support were shamed in a television documentary.

Millwall have returned to the spotlight following an investigation into fan behaviour that revealed instances of racism from fans during matches.

The chief executive, Andy Ambler, says the club are "appalled" by footage from Millwall's league match at home to Leeds United last November that showed striker El Hadji Diouf being racially abused. And Jackett insists the club are doing all they can to drive racism out.

is society and football's problem," he said. "We want to stamp this out - we can't hide away. We will face this head on. The situation has improved, no doubt. Do things still need to be improved? Yes. We will carry on trying to improve."

Bolton striker Marvin Sordell has also previously made allegations of racial abuse from the south London club's followers. A banner abusing the England Under-21 striker was displayed at the Den following the complaint and a 13-year-old boy was banned.

Jackett insists that the club are not inherently racist and that a minority are shaming the rest. He said: "All I can give is an unbiased view of what is a fantastic football club."

he said. "I think it is a minority to some degree but a minority is still too much. It does reflect society, unfortunately."

Diouf made no complaint at the time of the match in November although the film, shown on Sky Sports News, appeared to show the Senegal international alerting referee Mark Halsey and making stewards aware of his allegations.

Millwall will come under scrutiny tomorrow when they travel to Luton for their FA Cup fifth-round tie.

Jackett said: "We have played in finals and in the play-offs against the likes of Leeds and there has been no problem whatsoever," he said. "The fans will get behind the team and will behave themselves."