

Preece's contested goal puts Cardiff in a rage

93/94 (FAC)
By NICK TOWNSEND

Cardiff City.....1

Luton Town.....2

DAVID PREECE secured Luton's rightful place in the quarter-finals and caused the smouldering passions of the conflict to become horribly inflamed.

The score stood at 1-1 when Preece took a pass from John Hartson as Ceri Hughes ran back from an offside position. Referee Roger Dilkes looked as though he would give offside but linesman Brian Rice did not flag and Preece advanced to beat substitute goalkeeper Phil Kite with a low drive.

The Ninian Park crowd was enraged. One fan ran on to the pitch toward Preece before being hauled away by stewards.

The referee and linesman made a sprint for the tunnel as the final whistle blew but Cardiff manager Eddie May rushed towards them and thrust a finger in their faces while the club's infamous supporters tried to confront Luton supporters at the opposite end of the ground before four police horses and dog handlers restored order.

Linesman Rice appeared to be struck by several objects following the incident and Scott Oakes said afterwards: 'A three-inch brick hit me on the arm. I've never been so frightened during a game.'

He said that almost the whole team had been pelted with coins and other missiles.

City received a suspended £25,000 fine following trouble with their fans at a match at Fulham this season and the Welsh FA are investigating incidents at their December home match against Swansea.

May and his chairman Rick Wright claimed their team had been 'cheated' out of a replay, which will inevitably mean an FA appearance by either or both on disrepute charges.

However, Wright retorted: 'If they charge Eddie and not the linesman we'll go to the High Court if necessary. If one of my players does something wrong he gets fined £3,000 but officials can do the same thing and they're back on the field running a game next week.'

May raged: 'Amateurs are getting in the way of the professional game. The boy was offside. I think we were, yes I will say it, cheated.'

The evidence suggests, however, that the linesman and referee were correct in their interpretation of the rules. Dilkes said afterwards: 'We have had directives for a number of weeks from the FA which have also gone to all clubs. The player (Hughes) was deemed not to be interfering with play.'

Luton evaded the offside trap seven minutes before the break when Preece released Oakes, who cut in from the left and beat Mark Grew with a fine individual effort.

Against the run of play substitute Phil Stant equalised midway through the second half, hooking home spectacularly after Garry Thompson headed down a Derek Brazil cross.

Cardiff: Grew (Kite, 45 min), Brazil, Searle, Millar, Baddeley, Perry, Thompson, Richardson, Bird, Dale (Stant, 53), Griffith.

Luton: Sommer, James, Peake, Dreyer, Oakes, Telfer, Hughes, Preece, Hartson (Dixon, 70), Linton, Harper.

Referee: R Dilkes (Mossley).