

Frozen solid!



Arsenal0

Luton0

(after extra
time)

Luton make it hard for Arsenal

ARSENAL and Luton must replay a second time after extra-time at ice - bound Highbury failed to resolve this 5th round FA Cup-tie.

The replay will be at Luton tomorrow.

Millions of pounds worth of international footballers were required to risk their limbs on the frozen wastes of Highbury last night so that Arsenal and Luton might complete their fifth-round FA Cup tie.

The goalmouth which Arsenal defended in the first half was so icebound that the

captain of the Titanic might not have risked a venture into it.

From there, across a third of the surface, white patches spread out like ice floes on a green Arctic sea.

Presumably, referee Allan Gunn was happy that the surface was safe but the players were deeply suspicious of the affected areas, upon which stopping, turning, sometimes even standing still, were treacherous exercises.

In all there were 15 full or under-21 internationals trying to keep their feet and avoid injury . . . not to mention Luton centre forward Mick Harford, who was trying to play for his place in England's World Cup team and was also under scrutiny

by Manchester United as a possible replacement for Barcelona - bound Mark Hughes.

Arsenal goalkeeper John Lukic found it hard to keep his balance in the first half even when trying to effect clearances and the conditions so betrayed him and centre half David O'Leary that Arsenal almost conceded an own goal in the 17th minute.

Both the retreating O'Leary and the advancing Lukic slipped as a dropping ball bounced between them and the centre half's awkward header looped over the goalkeeper and bounced within a foot of a post.

It was unfair, also, to ask the clubs to resolve such a close and important issue in

these circumstances. The replay had waited long enough that another delay would hardly have complicated this winter's fixture pile-up much further.

Luton survived a vigorous penalty appeal on the half hour, former England centre forward Paul Mariner leading Arsenal's protests after his shot struck Mal Donaghy.

As the night grew colder, the chances improved of Arsenal defending their record of losing only one FA Cup tie at Highbury in the past 21 years. That solitary slip up was against West Ham in 1975 and in those 21 years Arsenal have reached the final five times.

JEFF POWELL