

BUTLIN'S SALUTE

Bullet's goal spells the big time

West Brom 1 Luton 1 73/74

THE MATCH itself was not as exciting as the outcome. Luton were by far the better side and could have won quite easily had the breaks gone for them.

It was hardly an occasion that will live in the memory as the great day Luton went into the First Division. West Brom, riddled with internal strife, were a dull lot.

A lot of spoiling tactics were used and Luton's dressing room resembled a Red Cross station after a skirmish.

John Faulkner, Peter Anderson, Alan West and Alan Garner all had painful cuts and grazes dressed. Trainer Reg Game was the busiest man in the ground after the match.

Barry Butlin had a tremendous game at centre-forward and almost scored three times in three minutes early in the second half.

But it was in midfield where Luton played their football. Jim Ryan had another outstanding match, with Anderson and West squinting down the sights as they drilled passes through West Brom's defence for Butlin and the hard-working Husband to feed on.

West Brom's attack rarely got a look in with Luton's back four in magnificent form. John Ryan, fast and strong, had West Brom's best player to mark — Willie Johnstone. A couple of times he got past Ryan and crossed accurately. And John was booked in the first half for taking his legs from under him.

Skipper Bobby Thomson, "over the moon" at going back to the First Division where he had such an illustrious

career with Wolves, was cool and skilful, while middle men Alan Garner and John Faulkner played as well as they have done all season.

Celebrations

I made Faulkner Luton's best player on the day — but it was a difficult decision — they all played well.

A black spot on Luton's celebrations was Faulkner's booking for a foul on big centre-forward Mayo. He has now gone over the top of the 12-point limit and is expected

to miss the start of the First Division season.

"I hope to God I don't miss the Leeds match," said John. "I want them." John was transferred to Luton from Elland Road where he had been bought from Sutton to replace the ageing Jack Charlton.

His hopes were crushed by collecting a broken kneecap in his second match against Manchester City.

Alan Garner, strong and mobile, collected a nasty kick in the side while providing Jim Husband with a glorious through ball from which he almost scored Luton's second goal. Husband's shot was scooped off the line by a retreating Robertson.

Spurred on by thousands of Luton voices, the Town attacked from the start, and they went ahead with a characteristic high-leaping header from Bullet Butlin in the fifth minute. The chance came from a Faulkner free kick.

The goal took some of the tension off the Town and they continued to provide all the football. Graham Horn was not over-worked in the Luton goal but what he did he did with confidence.

West Brom's goal came from a Tony Brown penalty. And even that was doubtful. Fussy referee Kevin McNally gave it after the tricky Johnstone had run into Faulkner on the edge of the box and hit the deck as if he had been machine-gunned.

Sore

Mr McNally also booked West Brom's Wilson for arguing after fouling John Aston, and Mayo for a challenge on Horn.

Aston had to stay in the dressing room at half-time because of a recurrence of his knee injury. "It's a bit sore," he said afterwards. "I was struggling. I could run but I couldn't kick properly."

Gordon Hindson took over and did a most capable job. He has been unfortunate to have been out of the side for most of the season.

The worst moment of all for Luton was right at the end. With their fans bellowing for the whistle, West Brom put in an attack. It was broken by Thomson's cool head but the three minutes of injury time that Mr McNally found gave the Luton bench the screaming ab-dabs.

When the whistle finally shrilled the relief was unbelievable. It was like a taut elastic band being snapped.

The players' arms went up in a salute of victory. Coach Roy McCrohan jumped up and down in delight. Hundreds of fans streamed across the pitch — and for once they can be forgiven — and manager Harry Haslam beamed like the Eddystone Light as he shook the hands of the players who have put him in the First Division two short years after becoming a Football League manager.

— ROGER DUCKWORTH

MATCH DETAILS

LUTON TOWN: Horn; John Ryan, Thomson; Anderson, Faulkner, Garner; Jim Ryan, Husband, Butlin, West, Aston (Hindson, half-time).
WEST BROM: Latchford; Thompson, Wilson; Hughes, Wile, Robertson; Johnstone, Tony Brown, Mayo, Alistair Brown, Glover. Sub: Shaw.
Referee: Mr Kevin McNally (Ellesmere Port).
Attendance: 13,227.
Goals: Barry Butlin (Luton, 5 mins), Tony Brown (pen, West Brom, 73 mins).
Bookings: John Ryan and Faulkner (Luton), Wilson and Mayo (West Brom).



The moment when thousands of Luton hearts missed a beat.

Above: John Faulkner and Willie Johnstone go down in a heap and referee McNally has no hesitation in awarding a penalty to West Brom. Luton still say it wasn't a penalty — but (right) Tony Brown gives Graham Horn no chance with the spot kick. That made the scores level at 1-1 but that point was enough to make sure Town were in Division One.

More pictures and a great round-up to Town's glory season in Promotion Post inside tonight's paper.

Pictures:
KEITH DOBNEY

