

Bruce first to feel brunt of new law

STEVE BRUCE, the Manchester United captain, became the first First Division player to be sent off under the new regulations after bringing down Iain Dowie as the Luton striker raced towards the visitors' goal.

The incident occurred in the 39th minute, when Dowie collected Preece's pass and advanced on goal.

Bruce took the striker's legs from under him and referee Ray Lewis produced the red card. It was Bruce's second dismissal of 1990—he was sent off against Derby in January.

There can be no doubt that Mr Lewis's action was correct. While there would inevitably be inconsistencies about sending off players for committing the so-called professional foul—"unprofessional" is more appropriate—Mr Lewis should be applauded for dismissing Bruce.

Players who bring down opponents under such circumstances are cheating the public of what they come to see—shots at goal—and offenders should not prosper.

Bruce's dismissal overshadowed another impressive goal-scoring display by Mark Robins, who fully justified Alex Ferguson's decision to select him ahead of Mark Hughes.

By Christopher Davies

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The United manager also left out former Luton defender Mal Donaghy, thus abandoning the sweeper system that the team had been operating in their first three games.

The more famous Hughes may have been on the bench but his namesake, Ceri, a Welsh Under-21 international, almost put Luton ahead after only two minutes.

He controlled Preece's intelligent through-pass and possibly didn't realise how much time he had, hurrying his shot from the edge of the penalty area and Sealey, given a warm reception by the fans of his former club, saw the effort go wide.

Hughes may have claimed he couldn't see the United goal properly and he would have had a fair point. The floodlights at Kenilworth Road must be among the weakest in the First Division and one could almost imagine referee Ray Lewis offering one of the captains the light later in the match.

Unfortunately his shot lacked power—rather like the floodlights—and Sealey was able to save with ease.

Webb showed some neat

touches and it was his centre from the left, when no cross seemed possible, that led to Luton's conceding a corner.

From Irwin's corner Webb struck a fierce low shot from 20 yards and Hughes had to clear his lines.

It was no surprise when Robins put United ahead in the 23rd minute because the visitors had slowly stamped their authority on the game.

It was a simple goal but one that must have had Jimmy Ryan, the Luton manager and a former United winger, cursing his defence.

From Irwin's centre, Robins rose unchallenged to head past Chamberlain. While taking nothing away from Robins, Luton's defenders greatly assisted the striker by giving him a free header.

It meant that Robins had continued where he left off last season. He scored seven League goals in 10 starts and nine appearances as substitute and the way he ended 1989-90 it was obvious he was going to pressing his claim for a regular place this season.

Luton: Chamberlain; Breacker, Harvey (Johnson 77), James (Rees 45), Beaumont, Dreyer, Elstrup, Preece, Dowie, C Hughes, Black. Booking: Rees 47.

Manchester Utd: Sealey; Irwin, Blackmore, Bruce, Phelan, Pallister, Webb, Ince, McClair, Robins (M Hughes 77), Beardsmore (Donaghy 60). Booking: Beardsmore 35. Sent off: Bruce 39.

Referee: R Lewis (Great Bookham).