

All down to style

The domestic season is finally over after the drama and tension of last weekend's play-offs.

But for those teams who went up via the Wembley one-off games - Leicester, Burnley and Wycombe - the hard work has only just begun.

Let's take Leicester first. It's fair to say that they deserve to go up after two successive seasons of heartache.

The supporters celebrated like there was no tomorrow. But Brian Little already had his feet on the ground.

Brian will be well aware of the big, big challenge that they face in the Premiership.

I think he will be mindful of what happened to Swindon and be determined to make sure that does not happen to his team.

Swindon stuck with playing their attractive brand of football.

John Gorman insisted on their possession game and passing the ball but it did not come off.

Brian is a keen student of the game and has used many varying styles.

Whether he will stick with the three centre halves and three big strikers he used at Wembley to conquer Derby I don't know.

Whether it will work in the Premiership is another thing open to debate as well.

What I feel Brian must do is make sure the side get a good start. If they can be mid-table around Christmas that will be fine.

He does not want to get into a situation like Swindon did when they kept losing and only when they bucked up later it was too late as they had too much to do.

I think if things are not going his way in September he should

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assess what has gone on and change their style.

I see their chairman, Martin George, has admitted that £2.5 million or so they will make from going up has to be used on good, quality, players.

That's exactly right. Brian needs some experienced Premiership players.

The teams that went up automatically - Palace and Forest - have already been at that level.

They know the score. People like Eric Young, Nigel Martyn, Andy Thorn, Stuart Pearce, they will pass on valuable information to their colleagues.

They will be wiser than Leicester and unless Brian can get in such people then it is going to be very, very difficult for them to survive.

It will be a big test of Brian's ability. And, for that matter, the likes of Chris Armstrong and Stan Collymore.

Can players like those two do it in the Premiership? It is going to be interesting to find out.

People often say to me: 'Is the gap getting wider between the leagues?'

I point to Newcastle and say they didn't do badly when they went up.

But in that instance Kevin Keegan keep using

money to strengthen his squad. He had the resources. Do Leicester City?

At lower levels it is the same for Burnley and Wycombe.

I have been at Lillleshall this week and have been speaking to Dario Gradi, the Crewe manager.

He was making the point that sometimes you think you are better off if you don't go up because of the weight of expectation and difference in class is too much.

He said promotion brings a lot of headaches.

You have to look at players you can't afford, play against sides who

could be walloping you every week, the fans start to have a go and it can lead to the sack.

Without the resources teams can struggle. Maybe some are better off at a level they know they can play at.

Burnley are, like Leicester, another of those 'traditional' clubs who can bank on excellent support.

They have got experienced players like Adrian Heath and Ted McMinn who will be an asset in the Endsleigh Division One.

I like their manager, Jimmy Mullen, a lot. We played them at QPR in the Cup three times and they were real tactical battles.

If he can continue that approach and use his knowledge to good affect they can make a go of it.

At Wycombe you have to give Martin O'Neill a big pat on the back for what he has done there.

People said he was mad to turn down Forest but he can argue he has been

vindicated.

The idea is that they will do a Barnet, too: have an initial flurry of success then go 'bang'.

I've got this feeling that it won't happen. They are well run on the field and off.

They have some super players, a smart new stadium and a thriving commercial department.

But, like Leicester and Burnley, they will encounter the same problems.

Steve Guppy is a talented player, but at the higher level? We will see.

And when Martin tries to sign to strengthen it is not easy because 1) players are too expensive and 2) they want too much money.

It will be a good test for Martin. Indeed a good test with a lot of questions for all three. As I said earlier, the hard work has only just begun.

■ **DONE HOWE** was talking to **COLIN TATTUM**