

Butlin puts Luton up

73/74

West Bromwich 1 Luton 1: by JOHN PATRICK

LUTON GOT the point they need to send them back into the First Division—but not before their nerves had been stretched close to breaking point by the unlikely combination of flying Albion winger Willie Johnston and fussy Cheshire referee Kevin McNally.

West Bromwich, once such dangerous promotion challengers themselves, seemed powerless to stop Luton striding to the victory they wanted, once Barry Butlin had headed them into a seventh-minute lead.

But Mr. McNally set the game alight 18 minutes from the end by awarding Albion a highly debateable penalty after Johnston had run straight into Luton's centre-half John Faulkner.

It is doubtful whether Faulkner, battling gamely on after being knocked cold in an earlier collision with colleagues Graham Horn and Peter Anderson—could have got out of the way even if he had wanted to. And in any case the most he could be accused of was obstruction, which is penalised by an indirect free kick.

But a penalty it was. Tony Brown blasted it in for the equaliser and for the next few minutes the inspired Johnston threatened to ram Luton's shaken defence into the ground.

But thankfully Luton quickly recovered their composure. Jimmy Ryan and Anderson pushed them boldly forward once more and though Mr. McNally made them sweat it out for a good four minutes' of injury time, they got their point in the end.

Their army of fans, who had given them magnificent support, swarmed on to the pitch and Luton came off to be hugged by their proud manager Harry Haslam and coach Roy McRohan.