

Albion's only cheer is Brown penalty

73/74

WEST BROMWICH ALBION played their part in promotion celebrations at The Hawthorns after all. It was not their own success they toasted — that went by the board two weeks ago — but that of Luton who assured themselves of a place in the First Division with their draw.

But what a pity that a piece of soccer history should take place to the accompaniment of that scourge of soccer — the terrace hooligan.

For while Luton were making sure of their place in top class football with a competent performance against disappointing Albion, police were in almost continual action against "renegade" fans.

All the trouble took place at the Smethwick end, where there was a large contingent of Luton supporters.

Several fans were ejected from the ground and at one stage an injured policeman had to be assisted away by his colleagues.

This apart, it was an entertaining enough match although Albion failed, yet again, to produce a two-point performance for the benefit of their followers.

Unguarded

They were, in fact, in trouble as early as the 8th minute when Barry Butlin put Luton in front.

He seized on a misunderstanding between goalkeeper Peter Latchford and centre-half John Wile to float a header into an unguarded net.

From then on Luton steadfastly resisted Albion's equalising attempts until the 71st minute.

Then their strong central defender John Faulkner body checked Willy Johnston as he raced into the penalty area and referee Kevin McNally had no hesitation pointing to the spot.

Tony Brown, Albion's leading goal-scorer, ended the season as he had begun, by earning a point for his club with a firm shot.

Luton fully deserved the point which made First Division football a certainty. Albion just about deserved a point if only for their determination.

Debatable

It was probably not sufficient for the benefit of manager Don Howe who took the controversial decision not to play transfer-listed internationals Asa Hartford and Len Cantello.

Without them Albion were certainly not too efficient in midfield, but it

Albion 1
Luton 1

is debatable whether they would have made all that difference on the day.

Albion's performance was a reflection on their season as a whole. Inconclusive.

They face the future with the need to completely reconstruct their side.

They must find adequate midfield replacements for Hartford and Cantello, and they must find an attacking combination to provide the goals they will need to sustain a promotion challenge next season.

WEST BROMWICH ALBION:
Latchford; Thompson, Wilson,
Hughes, Wile, Robertson, Johnston,
Brown (T.), Mayo, Brown (A.),
Glover, Sub. Shaw.

LUTON TOWN: Horn; Ryan
(John), Thomson, Anderson,
Faulkner, Garner, Ryan (Jim),
Husband, Butlin, West, Aston, Sub.:
Hindson.



● Tony Brown . . . ended season as he started, with a goal.