

Foster breaks Everton's spell

Luton 2

Everton 1

85/86

STEVE FOSTER, the Luton centre-half with the white headband and the swashbuckling style, would not figure high on the popularity lists of referees and visiting supporters, writes Donald Saunders.

Yet, over the years, home crowds at Portsmouth, Brighton, Aston Villa and Luton have hailed him as a hero.

Now, League soccer has cause to pay its respects to the man who has prevented a crucial season from suffering premature death by sending Everton stumbling to a rare defeat that throws the championship wide open.

True, Foster seemed to have lifted the out-of-touch champions three points nearer retention of the title, when a shot from Richardson was deflected off his boot into the net for a goal Luton did not deserve to concede.

That came shortly after the interval and caused such frustration among Luton's players that Foster, Preece, Thomas and Johnson were booked in an ill-tempered 20 minutes that threatened to turn the game into a brawl.

'Tremendous job'

Then, Foster demonstrated why David Pleat, Luton's manager, considers him a "naturally gifted strong man" who has done a "tremendous job" during his 15 months with the club.

With nine minutes remaining, Luton's captain headed a spectacular equaliser from Hill's free-kick. This persuaded him to go galloping forward, five minutes later, to outjump friend and foe and get his headband to Preece's corner-kick.

Though Newell applied the finishing touch that enabled him to claim the goal, this winner really belonged to Foster. So did the credit for making us forget an undistinguished performance by Everton which, promises Howard Kendall, their manager, "will not happen again."

Meanwhile, Mr Pleat is thinking of starting a campaign to ensure that the referees are shared around the clubs more fairly. "This is the third time in 32 games that we have had Ray Lewis," he complained.

Luton.—Sealey; Johnson, Thomas, Nicholas, Foster, Donaghy, Hill, Newell, Harford, Breacker, Preece.

Everton.—Southall; Harper, Pointon, Van den Hauwe, Mountfield, Richardson, Steven, Lincker, Sharp, Bracewell, Sheedy (Marshall, 43).