

TWIST OF FATE

THIS is a letter about fate, and the famous cliché 'it's a funny old game, Saint!' Picture the scene. The supporters of the largest non-league club are packed into the beautiful stadium, Adams Park. Their programmes denote the latest victims to be Witton, in the Quarter Final of our trophy!

It seems only the twinkling of an eye has passed since the blue army graced the twin towers. Whisperings amongst the crowd that an immediate return is inevitable seem justified. Quiet assurance reigned, except in the far corner, where red and white's of Witton were bubbling in a cauldron of excitement.

The home heroes charged on to rapturous applause, they were ready to banish the northern pretenders to the throne. The northerners surged on to the field of battle, and immediately summoned fate to their side by approaching their followers and stirring the cauldron into a froth of bubbling red and white fervour.

It was then I knew. The vivid memory of our own cup run last season provided the comparison. At Northwich in the quarter final last year, we were the bubbling cauldron of excitement. We knew destiny awaited us. This year we simply expected, and so fate understandably threw us aside.

As the battle commenced it seemed a matter of just waiting for their inevitable goal, and counting our missed chances. Their commitment was superb, and the goal came. The second goal sent the Witton players amongst the cauldron as it spilled over on to the field. Fate gave the blue army one final blow, as we scored a consolation goal at the death. Just time to look at the clock to see if we had any time left, and the battle was over.

Fate, of course, can only be judged with the benefit of hindsight. So we shall see if I am tempting it by saying Witton are Wembley bound, purely on the basis of a comparison with our cup run. But I sincerely hope they do, as they deserve success.

From our point of view, I shall finish with another fine adage, 'we can now concentrate on the league!' Good luck Witton, although I don't believe you will need it!

Stephen J Lee
Cardiff, S. Glamorgan

IN OFF THE POST

Dear Sport,

I thought I must write regarding last Saturday's FA Trophy defeat against Witton Albion. I am a regular Blues supporter, both home and away, and I accept we cannot always get a result.

After estimating I have spent around £230 in gate money, petrol etcetera already this season, however, I read in your Midweek that Simon Stapleton said "They wanted it more than us." Can you imagine what Brian Clough would have done if Nottingham Forest midfielder Roy Keane had been similarly quoted.

Also, it's said Kim Casey was not fully fit. So why wasn't Mark West, who is inspired in cup games, not selected to commence the match?

I work in a large High Wycombe factory and all the supporters I've spoken to feel 'Clobber' Smith should have been substituted at least by half time by Keith Ryan, who has got pace and flair and can be a match winner.

I would also like to ask Martin why he tries to emulate Watford and Wimbledon in putting the match ball in orbit every time goalkeeper Paul Hyde kicks from goal.

I can only remember Keith Scott heading it on to one of his own forwards once during the whole game, while Witton kept the ball on the ground and it paid off in front of goal.

Ironically, Manchester City in last Sunday's televised game against Southampton tried to find Niall Quinn with big kicks with similar results. What amazes me is Martin's old club, Nottingham Forest, invariably play it along the ground. This not only brings good results but is entertaining to the terrific support the club now generates.

We now have 13 games to show what we can do. Let's complete the season in style.

Andrew Clark
Abbey Barn Road
High Wycombe

●WHAT do you think? The Bucks Free Press welcome letters, with name and address supplied, on any sporting matters. They should arrive at the sports desk in our Gomm Road office by Tuesday morning.

Hampden storm into semi finals

John Hampden Grammar 5
Tauntons College 0

ALEC Norman scored twice as John Hampden Grammar School won through to the semi finals of the Barclays Under 19 Trophy in the wind and the rain of Wednesday afternoon, beating Tauntons College from Southampton 5-0.

The team managed by Mr Mike Jeffery will now meet the winners of yesterday's game between Southend High School and Barton Peverell (Eastleigh).

Hampden went 2-0 ahead with the wind behind them, Gareth Wood scoring after 17 minutes and Andy Lupton after 33 minutes.

The combination of flair with commitment made Hampden almost unplayable. With Norman's strength on the ball and direct running, Hampden imposed their game on their opponents after the break.

Norman's goals sandwiched a 75th minute penalty by Graham Tilly.