

Luton upset Palace plans

05/06

By Nick Hoult

CRYSTAL PALACE	1
LUTON TOWN	2

THE talk from Crystal Palace before this match was full of confidence. "Top of the league - I guarantee you," said chairman Simon Jordan. By the evening, "wake-up call" and "collective responsibility" were the buzz-words after Luton Town gave a lesson in humility.

Comments in the match-day programme from Palace's Australian fitness coach John Harbin stirred Luton's indignation. "It will be a bit like a cup final for them," was hardly the most stinging Aussie sledge of the summer, but Luton were inspired.

"They did not show us enough respect and it was a bit degrading," said Luton's captain Kevin Nicholls. With Nicholls driving the midfield and Steve Howard's

aerial presence causing havoc in the Palace defence, Luton are ready for the Championship challenge this season.

Luton had chances to take the lead, including Nicholls' feebly struck 21st-minute penalty, before Howard was left unmarked to head home a Nicholls free kick. Andy Johnson levelled with a close-range header from a corner just after the break, then Palace had opportunities, with Luton keeper Dean Brill saving a Johnson free-kick low down. But Luton struck on the break with Ahmet Brkovic scoring in a goal-mouth scramble 10 minutes from time.

Crystal Palace (4-4-2): Kiraly; Boyce, Hudson (Ward 84), Hall, Borrowdale; Soares (Kolkka 62), Hughes, Watson, McAnuff; Macken (Andrews 84), Johnson. **Subs:** Leigertwood, Speroni (g). **Goal:** Johnson (52). **Booked:** Hudson, Hughes.

Luton Town (4-4-2): Brill; Foley, Davies, Heikkinen, Underwood; Brkovic (Showunmi 88), Nicholls, Robinson, Morgan (Holmes 71); Howard, Feeney. **Subs:** Seremet (g), Vine, Perrett. **Goals:** Howard (44), Brkovic (79). **Booked:** Foley, Underwood.

Referee: P Dowd (Staffs)