

Bucks Free Press

EDITORIAL, ADVERTISING
AND PUBLISHING OFFICES
Gomm Road, High Wycombe.
Telephone: High Wycombe 21212.

ADVERTISEMENT AND
NEWS RECEPTION OFFICE
Free Press House, Castle Street,
High Wycombe.

Stamp out the hoolifan

APART from the occasional skirmish, the non professional game has so far escaped the soccer sickness of the hoolifan.

But it could be only a matter of time before the terrace louts transfer their attention from the professional grounds, where the authorities are making it too hot for them, to local grounds such as Loakes Park where supervision and control is less intense.

Naturally, Wycombe Wanderers' officials wish to play down the violence that marred the club's FA Cup triumph on Saturday. And we have no wish to overplay the situation. But it is a matter of record that five arrests were made and about another 40 so called fans were ejected from the ground, only to wait outside to stone the Colchester coaches at they left.

And at Aylesbury on Tuesday night what could have turned into an ugly scene was nipped in the bud by the quick action of the police, although Slough supporters were forced to seek the sanctuary of the pitch in order to escape the flaying fists.

It is a matter of extreme concern, not only for the genuine soccer fan but more so for local football managements that we are beginning to see the sickness that is destroying the game at professional level insiduously creeping into local soccer.

Wycombe chairman Brian Lee indicated this week that there has to be a limit to crowd control arrangements at Loakes Park. The club, now playing in a higher league of football involving considerably more running expenses, has not the financial resources for high level policing of the ground.

Yet, on the other hand, it cannot afford to allow the hoolifan, who is more a fan of the bottle than any soccer club, to drive away the genuine supporter and thus lose the life blood of the game.

The five arrested are to be paraded before Wycombe magistrates on Monday and all with a genuine concern for football's future will watch the outcome with interest.

One answer must be to take the hoolifan out of circulation on Saturday afternoons. A long period of community service would at least ensure he occupies his spare time usefully and not by upsetting the leisure activities of others with his bullying behaviour.

We agree with Mr Lee that, primarily, control of the soccer thug is fair and squarely on the shoulders of the judiciary, but that doesn't mean that clubs should not be prepared to help themselves and be ever vigilant in their own interests.

It has been suggested that the Loakes Park louts were much the worse for drink or some other stimulant before they entered the ground and, following the example set by professional soccer, should have been refused entry.

More control at the gate before the hoolifan gets into the ground would cost less and be much more effective, and less costly, than allowing the trouble in and trying to snuff it out once it erupts.