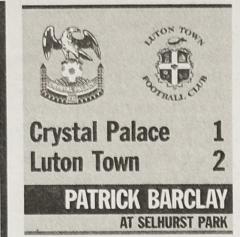
## Palace get off on wrong foot



Winning start... Ahmet Brkovic celebrates after scoring promoted Luton's second goal against Crystal Palace / Jim Keogh



IF Crystal Palace are to meet their chairman's expectations at that stage, having estab- son, the eye was also caught by winning the Championship, they will have to take the Peter Kenyon by declaring: too, remains, along with the lesson in application administered by Luton here. The promoted team displayed more sea's boastful chief executive, Soares, however, had a very his side, though recast due to concentration when defending Jordan was able to back up quiet match and gave way to the late replacement of Chris and infinitely superior move- his claim with plausible argu- Joonas Kolkka around the Coyne by Heikkenen, never ment going forward and might ment: the managerial talent of hour mark. have won by a greater margin.

statuesque, Mike Newell's men mer acquisitions. With Jon ing half a yard on Davies, the alty saved. never lost their composure Macken, Jobi McAnuff and during Palace's best spell of Darren Ward, the club do look the afternoon and gradually at least as well endowed in the built the platform from which Championship as they did in they launched the push for the Premiership, despite the victory that culminated in a loss of Wayne Routledge. close-range winner by Ahmet But they will have to work a Brkovic towards the end.

embarrassment, he would have stave off relegation until the been a very sheepish chairman final few minutes of last sealished himself as a poor man's by young Tom Soares and he, "We will be top of the league skilled and industrious cen-- I guarantee you." Like Chel- tral midfielder Ben Watson. a manager with a future and Iain Dowie, who Jordan hailed No one in Dowie's defence, inferiority. Indeed they ought left Kiraly helpless. Although Andy Johnson as the best in the country; the meanwhile, was as sharp as to have taken the lead before

lot harder than this. Although If Simon Jordan is capable of Johnson's goals did most to

were plainly unjustified.

Watson's set-piece delivery was another source of danger to Luton. But their emergence as the Chelsea of League Two last season identified Newell as exhibited the slightest sense of

cancelled out an opening goal continued presence at the club Newell's tall 20-year-old Cur- Howard performed that serv- which Heikkenen was caufrom Steven Howard, whose of Johnson, who signed a new tis Davies, whose contests with ice a couple of minutes from tioned for curtailing raised the deft aerial work often left Fitz five-year contract last week; Johnson were always worthy the interval; their captain, home supporters' spirits and Hall and Mark Hudson looking and some promising sum- of close attention. After gain- Kevin Nicholls, had had a pen- soon they had an equaliser to

England striker shot into the The opportunity had arisen side netting and, as was the due to an excellent decision tapped to Johnson, the 19case in the Premiership, he by the referee, Phil Dowd, who year-old Dean Brill made a showed he could drop off the waited until Steve Robinson, superb one-handed save, but front to good effect as well; fed his shirt being tugged by Gary at the expense of a corner, by him, McAnuff dashed into Borrowdale, had shot wide which Watson flighted on to the penalty area, where his under these trying circum- the head of Hudson, leaving protestations that he had been stances before pointing to the Johnson to do the rest with a fouled by Markus Heikkenen spot. Nicholls, though, could nod that said normal service, not force the ball past the div- after all the speculation that ing Gabor Kiraly.

was another chance for Luton, been resumed. but again the shot, now from Brkovic, lacked conviction and Kiraly was able to throw himself upon it. Warren Feeney then had an effort deflected wide before Howard got his Luton merited. They were to head to a cross by Nicholls and

A thrilling run by McAnuff

After a free-kick had been he would leave to pursue his Shortly afterwards there international ambitions, had

Howard sent a header into Kiraly's arms before, nudging on another free-kick by the irrepressible Nicholls, he set up Brkovic for the goal that endure the odd scare before the final whistle but always remained the better side.