

Exiles get benefit of the doubt



NEWPORT CO 1

Collins 90+5 (pen)



LUTON TOWN 1

Willmott 18

10/11

THIS spelt a story of two seemingly blatant spot kicks not given and one hopeful decision surprisingly awarded as a frantic Newport managed to rescue a point against Luton Town.

Indeed, it took until the fifth minute of stoppage time for referee Warren Atkin to rectify what had looked to all a horrendous wrongdoing that was worryingly threatening to overshadow this Friday night encounter in South Wales.

From possibly the least feasible penalty shout of the night, the official chose that exact moment to point to the spot to rescue the desperate hosts with barely the last kick of the match.

The ever-dependable Jamie Collins bravely stepped up to drill home and the rest was history.

Quite how the respected Crawley official had decided to wave away the two previous home appeals, however, was still highly debatable.

Substitute Yemi Odubade appeared to have his legs clearly whipped from beneath him in the 75th minute. Worse was to follow four minutes later when Collins was unmercifully hauled down inside the visitors' penalty area, only for the referee to ignore the screams despite being superbly placed.

It almost defied belief and universally ignited the home crowd's venom.

Rather bizarre, then, that following an innocuous chal-

By Ade Williams

lenge on defender Paul Bignot, some five minutes into added time, the Sussex official finally deemed it sufficient foul-play to point to the penalty spot and rescue County from a game that had looked increasingly like slipping away from them.

County are yet to taste victory in 2011, but director of football Tim Harris remains upbeat.

"The number of times we put the ball into their box, we completely deserved it.

"We earned that break

and we still believe that we have a chance of reaching the play-offs.

"Sometimes decisions even themselves out over the course of a game and we think we more than merited that penalty award tonight."

It had all started so well for Luton. Only 18 minutes had elapsed when Robbie Willmott effortlessly stroked home after a fine ball from the

right had dissected the hosts. The same player had two golden chances to seal the points during the second-half, racing clear with one-on-one opportunities only to discover inspired Newport keeper Glyn Thompson his equal.

Hatters boss Richard Money was equally forthcoming. "I've no qualms about the penalty," he said. "I merely asked my team for a big response here tonight after a poor result last week and, to a large degree, I feel I had that."

MATCH STATS

NEWPORT v LUTON

5	SHOTS ON TARGET	6
6	SHOTS OFF TARGET	1
9	CORNERS	2
4	OFFSIDE	3
16	FOULS CONCEDED	12
1	YELLOW CARDS	3
0	RED CARDS	0

STAR MAN: Andrew Hughes (Newport)

ATT: 2,834

ENTERTAINMENT: ★★★★★

REF RATING: Warren Atkin 4/10

NEWPORT: 4-4-2: Thompson 7, Bignot 7, Hughes 8, Hatswell 7, Warren 6, Collins 7, Miller 6 (Morgan 78, 6), Knights 5 (Montgomery 73, 6), Rose 6, Griffin 6, Matthews 5 (Odubade 66, 6). Subs not used: Foley, Garner.
LUTON: 4-4-2: Tyler 7, Gleeson 5 (Graham 46, 6), Murray 7, Pilkington 7, Gnallpa 6, Keane 6, Willmott 7, Kroca 6, Carden 5, Walker 5 (Howells 60, 5), Owusu 5. Subs not used: Lawless, Crpov, K. Pilkington.