

HOPES DASHED BY INJURY TO BRANSTON

Town attack was out of touch

By CHILTERN

CREWE ALEXANDRA 2, LUTON TOWN 1

JUST what would have been the outcome of this vital match at Gresty Road on Saturday had Branston not received a severe ankle injury just after the interval, can only be a matter for speculation.

However, it seems reasonable to assume that the Town would have been able to hold on to the point that would have opened the door for them to set up a new Fourth Division record by beating Brentford on Saturday.

Until the mishap to Branston reduced his effectiveness a great deal, the Crewe leader, Talbot, recalled after a spell out of the team, had been rarely dangerous.

This despite the fact that he obtained the first goal after 40 minutes, though it was a rather scrambled effort, leaving the suspicion that something positive should have been done to prevent it.

Particularly did one think that there should have been a decisive move from Read, who remained on his goal line.

Any thoughts that cock-a-hoop Crewe would build on that to a convincing victory were dimmed three minutes later when RIOCH added yet

another great goal to his total when he took a pass from Whittaker in his stride and left Mailey helpless with a great rising drive.

HAD REASON TO BE PLEASED

So, although Crewe, with great incentive driving them on, had been the more dangerous almost throughout the first half, the Town had reason to be pleased with their position at the interval, even though their form had been below their best.

There had to be some readjustment in thinking immediately after the re-start when Branston, racing across to intercept, could not stop himself over-running into the boundary wall and into the crowd.

After a stoppage, he resumed with a decided limp, came off to have an ankle strapped and, afterwards, proceeded rather gingerly.

To try to combat that, the Town withdrew to more defensive positions, with Allen coming back and Rioch taking up more of a striker's role, though he was often required in defence, too.

TALBOT MADE THE WINNER

As a result, play ran Crewe's way almost entirely, with Talbot becoming increasingly prominent. Even so, it was not until 17 minutes from the end that the tension was broken and they secured what proved to be the winning goal.

Talbot brought the ball along the deadline before centring to McHALE, who had time in which to pick the spot for his header.

Appeals that Talbot had taken the ball out of play were turned down and there was never much hope of the Town gaining a point after that. It seemed that Branston conceded that because, eight minutes from the end, he limped off and Potter came on to substitute.

CREWE WERE OVER-ANXIOUS

Even though the defence was not completely certain under pressure, while Branston was 100 per cent fit, serious trouble did not seem all that likely, especially as Crewe were over-anxious in their finishing.

Slough showed a measure of improvement on recent form, Moore was adequate and so, up to a point were Dougan and Jardine, though a certain amount of pressure was thrown on to the defence

as a whole by the ineffectiveness of the attack.

In this department, only Rioch was in anything like his best form because neither wingers was effective, Green was completely in the grip of Barnes and Allen, though industrious enough, did not accomplish a great deal.

CREWE ALEXANDRA: Mailey; Lowry, Leigh; Stott, Barnes, Gannon; McHale, Bradshaw, Talbot, Wallace, Ratcliffe. Substitute: Tarbuck.

LUTON TOWN: Read, Dougan, Jardine; Slough, Branston (Potter), Moore, French, Allen, Green, Rioch, Whittaker.

Referee: G. C. Kew, Leeds.
Attendance: 8,634