

Booking's won't alter my game

STEVE BROWN

PARKLIFE

MY problems with referees, or rather their problems with me, have landed me in trouble again and I'm currently serving a three match ban.

I've been booked 16 or 17 times this season and it is an astonishing record I'm not at all proud of and one which I don't think I totally deserve.

I know we've played a lot more games this year than normal but that still does not make it right.

I don't consider myself a dirty player. I haven't challenged anyone like Roy Keane did last Saturday.

In fact the only time this season that anyone has been forced to leave the field because of one of my challenges was against Wolves when I went in for a 50-50 with Simon Osborn – and I didn't get booked for that, the referee didn't even give a free kick.

I'm beginning to think my reputation is going before me. On seven or eight occasions I have been booked for my first mis-timed tackle while other people are allowed to make three or four before any action is taken against them.

In the semi-final I got done for my first mis-timed tackle but I had been the victim of bad tackles three or four times from Liverpool players before that and no action was taken.

I'm not proud of my disciplinary record. To enter the referee's notebook ten times in 11 games is not something I want on my cv.

It disappoints me how many games I've missed through suspension because I know I'm no good to the gaffer sitting in the stands, but I can't change the way I am.

I've had 16 or 17 bookings this season but I think I should only be on ten.

It seems to have got worse since I was sent off against Leicester for taking my shirt off and I seemed to be the focus of everyone's sympathy.

I took my four game ban on the chin. I never slated the referee. I didn't ask the national papers to make a big story out of it and I didn't make the referee out to be the bad guy.

I think sometimes my reputation counts against me. But as I said earlier. I'm not a dirty player. I'm a competitive player. I can't change the way I play because if I did I would be selling myself and the club short.

Talking of referees, I think it is time we seriously looked at their position. The game has changed so much since we won the World Cup in 1966 but the referees have not.

The game is so fast now and I don't think they can keep up. When we played down at Bristol City we counter-attacked brilliantly. We were much too fast for the ref.

I looked around and he was ten or 15 yards behind me every time we broke and I'm a midfielder so how far does that make him behind the play?

I think we have got to think about having professional referees or maybe having an official in each half of the field – although I suppose that might mean double trouble for me.

Even though I'm now banned until we play Colchester on the last match of the season I will still be with the lads every step of the way.

I drove up to Notts for the abandoned match on Wednesday and will be driving to Bury on Saturday.

My missus can't understand it. She thinks I should take the weekend off but I couldn't do that. Football on Saturdays has been my way of life for so long now that I would just be irritable if I was sitting at home and there was a match on.

I can't watch the scores coming in on teletext. I've got to be up there with the lads.

The trip to Notts was amazing. I drove up in the storm and it seemed to hit Nottingham just as I got there. There was no way you could play on that pitch.