

Limpapar dismissal mars first League victory for Arsenal

By Colln Gibson

Arsenal 2 Luton 0

ARSENAL regained a semblance of their championship poise at Highbury last night, but in the process of recording their first victory of the season had Anders Limpar sent off in the second half after 56 minutes.

The Swedish international was dismissed after jutting an elbow into the face of Luton's promising Welsh international Mark Pembridge. Referee Peter Foakes, from Clacton, briefly consulted his linesman before reaching for the red card and consigning Limpar to a three-week suspension next month.

Limpar will also find that his wage packet is somewhat lighter than usual as George Graham, the disappointed Arsenal manager, will be disciplining the winger. Pembridge, who had been involved in an incident with Limpar moments earlier, went down as an Arsenal attack broke up on the edge of the Luton area.

As Limpar left the field to the undeserved applause of the Arsenal fans, Pembridge followed in need of stitches.

Mr Graham, after a fleeting word with the match officials, said: "They told me that Limpar was sent off for punching an opponent. If a player lifts his hands to an opponent then he has no excuse.

"The team could have suffered tonight and experienced players with his talent have got to learn to take stick without retaliating."

David Pleat, the Luton manager, had some compassion for young Pembridge and said: "He needed the stitches during and after the game. He is not a cheat. He was hurt. I've never seen him react to any rough treatment yet."

It was a foolish flash of temper from the Swede, especially as Arsenal were cantering to a victory even though it was not that convincing against the struggling Luton.

After Arsenal's depressing start to the defence of the championship they won with such style last season, they could not have wished for a more accommodating opposition than Luton.

Mr Pleat recognises the weaknesses of the only First Division side that has failed to score this season, and, in their last nine visits, Luton have failed to take a single point away from Highbury.

Even the reinforcements in their defence offered by Peake, signed from Coventry for £100,000, could not rescue Luton from another defeat. They were unfortunate in

conceding the opening goal in the 19th minute when Dixon's cross took a deflection to drop into the path of the alert Merson, who had saved Arsenal from defeat in their opening game of the season with late equaliser against Queens Park Rangers.

Given Luton's inability to score goals, falling behind at that stage did not instil confidence. They conceded their second, which ended the game as a contest, five minutes into the second half.

Despite having five central defenders, Luton failed to deal with a long clearance by Seaman which found its way to Smith who scored his second of the season.

The game then decended rapidly as Limpar took his own retribution on Pembridge for a late challenge and became the third player in Luton's opening four games to be sent off.

Mr Pleat was so concerned that Beaumont, the right back, might add to that statistic that he withdrew him in the 60th minute after he had been booked for a foul on the flying Winterburn.

Arsenal: Seaman, Dixon, Winterburn, Thomas, Linighan, Adams, Rocastle, Davis, Smith, Merson, Limpar.

Luton Town: Chamberlain, Beaumont (Jackson 61), Dreyer, McDonough (Farrell 68), Rodger, Peake, Gray, Preece, Stein, Pembridge, Black.

Referee: P Foakes (Clacton).