

Crewe reel as Luton score four

67/68

By ROGER DUCKWORTH

Luton Town 4, Crewe Alexandra 0

EYES SPARKLING with emotion, Luton Town's victorious footballers last night did a lap of honour round the Kenilworth Road pitch to the accompaniment of the biggest cheer heard in Luton since the Town reached the FA Cup Final nine years ago.

For at 9.14pm the final whistle shrilled to end one of the most exciting nights in the history of the club. Luton's handsome win over once-feared Crewe made them Fourth Division champions beyond any doubt.

P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
43	26	12	5	83	38	64

Anyone who was at Kenilworth Road last night will never forget the occasion. And there were nearly 19,000 present.

The scenes of rejoicing at the end would normally have overshadowed memories of much of the game. But this one was so good that its highlights will be imprinted for many, many seasons by all who saw them. What a match — what a brilliant first half!

If Bruce Rioch could be crowned King of Luton, he would be enthroned today. For Rioch had a magnificent night in scoring two wonderful goals, laying on a third and going so close on several occasions that Crewe goalkeeper Willis Mailey will need a rest cure to recover from his barrage.

Skipper Terry Branston, who has been such an inspiration to the side, was carried shoulder-high round the pitch by his team-mates to a deafening roar from the fans.

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Afterwards, a glass of champagne in his hand, Terry said: "What a night! What a game! Weren't they great? And what about the crowd? They are the greatest!"

And manager Allan Brown, beaming happily, said: "We've done it. What a triumph! All the players have given me 100 per cent effort. Now we want to break the record for the number of points scored for promotion. We want 67 — then I'll be satisfied."

This was Luton's finest hour for years — both on and off the field. They went ahead in the eighth minute through John Moore. Until then you could cut the atmosphere with a knife. You could almost smell it.

I don't think any team — and I mean any team — in the land would have beaten Luton in last night's mood — and the tension wasn't really released until Mr Daniels blew that final blast.

Luton's performance fitted the occasion. And every credit must be given to Crewe for the way they took their biggest hiding of the season. They were ruffled but always played good football. They were the most sporting side to visit Kenilworth Road this season.

The Luton crowd was silenced just once — when Gordon Wallace, Crewe's best forward, netted in the fourth minute. But he was well offside,

and Town used this reprieve as the starting gun for an all out assault.

A foul on Allen brought Luton's first. Slough tapped the ball to Rioch who blinded at goal so hard that the diving Mailey could not hold the ball and Moore darted in to score an easy goal.

In the 20th minute Luton's second goal came in an almost identical manner. Outside the penalty area Slough slipped a short free-kick to Rioch who thumped the ball past Mailey with the help of a deflection off Curley.

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Eight minutes later a French shot was only parried by the obviously rattled Mailey following a Buxton run. Ray Whittaker won a corner and after a terrific goalmouth scramble, in which Ian Buxton tried a header from a lying position, Slough banged the ball home.

And after a further eight minutes a Rioch first-timer was screaming goalwards when a defender risked decapitation by keeping his head in the way.

The goal of the night came a minute before the interval. And it was that man Rioch again. Racing through the middle he chased a perfect pass from Buxton, took it in his stride, and hammered it into the roof of the net from near the penalty spot.

The second-half made up in sheer endeavour what it lacked in goals. All the Luton forwards went close. Slough also showed himself to be a considerable marksman, as did John Moore who was always ready to have a go.

With eight minutes to go Rioch was inches off a hat-trick when he chased a through ball and shot over the top with his right-foot.

Seven minutes from time Slough left the field suffering with cramp to be replaced by Billy McDerment.

Tony Read made a fine flying save to a hard shot from Wallace when he tipped it over as he jumped backwards.

This is the sort of football of which champions are made. Remember these Luton Town names, for they provided a night to remember.

Read; Dougan, Jardine; Slough (McDerment), Branston, Moore; French, Buxton, Allen, Rioch, Whittaker.

Crewe: Mailey; Lowry, Ratcliffe; Stott, Barnes, Gannon; McHale, Curley, Regan, Wallace, Dearden. Sub: Tarbuck.

Referee: Mr B. H. Daniels (Rainham).

Attendance: 18,904.