

Sports News

CHEATED Fury as City goals

WHEN YOU follow a team like Luton Town you have to learn to live with the disappointment of defeat.

But it sticks in the throat when the pain is inflicted as much by the third team, the ref and linesman, as by the opposition, as happened against Manchester City.

Like players, the men in black have their off days. But the 17 laws of football are simple.

If we have to accept the occasional aberration that cost the Town White was offside, the moment that caused fury was down to referee Kevin Breen from nearby Liverpool forgetting the unwritten 18th law of football — use your common sense.

By Sports Editor Brian Swain

He reduced himself to a laughing stock in the eyes of home fans when he allowed an astonishing third killer goal early in the second half.

And it provoked fury from the whole Town team, and on the bench, when Mr. Breen gave the goal to a man he knew was offside.

If he had any common sense he could have got out of his predicament.

City, with the pace of David White their greatest asset, had been outplayed by the Town's good passing football, and were restricted to counter attacks.

With the Town well forward for most of the first 50 minutes, White and Niall Quinn had been caught offside time and again.

Missed

But linesman E. K. Wolstenholme from Blackburn missed one when White was allowed to go through on his own in the 13th minute to capitalise on Quinn's ball over the top and the linesman's error.

That was bad enough, but the other flag-waver, P. M. Roberts from the Wirral, was on the ball when the greatest controversy arose.

Peter Reid lifted a pass forward, and the flag went up against White.

Flag seen

He waved play on, but Sutton had already seen the flag for offside, and was looking at the ball, he kicked it almost aimlessly upfield.

White hit

White hit the ball back, and it went into the net off the inside of the post and the crowd chuckled when they realised that the offside was to be ignored even though two officials had seen it.

But it was no laughing matter for the Town.

It took three minutes for the mass protest to die down. Not a man was booked, either.

White said: "You have to feel sorry for Luton. But I just played to the whistle."

Fair enough, but he did not dispute that he

was well offside. Nor did anybody in the ground, the ref included.

If he really thought playing the advantage rule and giving a goal to the offender was right I

All he had to do was have a word with his linesman, confirm his decision, and that would have been that.

And I doubt if even City would have argued: their players too, were laughing over the craziest goal they are ever likely to see.

They also knew they had been lucky to win, let alone by such a flatter margin.

The Town had gone on to the attack from the very first minute, with Paul Telfer on the right and David Preece on the left using the width of the pitch intelligently.

But Telfer began to

Excellent

But a lot of excellent approach play came to nothing through failure to get the final touch.

Pembroke wasted a couple of chances. Peake had a drive in a goalmouth scramble hacked off the line by Reid and Julian James hit the outside of the

post from that clearance.

White's 13th-minute lucky break did little to turn the tide City's way, and at the interval my oppo on the Manchester Evening News, a City man to his toenails, and who used to play for them, reckoned the true reflection of play would have been about 5-1 to Luton.

But City had survived mainly through the Town's lack of the final thrust.

Astonishing

And when Stein got a humdinger on target, after Harford's low cross and Preece's clever dummy, Tony Cotton made an astonishing save.

But the game was

THE FULL MATCH DETAILS

MANCHESTER CITY 4 LUTON TN 0 (Half-time: 1-0)

TOWN: Sutton; James (Hughes 76 mins), Peake, Dreyer, Harvey; Telfer (Oakes HT), Kamara, Pembroke, Preece; Stein, Harford.

CITY: Cotton; Hill, Curle, Redmond, Pointon; Brightwell, Reid (Heath 66 mins), McMahon, Hughes (Sheron 75 mins); White, Quinn.

THE GOALS: David White, 13 mins, well offside from Niall Quinn's lob over the top; Andy Hill, 47 mins, good lob after a cross by Ian Brightwell was half-cleared; White again, 49 mins, given offside by the linesman but allowed to play on by the ref under a mistaken 'advantage' ruling; Adrian Heath, 76 mins, after the Town defence failed to deal with another deep cross.

OTHER ATTEMPTS: Town nine saved, ten wide and one hit a post; City seven saved, five wide. Corners: 8-4 to the Town (5-0 at half-time).

REFeree: Kevin Breen, Liverpool. Turned in a joke performance, except that it is not funny when you are playing against two teams: the three men in black all came from within 30 miles of Manchester, which put them in an invidious position anyway. Mr. Breen's brainstorms, giving City two goals, had the home fans

chortling in disrespectful glee.

BOOKED: Mark Pembroke, David White and Neil Pointon, all for fouls. And no-one for the mass dissent angry Town players expressed after White's second amazing goal.

ATTENDANCE: 22,137, with a few hundred from Luton who can at least claim to have seen the worst First Division refereeing performance they are ever likely to experience.

ENTERTAINMENT: Knock-about fun for the City fans. For visiting supporters, it was galling to see so much excellent play come to nothing, with the Town's poor finishing a contributory factor. In the first half they played City off the park.

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