

Foster's stunner

Luton 2 Everton 1

THE RACE for the League championship is now programmed for its most riveting climax in years.

Everton's smooth acceleration towards a repeat of last season's triumph was seriously disturbed yesterday on Luton's plastic pitch, which the champions so obviously loathe.

Everton had looked on course for victory when a fluke goal gave them the lead just after half-time.

But Luton equalised in the 81st minute with a glorious headed goal by Steve Foster and six minutes later Mike Newell scored the winner.

Everton's first defeat in 19 games was, perhaps, the inevitable conclusion to a daunting week for them.

The club had been stunned by reports that Howard Kendall was being wooed by Barcelona to replace Terry Venables.

And, on the evidence of this intriguing contest, Everton will face as fierce a fight to retain their League title as they will to cling on to the manager who has trans-

By JOE MELLING

formed the club so successfully.

With Peter Reid, Kevin Ratcliffe, Gary Stevens, and now Kevin Sheedy, injured, their forces are depleted.

Sheedy had to quit with a torn hamstring after 41 minutes yesterday and could be out for up to three weeks.

Kevin Richardson put Everton in front when his shot was deflected off defenders Webb Johnson and Foster past Les Sealey.

But Everton were clearly concerned at the considerable menace provided by the aggressive Mick Harford.



NUDGE, NUDGE! . . . Mike Newell helps in Luton's winner against Everton

Picture: KEITH DOBNEY

The Luton striker might well have impressed the watching England manager Bobby Robson with splendid examples of his prodigious heading ability.

Neville Southall won his personal battle with Harford with timely help from one of his posts, but lost the overall war.

For while anxious eyes were fixed on the Luton striker, centre-half Foster was able to rise unopposed and head a super equaliser from a Ricky Hill free kick.

Three minutes from time Foster was there again with another bludgeoning header that Newell turned past Southall at the far post.

Pleat's pleasure was tempered by

the fact that four of his players were booked and he insisted: 'We have had this referee three times already this season, and I don't think that can be right, when there is a panel of 85 referees.' Foster, Peter Nicholas, Mitchell Thomas and Johnson were cautioned by Great Bookham referee Roy Lewis and Pleat observed: 'It's time the PFA took a look at players who are conning referees by going down as though they have been poleaxed.'

'It is a stigma to keep getting these bookings.'

LUTON: Sealey; Johnson, Foster, Donaghy, Thomas; Hill, Nicholas, Breacker, Preece; Harford, Newell. Sub: King.

EVERTON: Southall; Harper, Mountfield, Van den Hauwe, Pointon; Steven, Richardson, Bracewell, Sheedy (Marshall 41 min). Lineker, Sharp.