

Riot by Millwall supporters overshadows Luton win

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(FAC)

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Luton Town.....1
Millwall.....0

It became sadly in the end yet another shameful night of sickening violence. After Millwall's defeat at Kenilworth Road, some of their so-called followers ripped out seats and, after invading the pitch, began to throw the potentially lethal weapons indiscriminately. The police forced to retreat momentarily under the hail of missiles, eventually won a battle that threatened to run alarmingly out of control.

Luton Town at least have celebrated their centenary year by reaching the last four of the FA Cup, where they will meet Everton at Villa Park on April 13. A lone goal by Stein proved decisive but this was another occasion in the troubled sport that will be remembered only for the idiocy, the brutality and the irresponsibility of those on the periphery.

The backcloth of uneasiness was evident well before the start. Apart from broken shop windows littering the streets surrounding the ground, trouble was bubbling to the surface inside it. The problem was caused by an overspill of Millwall supporters, who wandered out of the terraced end and took over part of a stand.

Within five minutes of the kick-off they were on the move again, though this time with the assistance of the police. The exodus from behind Sansome's net continued for another 10

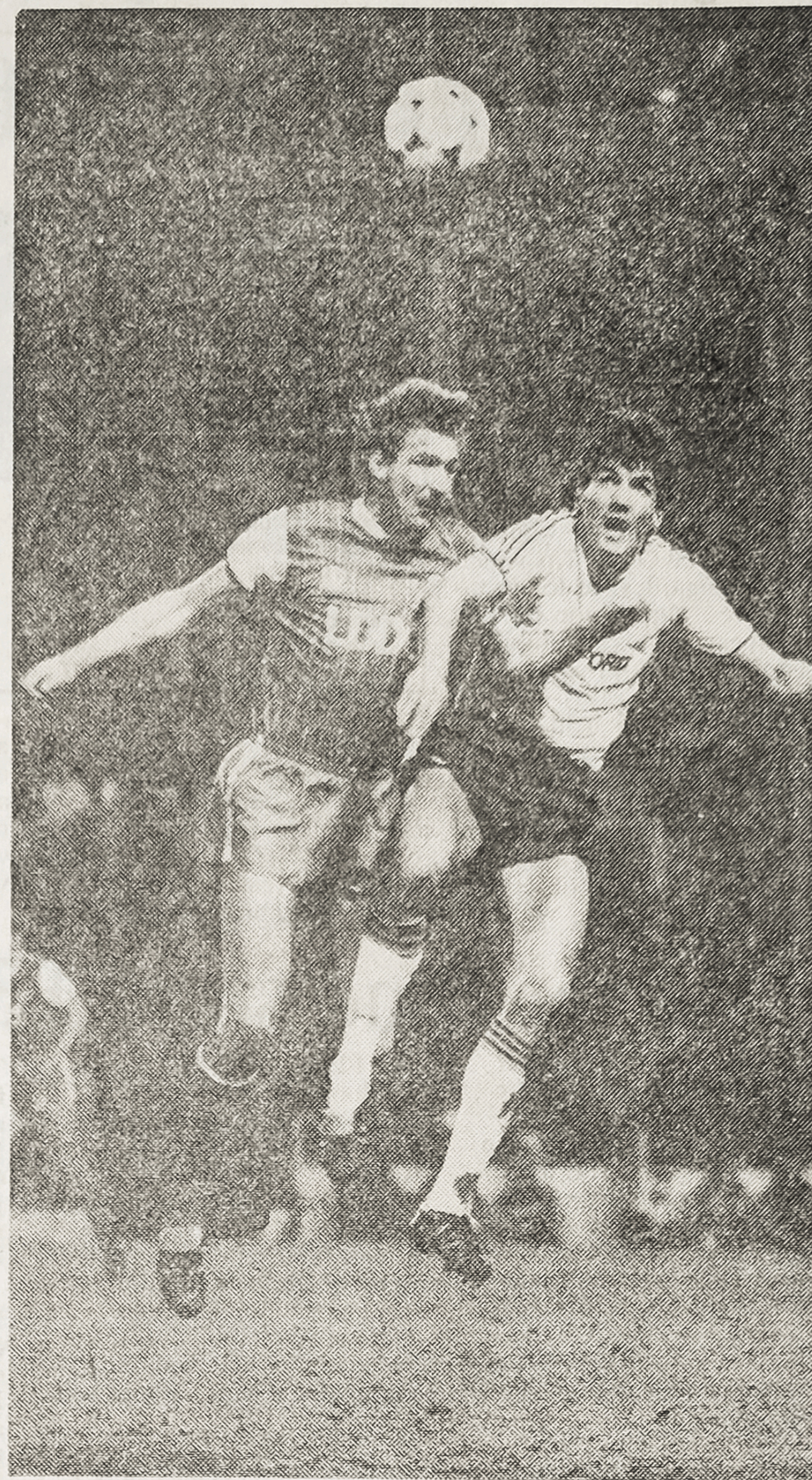
minutes until, without any apparent vacancies elsewhere, they strayed onto the pitch. The referee, himself a police inspector, immediately led the players off until order had been restored.

As the rest of the crowd waited patiently, it took hundreds of uniformed officers, several alsatians, Luton's stewards and George Graham, Millwall's manager, 25 minutes to do so. After the referee had publicly pleaded with "both sets of supporters to co-operate, enjoy yourselves and let us entertain you", he set the game in motion again.

After the lengthy disruption, marked only by sporadic scuffles here and there, the concentration of the teams had become as significant a factor as their respective abilities. Millwall's was to crack after half an hour. Otulakowski's wayward back pass was picked up by the alert Stein, and he put Luton ahead with a shot that went in off the far post.

Although Cusack and particularly Hinshelwood threatened to respond immediately, the smooth control and the greater experience of the first division representatives was increasingly apparent. Like a large, white mist bringing relative tranquility to the evening's disturbances, they advanced with a fluency and a simplicity that was as commendable as it was effective.

Hill, with an elegance that once won him international recognition, and the fleet-footed Nwajiobi were prominent, especially after the interval when Luton should have



Smith (left), of Millwall, and Harford, of Luton, having one of their many aerial tussles (Photograph: John Evans).

increased their lead. They were denied Sansome.

Sealey Luton's goalkeeper, was more concerned about other missiles, including a bottle and a firework, that were thrown from behind than the events taking place in front. But belated efforts from Bremner and Fashanu reminded him that

he had a serious job to carry out.

LUTON TOWN: L Sealey, T Breacker, M Thomas, W Turner, S Foster, M Donaghy, R Hill, B Stein, M Harford, E Nwajiobi, G Parker.

MILLWALL: P Sansome, K Stevens, P Hinshelwood, L Briley, L Smith, D Cusack, S Lowndes, J Fashanu, N Chatterton, S Lovell, A Otulakowski.
Referee: D Hutchinson (Harrogate).