

REF MAKES IT A FARCE!

BY JIM McCANN

A VERY sudden change of mind by the referee brought Wycombe's Isthmian League encounter with Sutton to a premature and farcical end on Saturday at Loakes Park.

Referee David Eleray, from Harrow, abandoned the Blues game after only 15 minutes because he felt the bone-hard and icy pitch was becoming too dangerous.

The decision sparked off a farce as some fans waited nearly 30 minutes to hear an official announcement that the game had been called off and then demanded some sort of compensation for their ruined afternoon.

Argument

The early final whistle also left Wycombe manager Paul Bence with another problem to contemplate — lack of

match practice before Tuesday night's doubtful Hitachi Cup match with Bishop's Stortford and the crunch FA Trophy match against Dartford on Saturday.

Bence admitted that he had no argument with the referee's declaration that the Loakes Park pitch was too dangerous for further play.

But he added: "Having decided to start the match the ref should have given it

until half time at least.

"My players trained on the pitch afterwards and it was dangerous and almost impossible to hold your feet.

"But the ref should have known that before the kick-off."

Mr Eleray's comments for the Press afterwards were less expansive.

"I consider it too dangerous for further play," he said.



The man in the middle of the controversy, referee David Eleray, walks off with the match ball after calling an early halt on Saturday.

"I have no further comment to make."

What Mr Eleray neglected to say was that he had looked at the pitch just over an hour before kick-off and gave it the go ahead after instructing the Wycombe groundsman to sand certain areas.

Whether the pitch was playable or not is a matter of diverse debate.

Pocket

But what is certain is that Mr Eleray's dramatic change of mind left the paying customers feeling cheated.

The decision also means that Wycombe will be hit hard in the pocket.

They will have to play Sutton's travelling expenses for this and the re-arranged tussle as well as giving them a share of the joint gate receipts.