



Coming out on top... David Batty of Leeds gets the better of this duel against Luton

Jones back in firing line

By Colin Malam

Luton 1 Leeds 0

HOWARD Wilkinson's press conference after this entertaining match was of the sort that constitutes a strong argument for not allowing football managers to speak in public until they have worked the bile of undeserved defeat out of their systems.

Charmless is perhaps the kindest description of a performance that ranged from Yorkshire bluntness to sarcasm. "Wilkinson and Leeds suit each other perfectly," someone said bitterly after the sorry little sideshow was over.

That was a harsh, one-dimensional assessment of an intelligent, successful manager and a club who have worked hard to lose their reputation for intimidation on the field and violence on the terraces.

Nevertheless, it is difficult to feel sympathy for anyone who signs a midfield "enforcer" like Vinny Jones, then reacts to criticism of the player's rough-house behaviour as though the existence of God

was being questioned. "Blackened the name of football this afternoon has he, Vinny Jones?" said Mr Wilkinson sarcastically in response to enquiries about the knock on the head that eventually removed Luton's David Preece from the game and sent him to hospital for X-rays.

As the Leeds manager saw it, the injury was an accident caused by a small man, Preece, bending to head a ball that a big man, Jones, was trying to kick. My first impression was that Jones, who later made way for Varadi, appeared, at best, clumsy.

Jim Ryan, the Luton manager, was careful not to comment in any way on that incident, but he did condemn the dangerous jump by Jones at goalkeeper Alec Chamberlain after only 45 seconds of play.

"The old Leeds team used to do that," said Mr Ryan. "The

first foul in the first minute, then apologise. I'm surprised the referee didn't do something there just to stop it. To me it was so late, so obvious, it was intimidation."

Fortunately for Luton, Chamberlain was not intimidated. Kenilworth Road's blossoming successor to Les Sealey pulled off a string of saves that enabled these young, attractive Hatters to hold on to the fine early goal headed by Kingsley Black after Elstrup's perfect floated centre to the far post.

But for Chamberlain and poor finishing by Lee Chapman and Gary McAllister—who twice in the first half fired wide after being presented with clear opportunities at the far post—Leeds would not have suffered their first defeat since promotion.

They will not play as well as this and win, and it is to be hoped a smile can be brought eventually to what should be a rewarding season at Elland Road.

90/91