

TWO POINTS — BUT TOWN MADE HARD WORK OF IT

Two brilliant headers by Gordon Riddick

By CHILTERN

LUTON TOWN 2, CREWE 1

THIS was a match the Town should have won much more comfortably than they did. They took an early lead, but Crewe scored a surprise equaliser, and Luton had to wait until the 63rd minute for their second goal.

Luton's attack showed a welcome determination, and the pressure they crowded on in the second half should have been better rewarded. Two fine headers by Riddick were all they had to show for their efforts.

More bad luck hit the Town before the start when star winger Graham French was unable to play. His wife is very ill in the Midlands and French is there with her.

So there was a place after all for David Pleat, who was due to be dropped. He stepped into his best position of outside-right.

Yesterday there was a slight possibility that he would be needed for the inside position but Tony Thear, who bruised a foot in training on Tuesday, was ruled 100 per cent fit this morning.

The substitute was George Yardley, who is almost certain to have his trial period extended by another month.

APPLAUSE FOR ALLAN BROWN

This was Allan Brown's first home match in charge and there was a warm welcome for the Town team from a sparse crowd, which did not look like being much over the 4,000 mark.

When Brown walked along in front of the stand to take his place on the trainer's bench there was a burst of spontaneous applause.

In the first minute the Town, looking purposeful in attack and with Thear already having taken over the leadership, there was a close call for Crewe when Thear's shot topped the bar by a matter of inches with Mailey struggling.

CREWE PACKING PENALTY AREA

Crewe's first attack was sparked off by a free kick against Jardine that Gannon crashed against the legs of Riddick. The Town came away with Rioch smartly intercepting a pass in midfield. He set off at top speed but took the ball too far and was robbed.

Crewe were tending to pack their penalty area whenever danger threatened. One shot by Pleat was blocked by this defensive array.

A determined dash upfield by Conboy came to a premature end—but it took a desperate tackle to prevent him getting in a shot.

Then there was a hold-up when Slough was injured, but he made a quick recovery.

Another free kick to the Town, this time for a foul on

TEAMS

LUTON TOWN: Read; Thomson, Jardine; Conboy, Moore, Slough; Pleat, Thear, Riddick, Rioch, Whittaker. Substitute: Yardley.

CREWE ALEXANDRA: Mailey; Marshall, Cuthbert; Bradshaw, Barnes, Gannon; Harley, Archer, Regan, Mahoney, Matthews. Substitute: King.

Referee: Mr. C. H. Nicholls, Plymouth.

Rioch, enabled them to make further ground, but the tall Barnes headed away Moore's high lob.

The Town were looking lively and confident and Mailey pushed around the post a long drive by Slough.

PERFECTLY PLACED HEADER

Then the Town took the lead after eight minutes with a perfectly placed header by RIDDICK from a centre by Conboy. The latter had shown great determination in fighting for possession of the ball before getting it across.

The Town were playing with great spirit and determination, their attack moving freely and looking dangerous almost every time they reached the visiting penalty area.

Both Pleat and Whittaker nearly found a way through and Conboy made a good effort that ended just wide of the woodwork.

There was nearly another goal when Rioch went racing through in great style before finally being frustrated by Mailey.

In the process Rioch was injured and needed attention but was able to carry on.

FULL-LENGTH DIVE BY MAILEY

Still the Town were the more threatening and Mailey was again in action, throwing himself full-length to cut out a fierce low cross from Whittaker with Thear and Rioch close up.

Just twice did Crewe look as if they might improve their



GORDON RIDDICK: Two goals for the Town.

position and on each occasion Regan was just wide.

So far there had been no comparison between the front lines. The Town's was moving smartly, and they were unlucky when Pleat, after beating Cuthbert brilliantly, dropped his centre on to the top of the bar.

A corner to Crewe gave them some encouragement and, after it had been booted out of the penalty area, Marshall tried a long-range shot for which Read, taking no chances, went full length.

More trouble came for Crewe when Whittaker flashed past the faltering Marshall before driving the ball across the face of the goal, too high for anyone to reach it.

It carried over to the right, from where Pleat returned it and Rioch earned applause for an attempted overhead shot which went wide.

CREWE SHOW MORE FIGHT

After a while Crewe began to come into the game a little more, with Mahony having a shot charged down and then sending behind as he was tackled firmly by Thomson.

There was a cruel slice of luck for the Town when Whittaker outstripped all op-

position before crashing in a shot that hit the bar and rebounded into play.

Thear made a great effort to meet it but could not quite get there and the misfortune was really rubbed in in the next minute, the 29th, when Crewe made a sudden breakaway and equalised.

It was one of those speculative sort of shots, by MATTHEWS. It came with considerable force from near the edge of the penalty area and the ball flew into the top of the net, beating Read's almost anguished attempt to reach it.

The Town could count themselves most unfortunate, because had Whittaker's shot been only inches lower they would have been coasting along with a 2-0 lead, instead of which they were back to square one.

MATTHEWS TRIES AGAIN

Obviously it was from Matthews that the Town had most to fear, from his shooting from any sort of reasonable range. He nearly scored again with a similar sort of shot, but this time the ball went just over.

Some of the Crewe tackling was of the rough-and-ready variety and Rioch was receiving rather more of it than most.

The Crewe defence was in a certain amount of trouble again when Barnes had to concede a corner to stop Thear's dash.

Half-time:
LUTON1
CREWE1

There was nearly a shock in the first minute for the Town when Matthews broke clear again and sent across a low centre which Regan missed with the goal yawning in front of him.

There followed a thrust by the Town and a centre by Pleat to which Rioch tried in vain to reach with his head.

GOALKEEPER GLAD TO PUSH OUT

Next attempt for the Town, who were still playing with any amount of enthusiasm, came from Conboy, who cleaved his way through before letting loose a drive that Mailey was glad to push out.

With the Town firmly on the attack Rioch was brought down crudely again, Whittaker's free kick struck a defender on the head and went

How the goals came

RIDDICK for Luton after 8 minutes.

MATTHEWS for Crewe after 29 minutes.

RIDDICK for Luton after 63 minutes

over for a corner which was cleared.

TOWN PUT ON THE PRESSURE

It was now all Luton, crowding on pressure in an attempt to regain the lead. Mailey was kept constantly in action. He punched away a corner by Whittaker, then did well to keep out a drive from Jardine, who had gone right up to join the front line.

Moore had to have attention for a leg injury after he had come out with the ball during one of Crewe's now-rare raids.

Chance for the Town fell to Whittaker but unfortunately not to his left foot. He



had to use his right and got little force behind the ball, which Mailey was able to pick up with complete ease.

CREWE TOUGH IN DEFENCE

Crewe were certainly proving tough customers in defence. They were never afraid to call back most of their resources into the penalty area and this helped to explain why the Town were still not in front.

They nearly did regain the lead when Pleat bobbed up in front of goal to head the ball only inches too high.

Then the long-awaited goal did arrive in the 63rd minute. RIDDICK, not normally regarded at a prolific scorer, notched his second goal of the match. Again it was a brilliantly judged, well-directed header from a centre by Pleat. The winger seemed to have lost possession when he slipped, but he recovered to beat Cuthbert and make a slide-rule centre.

The early work leading to the goal had been done on the left and the ball came across from Whittaker.

This, naturally enough, increased the Town's confidence, and the Crewe goal was now packed with red-shirted defenders. Twice the ball crossed their goalmouth, and on the second occasion Whittaker nearly got a decisive foot to it.

Crewe's efforts at retaliation were mostly confined to breakaway, occasionally dangerous, as was one in which Matthews produced a low drive that Read fell on.

SIGNS OF PANIC IN CREWE TEAM

There were signs of panic in the Crewe defence when Cuthbert, scarcely under pressure, gave away a corner with a back pass that was nowhere near the gallant Mailey.

There was further trouble for Crewe when Rioch made a run down the left wing to centre low in the direction of Thear, but Cuthbert got there first and booted the ball behind.

Still the pressure continued, with Riddick hot after a hat-trick, as he rose high to try to make contact with a centre from Whittaker.

Most of the not considerable trouble that was being experienced by the Town defence was coming from Matthews, who was shooting on sight—and with a deal of accuracy too. A low drive from him, following some too-fanciful work in defence, was far too close for comfort.

That apart, though, the Town were on top and they nearly got another goal when Rioch made yet another shot that Thear just got a touch to as it passed him. Mailey had to throw himself hurriedly full-length to push the ball around a post. From the

corner, placed right under the bar by Whittaker, the goalkeeper was equally well prepared, making a fine catch.

RIOCH IN THE PICTURE

Rioch was much in the picture. First he brought Mailey into action with a shot from 25 yards, then, shrugging off a couple of attempts to obstruct him, he made ground before falling victim to a hard tackle on the edge of the penalty area.

When Crewe broke away Read showed good anticipation by coming out to snatch the ball away from the feet of Regan.

TOWN DRIVEN ON DEFENSIVE

As the closing stages were reached, Crewe began to rally strongly, which for a time had the effect of driving the Town back on to the defensive. As a result nothing got through to Read.

When Conboy came upfield Crewe always had to look out for trouble. Once he found his way to the edge of the penalty area and then missed a post by a very narrow margin.

Conboy again joined the forwards to send away Whittaker, from whose centre Riddick was very much on the mark again with his head. This time, though, he could not force in past Barnes, and Mailey was able to pick up.

With only three minutes to go the Town launched another all-out offensive—which, of course, was what they wanted at this critical juncture. Mailey only just prevented a terrific drive by Jardine getting in between him and the near post.

Then a header by Riddick was cleared off the goal-line by Barnes and in a scene of great excitement Thear also had an attempt pushed away when it seemed that a goal was a near certainty.

Crewe then made their last desperate effort, and in a terrific mix-up in front of goal, with Read out and Moore on the ground, Regan missed a gilt-edged opportunity by putting over from point-blank range. Result:

LUTON 2
CREWE 1