

Unbelievable!

Everton dismiss Pleat's 'play-acting' claim

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By JEFF POWELL

GARY LINEKER, the goal-scoring hope of England's World Cup team, last night described as 'unbelievable' Luton manager David Pleat's attack on him and his Everton colleagues.

Pleat, not content with the victory on Saturday which pulled Everton back into a wide-open race for the League title, accused the champions of theatrical behaviour which got his players into trouble with the referee.

After his team took some revenge for their second FA Cup knock-out by Everton in successive seasons, Pleat said:

'A few players were going down as if they had been poleaxed, getting a breather for two or three minutes while they had treatment, then getting up and playing on. As a result I've had four players booked and we're not an over-physical side. If anything, we've been too timid in the past.'

'The PFA have got to sort out players who are conning referees and getting opponents sent off.'

Arguing

Lineker, the victim of the tackles which provoked bookings for Luton match winner Steve Foster and left back Mitchell Thomas, said: 'I can't believe all this. Luton got the result, for goodness' sake. What more do they want?'

Peter Nicholas was also booked for a physical offence and full-back Rib Johnson for arguing with a referee who also incurred Pleat's displeasure.

Luton's manager said: 'There are 83 referees on the League panel but Ray Lewis has already refereed three of our games. He sent off Thomas at Oxford and now he's given us four bookings which seem like a stigma on my team. It's not necessary for any official to referee the same team more than once in 42 League matches.'

Pleat did apologise to the linesman with whom he remonstrated about what he perceived as time wasting by Everton when the defending champions were in the lead.

'I was out of order,' said Pleat. 'But



LUTON manager David Pleat remonstrates with a linesman.

I'm glad we won in the end. Not really for revenge over Everton but because it's good for football to have a close contest for the championship.

'We might be in contention ourselves if we had a goalkeeper as outstanding as Neville Southall.'

Luton—and the clubs pursuing Everton at the top of the table—had Steve Foster to thank for putting the brakes on Howard Kendall's team.

It looked to me as if Foster scored all three goals. But Everton claimed theirs for Kevin Richardson, even though Foster got the last touch into his own net, and Luton gave their match-winner to Mike Newell for a deflection on Foster's second scoring header in the last nine minutes.

Setback

'Even I tend to underrate Steve,' said Pleat. 'He's such a natural, he tends to make the game look easy.'

Foster's determination ended Everton's sequence of 19 games without defeat. The champions also suffered yet another injury set-back when Kevin Sheedy pulled a hamstring.

If they are to hold on to their title under pressure from Liverpool, Chelsea, Manchester United and Arsenal, Everton will have to respond to manager Kendall when he says: 'As a successful run comes to an end, it's important to make the next match the start of another good run.'

LUTON.—Foster (81 mins.), Newell (85). EVER-
TON.—Richardson (46).