

The enemy within Grimes

By Simon Jones

8/87

Norwich City	0
Luton Town	0

All the incident in this rather sterile match came in the last six minutes. After 84 minutes Ashley Grimes, the Luton Town midfield player, was sent off for "violent conduct towards a member of his own team". And, in the last minute, Steve Bruce, Norwich City's outstanding central defender, was carried off with a suspected fractured leg, an injury which club officials had been aware of at half-time.

Grimes's dismissal arose from a running feud he had been having with his own left back, Rob Johnson, since midway through the first half. It started when Grimes criticized Johnson for not giving him the ball when he was in space on the left wing.

Then, when Grimes took a corner which went out of play, Johnson told him to "get the ball over".

The friction which was clearly evident at that point reached an extraordinary climax at the end of the match. As a Norwich corner was about to be taken, Grimes squared up to Johnson and juted his head towards him. It seemed, however, that there was no physical contact between them.

Nevertheless, the referee, Michael James, immediately sent off Grimes who had, somewhat surprisingly, not even been booked previously. Mr James would not go into the details of the offence but he did confirm that Grimes had been sent off for violent conduct towards Johnson. It seems a reasonable inference, therefore, that Grimes was dismissed either for

threatening Johnson with violence or for spitting at him. Certainly the referee was in no doubt that the offence merited a sending off.

Grimes had been responsible, too, for Bruce's injury, a clumsy and dangerous tackle for which he was very fortunate not to be booked. Whether it was malicious only Grimes knows.

As for Bruce, he will have an x-ray examination today on the fibula (the smaller bone) in his right leg. Apparently, the club doctor thought it an acceptable risk for Bruce to continue to play

NORWICH CITY: B Gunn; K Brown, A Spearing, S Bruce (sub: W Biggins), M Phelan, I Butterworth, I Crook, K Drinkell, R Rosario, T Putney, D Gordon.

LUTON TOWN: L Sealey; T Breacker, R Johnson, P Nicholas, S North, M Donaghy, R Hill, B Stein, M Newell, M Harford, A Grimes.

Referee: M L James.