

Gayle Browned off at 'soft' dismissal

13/14
FA Trophy 1st Round
Staines Town 0
Luton Town 0

THREE coaches in the car park, an extra turnstile opened, a full press bench and hi-viz jackets aplenty, writes Clive Youlton.

A big club were in town, not to mention a seemingly unnecessary police presence for a crowd of 621 but Staines' fans won't have been reflecting on the long arm of the law, rather, the strict interpretation of a law, by fussy referee Colin Lymer.

The question 'when is a handball not a handball?' has been an issue seeping its way into the game's consciousness for a good while and continues to baffle.

As for when such an incident should warrant a booking, Lymer's interpretations were dunked in a bucket of contradiction and waved in the faces of bemused and angry home followers.

The biggest talking point was the dismissal of Swans' defender Jordaan Brown in the 29th minute - his second yellow for two handball 'offences' - the first a hugely contentious decision in the eighth minute, when the ball merely hit Brown's hand as he went to control in midfield.

Having made the decision to book the defender, the second - for an almost identical miscalculation from Brown - was inevitable but it appeared, from a neutral perspective at least, that yellow cards were only issued for that type of offence if you happened to be wearing a yellow shirt.

Perhaps the most blatant example came in the second half when, 10 minutes in, Luton striker Mark Cullen went to control

on the touchline, misjudged and deliberately handled to keep the ball in play.

Lymer's decision not to show a yellow card meant any credibility he had was flushed away in an instant and the derision hurled at him thereafter only served to remind him of that fact.

"The referee said Jordaan's handballs were cynical. We protested about a couple of their handballs, which we felt were equally cynical so if he was going to be consistent, he needed to do both," reasoned Swans' coach Martyn Spong.

"If it's a forward trying to control the ball, surely he's trying to gain an advantage so what's the difference between being cynical as a defender and being cynical as a forward?"

"On the first one for Jordaan, a warning would have been sufficient, especially at that stage of the game and if the second one was a legitimate, cynical handball, then book him and if he doesn't learn his lesson then, that's fine.

"I thought it was poor refereeing from that point of view and he was just taking it to the nth degree of the law without showing any sympathy."

The fact Staines matched their visitors with 10 men for much of the game was a credit to them, even though it was actually Luton reserves as only three of their starting XI featured in John Still's team in the midweek league game against Southport while only one, Matt Robinson, played in the Skrill Premier clash against Welling.

It said a lot about the visitors' ambitions - Football League status their only goal - and the contest had a rather flat feel because of it.

The brilliant Jack Turner stopped Cullen from handing the Hatters a



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I'm alright Jack: Staines' stopper Jack Turner made three top saves.

fourth-minute lead but after that, the first half was rather like a game of chess where only pawns were being moved - that was until Brown's dismissal when it livened up a tad.

The highlight of the match came eight minutes after the break when Turner's heroics saved Staines thanks to a magnificent triple save.

Blocking Matt Robinson's swerving thunderbolt was one thing. Turning aside

Cullen's equally fierce follow-up was another while, seconds later, imposing midfielder Arnaud Meny's belter from 25 yards was dealt with in equally spectacular matter.

Max Worsfold's run and shot straight at keeper Elliot Justham and the otherwise quiet Louie Theophanous's snapshot over the bar were the closest Staines came to scoring and there was a moment in the final seconds which caused

further controversy.

This time Staines' substitute Bajram Pashaj fired in a shot that appeared to strike the arm of defender Joe Davis in the box, not that Lymer saw anything on this occasion.

"We feel it was an injustice," added Swans' boss Marcus Gayle. "The sending off for two handballs was soft and I told the referee to his face afterwards he was poor. If I get told off for that I don't care."