

HATTERS IN LIONS DEN

88/89 (FAC)



HATTERS boss Ray Harford put on a brave face last weekend after Luton's FA Cup hopes ended in darkness and a hail of coins at The Den.

But after watching his side lose a five-goal thriller Harford criticised referee John Martin – a man with a number of unhappy connections with past Luton matches – for interrupting the match for 29 minutes at the end of the second half.

There were only seven minutes left and the Hatters were desperately searching for an equaliser when Martin intervened and suspended play because one of the four main floodlight pylons was virtually out of action.

"He caused us a lot of problems by taking us off," explained Harford. "It was an instant reaction and maybe

Millwall	3
(Cascarino, Carter, Sheringham)	
Luton	2
(Wilson, Black)	

he'll get a slap across the wrist for it.
"But it was a smashing game for the fans," he added. "A real thriller, a red-blooded cup-tie.
"Both teams had plenty of chances, but they took one more of theirs than we did and that was that. Of course I am very disappointed because when it was 2-2 I thought we had a real chance of getting a winner.
"The crowd was getting really anxious and we had a few half-chances, but we just couldn't get the break we needed."

The controversial stoppage wasn't the only talking point in an action-packed game as Millwall now face a possible FA inquiry after coins were thrown at Luton players during the hold-up – bringing back memories of the infamous 1985 riot at Kenilworth Road.
"We were more worried about coins flying down on us than the floodlight failure," admitted midfielder Ricky Hill. "David Preece was hit and we all had to protect our heads with our hands as we went down the tunnel."

Brilliant

"When the referee saw what was happening he told the rest of the players to stay on the pitch. It was very tense," he added.
Martin, from Alton in Hampshire, has earned a reputation as an unlucky omen for the Hatters after taking charge of their FA Cup semi-final defeat by Everton in 1985 and last year's Simod Cup final debacle against Reading.
In Saturday's tie Luton found themselves 2-0 down after half an hour following goals by Tony Cascarino and lively winger Jimmy Carter.
But Northern Ireland international Kingsley Black crashed in a brilliant reply shortly before half time and Danny Wilson levelled matters early in the second half with a penalty.
Teddy Sheringham headed Millwall's winner after 72 minutes with the light failing and both Rob Johnson and Black struggling with injuries.

Positive

Johnson came off with an arm injury to be replaced by Julian James while Black's ankle injury gave a chance to David Oldfield.