

Newell's brave stance applauded by former club

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MIKE NEWELL has been hailed as courageous by former club Everton for speaking out during the transfer bungs scandal, as he prepares to return to Goodison Park in the Carling Cup.

Liverpool-born Newell played for Everton from 1989 to 1991 and brings his confident Luton side to Merseyside for tonight's third round tie.

Everton assistant manager Alan Irvine – who had Newell under his wing while a coach at Blackburn – is not surprised the 41-year-old blew the whistle, when many felt it would

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damage his long-term career as a manager.

Irvine said: "It was very brave what Mike said last season, putting his head on the line like he did.

"He's always said what he thinks, so it wasn't a huge surprise when he said what he did.

"But he has spoken out about something he believes very strongly about, and quite rightly. He's a good, honest lad."

Irvine added: "I coached him at Blackburn, he was a

great centre-forward. If you ask Alan Shearer who his favourite partner was, he'd probably say Mike Newell, with all due respect to the other fine players who have partnered Alan.

"He was so unselfish and did a fantastic job for the team. It was more than just his work-rate, it was his football ability too."

Now Newell will be determined that his Luton side put on a good show against the Premiership's sixth-placed club. Irvine added: "I'm sure it will be a big night for Mike, a game he is very much looking forward to. He's done very

well so far as a young manager and his team have done well – they will be very difficult opponents.

"There have been rumours about him being wanted by bigger clubs and, if he continues to do such a good job at Luton, he will either move up with them or end up at a Premiership club.

"He's shown a lot of ability as a manager, and good luck to him. I've known him since the days at Blackburn when I was a coach and he was playing still. He's a good lad and showing he can be a very good manager.

"His team did very well in the FA Cup against Liverpool last season and, although they eventually lost, it will give them all a lot of confidence because they will know they can play against Premiership teams and do well. That was a great performance against Liverpool.

"It went wrong for them towards the end of the game. Now they know they have another opportunity to cause an upset against us. They are a good team and they know that. They can make life very difficult for us."