

BUTLIN CLINCHES IT



THE GOAL that ensured promotion: Barry Butlin outjumps John Wile to head home the Town's goal at West Brom from a John Faulkner free kick.

Pictures by Harry Dobkin

**PENALTY
'CURED'
FAULKNER**

One header puts the Town up

By BRIAN SWAIN

MATCH DETAILS

WEST BROM 1, LUTON TOWN 1
Half-time: 0-1

BARRY BUTLIN, the striker who leaped from the obscurity of reserve football with Derby to spearhead Luton Town's push for promotion, hit the jackpot on Saturday. He rose to head in his 14th goal of the season — and that was the goal that put the Town back into the First Division 14 years after they left it.

It was a goal good enough to beat West Brom, to end the Town's away matches on a happy note, but the Midlands side were let off the hook because the referee had a stinker of a game, reaching its absurd anti-climax when he gave a penalty from which West Brom equalised. It meant that for the last 18 minutes the Town and their supporters had to sweat as the team held on to the one point it needed to be sure of promotion.

Hold on they did, although in the end it transpired that the day's other results meant that the Town's Division One place would still have been safe even if they had lost.

We didn't know that at the time, and when the Town's point was finally assured, their fans mobbed the players and there were some emotional scenes in the dressing room afterwards.

Grown men, who have battled so long and so successfully, were near to tears as they took it all in — they were now First Division players.

And the fans sang and danced on the pitch, in the streets outside, and then on the train home. It was a noisy, happy rehearsal for last night's triumphant celebration.

And the happiness went some way to wiping out the Town's complaints about referee Kevin McNally, who booked four players and gave a penalty for West Brom 18 minutes from time.

Suffice it to say that little Mr McNally did not have a good game — and the Town manager, players and supporters were still incensed at his decisions

long after the game was finished.

John Faulkner, my man of the match, laid on the Town's goal when he floated a long free kick to the edge of the penalty area. As goalkeeper Latchford went to gather, Butlin nipped in first, and sent his header high into the net.

The Town's skill was too good for West Brom, and with movements sweeping the length of the field, West Brom were lucky to survive.

In three hectic minutes after the interval, Butlin was desperately unlucky not to score a hat-trick, each from chances made by Gordon Hindson, who came on for John Aston.

One shot screamed wide of the post; a neat flick beat keeper and post, and then a header rose just too high.

West Brom were struggling — but they were given the kiss of life by the referee. Willie Johnston cut into the penalty area, where Faulkner barred the route to goal.

Johnston shoved the ball past Faulkner, and then ran straight into the def-

TOWN: Horn, John Ryan, Thomson, Anderson, Faulkner, Garner, Jim Ryan, Husband, Butlin, West, Aston (Hindson for the second half).

WEST BROM: Latchford, Thompson, Wilson, Hughes, Wile, Robertson, Johnston, Tony Brown, Mayo, Alistair Brown, Glover. Substitute: Shaw, not used.

THE GOALS: Barry Butlin for the Town, five minutes, header from John Faulkner free kick; Tony Brown for West Brom, 72 minutes, from a penalty that should not have been given.

ATTENDANCE: 13,227 — and the Luton contingent shouted loud enough for it to seem that Luton were the home side.

REFEREE: Kevin McNally, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire — a keen amateur gardener. He should have stuck to that for his Saturday pastime.

BOOKINGS: John Ryan, for a foul on Willie Johnston; Wilson, for something he said after being penalised for a foul on John Aston; John Faulkner, for a foul on Mayo; Mayo for a foul on Horn. At least two appeals are likely.

ENTERTAINMENT: Fabulous for the Luton fans — but it was a nail-biting 18 minutes after the penalty equaliser.

TOWN'S LEAGUE POSITION — THEY'RE UP.



THE controversial penalty awarded against John Faulkner did have one happy after-effect — it brought him round after half an hour of concussion.

He was injured in a collision with Alan Garner, and played on in the dream world of a concussed man because the Town had already brought on their substitute, Gordon Hindson.

Faulkner had a faultless 90 minutes, and said afterwards: "There were times when I didn't really know where I was. But I knew I had to keep going — and the shock of that penalty decision brought me round."

ender. And that, said the referee, was a penalty.

West Brom could hardly believe their luck — the most they could have expected was an indirect free kick for obstruction. But Tony Brown took the gift, and from then on the Town played it cool to keep the draw they had.

West Brom, despite

having less of the play until then, fought hard, but the Town's defence was rock steady, and Jim Ryan very nearly produced a late winner for the Town with a 30-yarder which whistled over the bar.

MANAGER AND HIS BARGAIN

IN ALL the celebrations at the end of Saturday's game, the picture on the left sums up one of the happiest stories in football: Town captain Bobby Thomson with Manager Harry Haslam.

For Haslam was the man who had enough faith in Thomson's ability to bring him back from the wilderness. "The bargain of the year," smiles Harry, when he talks about the former England full-back.

For Thomson was a free transfer — thrown on to the scrapheap by Wolves and Birmingham, and apparently finished with top class soccer when he went to Walsall on loan.

But Harry Haslam, the man who keeps a long "shopping list" of players worth remembering, signed Thomson and put him straight into the first team.

He became captain of the side, and in the last two seasons he has been the model of consistency. A professional to his boot studs, his cool approach and calm skills have done a lot to put Luton Town back at the top.



SPORT LUTON LEAGUE CUP FINAL

SPORT YOUNG PLAYERS SPARKLE

SPORT RACING AND MORE SOCCER

SPORT OPENING OF THE CRICKET SEASON

On the other
**SPORTS
PAGES**