



You're off: Steve Brown can't believe it at Leicester on Saturday

Ref: F12

Brown out for four games, but not the semi

STEVE Brown will be free to face Michael Owen and co in the semi-final despite FA chiefs hitting him with a four-match ban following his impromptu strip at Leicester.

Brown was sent off for removing his shirt to celebrate Roy Essandoh's last-gasp winner, but his ban will be served before the semi.

The 34-year-old midfielder had earlier been booked for a foul and ref Steve Bennett showed no compassion when he removed his shirt and sent him off.

Brown received a one-match ban for his strip-show doubled to two matches because it was his second sending off this season.

It comes on top of a two-match suspension he already has ruling him out of the vital league matches against Oldham, Rotherham,

Walsall and Millwall.

Brown said: "It was costly, stupid of myself, but it won't dampen anything of what we have done."

"I'm in the twilight of my career and when Roy scored the adrenaline and jubilation were hard to explain and I took my shirt off in the heat of the moment."

Ironically his sending off came on the day FIFA ruled that players taking shirts off won't be booked next season and his dismissal created a national outcry with fans demanding it is overturned.

Fan Edward Pearce said: "I know rules are rules but this is so stupid. It's pathetic. It's like going through a 30mph speed limit at 31 and getting banned for it."

FA spokesman Nick Barron said: "Everyone at the FA has

nothing but sympathy for Steve but, unfortunately, he fell foul of the international rules of the game."

"Because Steve was sent off after a second yellow card he doesn't have a right of appeal."

But players boss Gordon Taylor is asking the governing body to revoke it.

The PFA chief executive said: "I've asked the FA to show a human side bearing in mind what Wycombe have done for the Cup this season."

"Steve didn't inflame the opposing supporters. It was a human gesture of joy at winning the game. If nothing else it would be good public relations by the FA in view of the fact that Wycombe have restored some of that magic to the competition."

Maxwell will be the lucky mascot again

STEVE Brown will have his 15-month-old son Maxwell in his arms again when Wanderers line up for their FA Cup semi-final against Liverpool.

The tiny tot was Blues' lucky mascot when they won at Filbert Street on Saturday and chairman Ivor Beeks wants him to do it again at Villa Park.

Beeks said: "Maxwell was our lucky charm at Leicester and we'd love to have him as our mascot again. I've told Brownie that if Maxwell wants to do it, it's his job."

Brown can play in that semi-final, despite his last-minute dismissal for ripping his shirt off at Leicester, and has jumped at Beeks' offer.

Maxwell has needed 20 operations since he was born without a proper connection between his throat and stomach and Brown says he is his inspiration.

He said: "People find things in life which motivate them and he has done that for me. Maybe if I'd had him earlier I would have achieved a lot more in

my career."

"Having Maxwell out on the pitch inspired me. It meant so much having him there and looking so well and I'm thrilled he'll be there against Liverpool as well."

"When he went out onto the pitch and saw the crowd he started crying. I said don't be frightened you've been through tougher battles than that and he took it on the chin."

"People have asked me how tough that game was and I've told them the toughest thing I have known is what my son went through."

And after Blues beat Leicester's £10,000 a week players on their own patch, the midfielder launched a barbed attack on the money swilling around in the Premiership.

"You've got some players earning an extraordinary amount of money a week but people like the doctors who treated Maxwell save lives and that concept of value of money is totally misconstrued. The doctors deserve it much more."

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