

Bring these officials to account

PARK LIFE

By Alan Hutchinson

OUR FA Cup campaign is over for another year after Tuesday's controversial defeat at Wigan.

We ended up being done by the officials and not Wigan Athletic on a night when we played well.

What upsets me is that the players have red and yellow cards and get suspended and fined, managers get fined for comments they make but the officials are untouchable.

There should be a system where referees are docked a couple of games if they make mistakes so they aren't earning any more money from the game.

At the moment the officials are like policemen, in fact some of them are policemen in their day jobs. They are untouchable and it is time something was done.

I thought the decision at Wigan was disgraceful. The referee was 20-yards off the game when it happened. I'm not having a go at the referee about that. It can happen to the fittest man in the world because the ball is whacked from one end to the other, but the linesman should have been there to give it.

They call linesman assistant referees these days and they should assist, but they don't all do that.

I've known some refs tell them before the game to only flag for offside and throw-ins and leave the rest of the decisions to them.

People might say I'm just having another go at the officials but all the Wigan people told me it was a blatant penalty.

Refereeing is not the only problem bothering me this week. Have you noticed how low the crowds have been in the FA Cup this season?

Our attendances have twice gone below 3,000 and it was a low crowd at Wigan.

It makes me wonder whether it was a good idea to go national at this stage of the competition when the early rounds always used to be regionalised.

● The BFP's best wishes go to regular columnist Steve Brown, his partner Nicola and their ten-day old son Maxwell who has been in hospital since he was born. He had a four-hour operation on his throat last week and the early signs are that it was successful.

● Our other columnist, Ron Barnett, returns to his regular slot next week.

HOW THEY STAND

Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pt
Wigan	19	8	2	0	21	6	2	7	0	17	12	39
Preston	19	6	1	2	13	9	5	5	0	18	9	39
Gillingham	19	6	1	2	20	9	4	4	2	17	14	35
Bristol R	18	5	3	1	12	5	5	2	2	10	6	35
Burnley	19	7	1	1	19	6	2	6	2	6	6	34
Notts Co	19	4	3	3	13	11	6	1	2	15	9	34
Stoke	19	4	4	2	13	9	5	2	2	16	8	33
Millwall	19	4	4	1	14	8	5	2	3	16	13	33
Brentford	19	6	2	1	18	9	3	4	3	13	14	33
Luton	19	6	2	1	18	11	2	1	7	5	14	27
Bour'm'th	19	6	2	2	18	8	1	2	6	8	20	25
Wycombe	19	4	3	3	14	14	2	4	3	10	12	25
Bury	19	4	4	2	20	17	1	5	3	9	9	24
Oldham	19	3	2	5	11	12	2	3	4	9	12	20
Oxford	19	2	3	4	10	11	3	2	5	8	12	20
Scunthrpe	19	2	2	5	8	15	3	3	4	12	16	20
Cardiff	19	2	6	2	11	11	2	1	6	11	15	19
Wrexham	19	3	3	3	11	11	1	4	5	7	20	19
Bristol C	18	2	7	0	12	7	1	2	6	9	19	18
Reading	18	3	4	3	11	11	1	1	6	11	23	17
Camb Utd	19	3	3	3	18	16	0	3	7	10	18	15
Blackpool	19	2	4	4	11	17	1	2	6	9	17	15
Colchester	19	1	3	5	10	20	2	3	5	10	22	15
Chesterfd	18	1	3	5	5	9	1	3	5	6	11	12