

Enoch shows 10-man Luton the way ahead

BOURNEMOUTH

0

LUTON

1

Showunmi (84)

By **Bob Williams**

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LUTON survived a first-half red card for central defender Russell Perrett to take a giant stride towards automatic promotion to the Championship.

Substitute Enoch Showunmi's late close-range winner spared Perrett's blushes, kept the League One leaders clear of the pack and if Tranmere fail to win at Brentford on Tuesday, they can start their celebrations.

'I'm not bothered how we go up,' said Luton boss Mike Newell, whose side can still book promotion by beating neighbours MK Dons on Saturday should Tranmere triumph at Griffin Park.

'I'll be at Brentford anyway because we've got them coming up in the next few weeks, but I'll take a helping hand.'

This upbeat scenario seemed rather unlikely when Luton were reduced to 10 men after 23 minutes.

In-form Bournemouth, themselves right in the thick of the play-off chase, began more brightly and Luton keeper Marlon Beresford kept his side in the game with excellent saves from John Spicer and the dangerous Wade Elliott.

And Bournemouth were then given a huge boost when referee Trevor Parkes sent off Perrett.

The Luton centre-back — who was born near Bournemouth and almost joined the club as a youngster — brought down the sprinting James Hayter just outside the area and referee Parkes correctly brandished a straight red card for the professional foul.

Just 60 seconds before his dismissal, Perrett had cleared Elliott's goal-bound shot off the line.

Bournemouth immediately tried to capitalise on their numerical advantage, but Beresford continued to be in inspired form and blocked a 10-yard shot from Garreth O'Connor before tipping wide a 35-yard strike from wing-back Stephen Purses.

At the other end, Steve Howard nearly gave the visitors a lead against the run of play just before half-time but his clever volley was well saved by Bournemouth keeper Neil Moss.

Luton were much more competitive in the second half despite play-

Top of League One

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Luton	42	26	10	6	77	42	88
Hull	41	25	7	9	76	46	82
Tranmere	41	21	12	8	70	50	75
Sheff Wed	42	18	14	10	73	52	68
Hartlepool	42	20	7	15	70	59	67
Bournemouth	42	19	9	14	70	55	66
Brentford	40	19	9	12	49	49	66
Huddersfield	42	17	9	16	66	63	60

ing with a man short, and Ahmet Brkovic headed just over the bar in the 67th minute before Luton substitute Warren Feeney nearly scored against his old club with a 10-yard strike which flew just wide.

The game looked to be heading for a stalemate until another substitute, Nigeria's international striker Showunmi, pounced six minutes from time with a close-range shot that crashed in off the



DON'T LOOK NOW:

Bournemouth's Stephen Purses keeps his eyes shut as he rises for the header to keep out striker Steve Howard

Picture: RICHARD LAPPAS

bar after the home defence had failed to deal with a Kevin Nicholls corner.

Bournemouth poured forward, Spicer shot wide and O'Connor saw a long-range drive saved at the second attempt by Beresford.

Despite the defeat Bournemouth remain in the top six, although Brentford could have a bearing on their destiny too.

The west London club only trail Bournemouth on goal difference yet have two matches in hand.

Bournemouth boss Sean O'Driscoll said: 'I'm very disappointed. We were a better side in the first half but needed to score. But it was difficult with that wind.'

BOURNEMOUTH (5-3-2): Moss; Purses, Howe, Simek, Mills, Elliott (Connell 79min); O'Connor, Browning (Rodrigues 86), Spicer; Fletcher, Hayter. Subs (not used): Stewart, Young, Maher. Booked: Elliott.

LUTON (4-4-2): Beresford; Holmes, Perrett, Davies, Foley; Underwood, Holmes (Showunmi 76), Nicholls, Brkovic (Feeney 62); Vine (Coyne 25), Howard. Subs (not used): Seremet, Leary. Sent Off: Perrett (23min).

Referee: T Parkes (W Midlands).