

Home draw welcomed

98/89 (L.C.)

THE LITTLEWOODS CUP

THERE WAS MORE satisfaction in Luton than at Maine Road when the Littlewoods Cup draw paired the Town with Manchester City in the fourth round.

The tie will be played at Kenilworth Road on Tuesday, November 29. It will be the third time the teams have met in the competition, with City winning a three-match marathon ten years ago, and then winning at Kenilworth Road two years later.

"I'm glad to get the home draw," said Town manager Ray Harford. "We must have a good chance, and it's a game to look forward to."

City chairman Peter Swales was not pleased. "Luton are not my favourite club — I abhor their plastic pitch and the way they treat away fans," he said.

When City were last in the First Division Mr Swales and his directors boycotted the game to show support for their banned supporters.

But he is ready to make the trip this time because the Town will give City up to 2,500 standing tickets and 1,000 for seats for the cup-tie.

While the Town are pleased for their supporters that the draw gave them a home tie, there is also a realisation that the team has at times looked better in away matches.

They qualified for further progress in

the cup with an elegant display of coolness and composure at Leeds. With nearly 20,000 home supporters creating a tremendous atmosphere, the Town's First Division quality overcame Second Division hustle and bustle.

They withstood the Howard Wilkinson game of long ball and super-fit running — Vince Hilaire claims Leeds train 22 hours a day! — and it was tragic that the night should end in tears for 18-year-old Julian James.

He had made a splendid full debut until he was sent off in the 85th minute for bringing down Ian Baird with a tackle from behind to stop the striker's run for goal.

Ray Harford was so upset he had a go at referee Neil Midgley of Bolton. There was no bad language, but the boss admitted: "I said things I shouldn't have, and afterwards I apologised to the ref."

The manager was banished from the dug-out, faces a reprimand at the very least, from the Football League, and has fined himself £100. That is the normal Town punishment for men who deserve red cards, and the cash goes into the players' pool.

Club discipline for players is kept private and confidential, but I understand

James will not be fined, although he will have to accept the automatic three match ban.

The feeling at Kenilworth Road was that if it was a sending-off offence not every referee would see it that way. Mr Harford was not the only one to be incensed.

Everton's Ian Snodin got away with a nearly-identical offence in a game televised live, while an 18-year-old on his debut was hammered. Mr Midgley said he had not seen David Scott's yellow card interpretation at Goodison. He saw James's tackle as serious foul play, for which there is only one punishment.

His report on the manager's offence will speak of Mr Harford being very excited. "He pointed out to me that it was the youngster's debut, but that was immaterial to me," said the ref.

James's fellow professionals, including the Leeds man he chopped were unanimous in accepting that it was a natural act for a defender who sees an opponent getting close to a likely goal. Red cards in that situation are accepted as an occupational hazard.

Professionalism was the word to describe the whole team approach to Elland Road on a very difficult night.

Leeds, unbeaten in the five games since

Wilkinson became manager, found their huffing and puffing getting nowhere, while the Town's counter-attacks with better quality passing were always more lethal.

Leeds were unlucky when Baird hit a post when he looked like getting an equaliser in the last minute of the first half, and John Sheridan looped a header onto the top of the bar after the Town had gone into a 2-0 lead.

But the quality strikes came from the Town. Danny Wilson curled in a 25-yarder in the 29th minute after Kingsley Black's cross had been half-cleared, and in the 65th minute Roy Wegerle, whose use of attacking space was brilliant, put David Oldfield through for a goal completed by Oldfield's pace and shot.

THE CUP-TIE DETAILS

LUTON TOWN: Sealey; James, Foster, M. Johnson, Dreyer; Wilson, Williams, Hill, Black; Wegerle, Oldfield. Sub: Grimes and Allinson.

LEEDS UTD: Day; Aspin, Blake, Rennie, Snodin; Sheridan, Batty, Aizlewood, Hilaire; Davison, Baird. Subs: Pearson and Stiles.

THE GOALS: Danny Wilson, 29th minute; David Oldfield, 65th minute.

OTHER STRIKES: Town five saved and two wide; Leeds eight saved and four wide, and two hit the woodwork. Corners: 5-2 to Leeds.

ATTENDANCE: 19,447.

REFEREE: Neil Midgley, Bolton. Correct to send off Julian James, and football needs all other refs to do the same.

ENTERTAINMENT: A smashing night out, especially for Town fans. It was the sort of Town performance we saw in the Littlewoods Cup last season. Wembley, here we come!