

WE'RE NOT ANIMALS—HALL



HICKS . . . Clumsy

WEALDSTONE manager Brian Hall yesterday hit back at: "unfair criticism, which has branded us a bunch of thugs and kickers."

Said Hall: "You don't win the Gola League and the FA Trophy as we did last season, if kicking people is all you do."

Hall was replying to verbal attack on his team before and after their 1-0 FA Cup first-round defeat at Reading when three players — two from Wealdstone — were sent off after a mass brawl on the halfway line.

"We've been made to look

By MARTIN HARDY

like a bunch of animals without any justification," said Hall. "I can't believe what's been said."

"It seems people are trying to get hold of any dirt they can and throw it at us. It all started after our match against Wycombe. One of their players went off with his nose bleeding and we were accused of committing premeditated and cold-blooded thuggery."

"Yet the lad who is supposed to have done this is frightened of himself, let alone a thug."

"There was just one incident against Reading which wasn't started by us and yet we receive all the blame."

"I didn't see any outrageous tackling and we had just as many free kicks as they did. We didn't complain about them kicking us, because it's supposed to be a man's game."

"I'm also upset that the Reading manager chose to say what he did. He didn't complain to me when we were talking together."

"I'm only sorry we didn't earn a replay because I'd have pinned his comments on the dressing-room wall and my team talk would have been done for me."

Awesome

Hall added: "We are getting a reputation which we do not deserve."

Hall was forced to defend his team after Reading counterpart Ian Branfoot had declared after the match: "One of my players said 'we have to earn our living and some of the things that were going on out there could have prevented us from doing that'."

Branfoot attributed the quote to Martin Hicks, a gentleman, but awesome-looking centre half who looks capable of taking care of himself.

The same Martin Hicks who had clattered so clumsily into Vince Jones that at least half a dozen Wealdstone players chose to demonstrate that if they get fed up of football then boxing is a ready alternative.

At least Wealdstone goalkeeper Bob Iles had plenty of reason to smile afterwards.

Iles, formerly with Chelsea, was without doubt the game's outstanding performer, equal to everything Reading sent his way apart from the penalty which Dean Horrix struck past the ends of his fingers.

Wycombe's masterplan

SATISFIED Paul Bence, manager of FA Cup giant-killers Wycombe Wanderers last night admitted: "Everything went to plan."

Bence's young Wycombe side outclassed Division Four pace-setters Colchester 2-0.

And Bence, a defender with Brighton, Brentford and Reading, said: "We studied the way they played and got things right."

"To start off with they played with a sweeper which gave us room to play football. They abandoned that in the second half but it was a case of shutting the stable door after the horse had bolted."

"By that stage we had already scored our two goals."

Former England schoolboy international Mark West, discarded by Spurs and Reading, scored the first goal with computer operator Simon Read getting the second.

● Dartford manager John Still had his anxious moments even before the 0-0 draw at Third Division Bournemouth.

He said: "Striker Micky Dingwall could not travel with us on Friday evening so he made the trip on Saturday morning in a supporters

coach that was delayed. He reached the ground after two o'clock and missed the team talk."

● Maidstone manager Barry Fry, who ordered his players to make their own way to Fareham after a sub-standard performance in midweek, was pleased with the 3-0 win.

Fry said: "The mini-bus is now back in service and I don't think the players will have any travel problems in the next round."

McGUIGAN TO DEFEND IN DUBLIN

BARRY McGUIGAN looks set to defend his WBA World Featherweight title against Fernando Sosa, of Argentina, in Dublin on the February 15 — the day Ireland play Wales in the Rugby Union international at Landsdowne Road.