

# 'Few nincompoops caused the trouble' says Town chairman



□ **PAUL WEST:** He was knocked unconscious during crowd disturbance at the end of Taunton Town's FA Cup second qualifying round replay against Yeovil Town on Monday.

TAUNTON Town soccer player Paul West this week relived the moment he was knocked unconscious during the worst crowd disturbances seen at a sporting event in the area in recent years, writes **PHIL HILL**.

Mr West, aged 25, reserve team manager and a first team regular for many seasons, was stretchered off and taken to Musgrove Park Hospital after fighting erupted at the end of the FA Cup second qualifying round replay between Taunton and Yeovil Town on Monday night.

A self-employed painter, he was allowed home to Priory Avenue on Wednesday, suffering from concussion, cuts and bruises.

Trouble flared after the match at Wordsworth Drive ended in a 5-3 win for the visitors.

"I can't remember too much about it," Mr West told the *County Gazette*. "I went over to clap the players off and there was some fighting.

"Some of my mates were attacked. I tried to split it up but got hit with an umbrella and four or five blokes piled in and gave me a few kicks to the head.

"When I came round, my chin was twice the size it ought to be and my speech is still slurred. It'll keep me off work for a while."

After the fighting, which lasted 25 minutes, a 20-year-old Taunton man was arrested and later released on police bail pending further enquiries.

Some spectators claimed that the Yeovil player-manager, former international Graham Roberts, sparked the violence by allegedly gesturing and swearing at Taunton fans at the end of the game. There were claims he later hammered on the home dressing room window.

But the former Spurs, Rangers and England defender refuted the accusations.

He said: "I just said, 'Good luck next season', that's all. If that's angered anybody, I apologise. Obviously they're bad losers."

Insp Simon House, of Taunton police, said allegations that one or more players incited the crowd would be investigated.

But he added: "The incident was a very minor disruption."

Insp House said his officers were outside the ground during the game, in line with the Taylor report, but moved in when the hooliganism started.

Taunton Town chairman Tom Harris appealed for calm over the public address system.

He said afterwards: "It was only 20 blokes out of the 2,200 spectators having a skirmish — you get a punch-up on the street every day.

"We've never had crowd scenes before. I don't like to see anything like that at Taunton — but it was just a few nincompoops who caused trouble."

Mr Harris said that in future, home games against teams of the calibre of Yeovil may be switched to an alternative venue, adding: "It was a blessing in disguise. We want a new ground with

## Disturbance after cup match

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better facilities — supporters who disagree might now see sense."

Taunton manager Russell Musker said his defender Dave Ewens, who claims he was spat at, had admitted headbutting a Yeovil player after the final whistle.

"I wouldn't condone either action," said Musker. "I'm not really sure what went on after the game, but it marred a good evening."

George Coggen, Yeovil's Green and White Supporters Club chairman, said: "Passions were bound

to run high, yet there was no segregation."

He added: "Nine Yeovil supporters who travelled on our coach, including young children, were afraid to come out of the ground because they would have to walk through a crowd of Taunton fans who were milling around the entrance."

Richard Greenaway, covering the match for local radio, said: "It was terrifying. I never thought I'd see anything like that at Taunton."

□ Full match report: Page 64.

