

Saints hardly the sinners this time

91/92

THERE was plenty of controversy at the Dell but this time it was not Southampton who were the sinners—the match officials were the villains in a game of six bookings.

It began when Southampton manager Ian Branfoot attacked the “hacks” in the Press for pillorying his side’s discipline, but the worst record in the League is surely not the fault of the media?

Branfoot then seemed to defeat his argument by leaving out Le Tissier, who was sent off in the midweek FA Cup defeat at Norwich. The Channel Islander is now extremely unlikely to play in

England’s friendly in Czechoslovakia on Wednesday.

Luton took the lead after only 44 seconds when, after Moore had fouled Stein, Pembroke curled a 25-yard free kick under the crossbar.

Harford became the first name to go into referee Clive Wilkes’ book. Flowers, clearing the ball, kicked it against Harford, who was turning away from the goalkeeper. But presumably the referee considered it ungentlemanly conduct by Harford.

Dowie later became Southampton’s 66th booking of the season, while Dreyer, Day, Pembroke and Hughes were

Southampton..... 2

Luton..... 1

Christopher Davies

also shown the yellow card. Goalkeeper Day was adjudged to have carried the ball out of his area. From the free kick, Ruddock struck an upright and a corner was conceded. From Powell’s kick, Shearer headed home. Day’s name went into the book for voicing his opinion about the infringement that led to the goal.

Luton were equally unhappy about the winning

goal from Dowie—a former Town striker—in the 83rd minute. Watch it on The Match this afternoon and you will understand the visitors’ frustration.

From Benali’s free kick, Shearer appeared to foul Day, going in with his foot up. Day failed to hold the ball, and with the England centre-forward in an offside position virtually on the goal-line, Dowie stabbed the ball home.

It was the seventh League game this season in which Luton have conceded a costly late goal, and it was easy to sympathise with the visitors, who had played by far the

better football and were the victims of some dreadful officiating.

Branfoot, obviously relieved at seeing his team ease their relegation worries with their 15th point from their last seven games, admitted: “Shearer fouled the goalkeeper and he was off-side.”

David Pleat said: “We were the victims of two unfortunate, questionable decisions. We have seven games to go, and it’s going to be hard for us. We’re going to need consecutive wins, but we all knew the importance of this one. It was like a premature cup final for us.”