

A POLICEMAN who wasn't in uniform was the real hero of the Luton night which shamed soccer.

No praise can be too high for the way Inspector David Hutchinson refereed Wednesday's FA Cup-tie with Millwall.

Yet, like so many of us, he admits to being at a loss to solve the overall problem of football hooliganism.

"I honestly don't know the answer," he told me the morning after the riot before. "Suggestions that Millwall fans were trying to get the game abandoned just don't make sense."

"When they swarmed on after 15 minutes the score was 0-0 and both teams had enjoyed an equal share of the play. No one could have predicted the outcome at that stage."

Hutchinson, married with three children and a referee for 20 years, is a member of the Cambridgeshire police force now working "on loan" in the Yorkshire spa of Harrogate.

PROBLEM

As a ref and a copper, he sees all sides of soccer's sickness — but remains baffled by what is still a minority problem.

"Most of the spectators wanted the game to go on as much as I did. When I spoke to the crowd over the Tannoy during the hold-up the majority of them clapped," he pointed out.

Despite the TV pictures, the majority were normal fans. They must not be judged by the mindless morons bent on a trail of destruction.

"I realised there had been trouble even before the kick-off," explained Hutchinson. "But when the local police came to

see me in the dressing room they were confident they could cope.

"There was nothing unusual in their visit. It's common practice in League games these days for the local lads to let you know what's going on outside and talk over any contingency plans."

David certainly showed he knew what was going on in the game.

You had to be in the ground to realise how much worse the consequences might have been in a tinder-box atmosphere

By **REG DRURY**

No. 1 for soccer



BLACK KNIGHT

84/BS(rac)

boss David Pleat. Poor Pleat tells me: "I didn't enjoy a moment of what should have been a fabulous occasion for Luton Town, and I couldn't sleep a wink on Wednesday."

"I had a mental picture of the hundreds of decent Luton fans who left when the trouble started after 15 minutes. I hope we haven't lost them for ever. I can only pray they come back."

Millwall must worry they will lose two VIPs. Chairman Alan Thorne, who has ploughed a million pounds into the South London club, and George Graham, who has proved himself an exceptional manager at The Den.

They must be wondering why they bothered.



I'M IN CHARGE —referee David Hutchinson, the coolest man on the pitch, leads off Millwall's Dave Cusack as fighting thugs stop the game at Kenilworth Road.

had Hutchinson not done such a magnificent job.

In the closing minutes, with fans spilling over one touchline, the referee still kept his cool. He even ordered the re-take of a Millwall free-kick 25 yards out.

Yet he must have been as aware as the rest of us that a Millwall equaliser, and a replay, would have led to claims that the hooligans had succeeded in influencing the result.

"The last few minutes were the longest of my life," he recalled. "And I can't speak too highly of the way the players behaved."

"One daft tackle could easily have sparked another pitch invasion. Thank God, I didn't have to send anybody off."

It's not the first time crowd trouble has forced Hutchinson to take two teams off the field.

"I did the same for 16 minutes two seasons ago in a Blackburn-Burnley match," he said.

EXCUSE

He may have had his fingers crossed while he refereed at Luton, and again when he went to collect his car afterwards. But, like his reputation, it wasn't harmed.

I wish I could say the same for the image of soccer — in my opinion, the excuse for modern violence, rather than the cause.

Long-term prison sentences for offenders, positively identified by video or TV film, seems the one effective answer — rather than some of the half-baked ideas being tossed around.

If Mrs Thatcher really wants to talk to an all-round expert, I suggest she sends for Inspector Hutchinson, who has first-hand experience to offer and sympathy for Luton