

VITAL POINTS MISSED BY THE TOWN

CREWE 2, LUTON TOWN 0

By CHILTERN

68/69

ANOTHER thoroughly disappointing away performance by the Town, which was much in character with the majority of those on opponents' grounds this season, led to their defeat at Crewe last night, and provided another setback in their bid to mount a promotion challenge. Once again, the main trouble stemmed from lack of penetration in attack, which threw extra weight on a defence which was never as certain as it can be.

The pitch at Crewe was soft and slippery, but no more than that.

In the first ten minutes neither team had shown signs of taking command, though an ill-judged back-pass by Bradshaw put Crewe in trouble until Mailey came out quickly to snatch the ball away from Allen.

DIFFICULT

Using fast, direct tactics, Crewe were beginning to get on top, and after Dougan, under pressure, had conceded another corner, Gannon, from close on 30 yards, gave Davie quite a difficult task.

Some improvement by the Town brought them a corner on the right which Harrison came across to take left-footed, and his inswinger was snatched out of the air by Mailey.

With 32 minutes gone, Buxton was injured, but was able to continue, and the next incident came at the other end where Davie was not extended in dealing with a long shot by Curley.

To a marked extent it had become near stalemate, with few clear cut chances being created, and defences, tackling hard, mostly on top.

Certainly, play was rugged, rather than entertaining, and Crewe continued to have the edge, slightly, and Bradshaw, with a first-time effort, whipped the ball just wide of the near post.

Then, suddenly, a good chance cropped up for the Town when Allen made a slide-rule through pass to Slough who raced fast on to it, but with Mailey coming out to near the penalty spot to challenge, he lifted the ball over the top.

Mailey, about whose fitness there had been some doubt, was hurt, and there

CREWE ALEXANDRA:
Mailey; Lowry, Leigh; Stott, Barnes, Gannon; Curley, McHale, Hollett, Tarbuck, Bradshaw. Sub: English.

LUTON TOWN: Davie; Dougan, Bannister; Slough, Branston, Moore; Lewis, Keen, Buxton, Allen, Harrison. Sub: McDerment.

Referee: J. H. Yates, Redditch.

was a hold-up while he was attended to.

Towards half-time there was some quite desperate Town pressure, but it all looked too hurried, and then came a difficult situation from a quick Crewe break in which a centre by Bradshaw was saved by Keen heading over his own bar.

Half-time:

CREWE	0
LUTON TOWN	0

From the start of the second half the Town were forced back on to the defensive, and Crewe, helped on by a disputed free-kick, gained a corner on the left.

Curley placed it accurately and as the ball came over high, Davie got both hands to it, was hustled and possibly impeded, by Hollett, and the ball bounced loose to STOTT who had time to breast it down, and then drive the ball into the roof of the net to put Crewe ahead after 50 minutes.

Davie was hurt in the process, and appeals by the Town that he had been fouled, met with no response from the referee.

For the free-kick that led up to the goal, the referee seemed to reverse his decision on a signal from the linesman.

Certainly the goal had given Crewe added confidence, and playing in tearaway style, they kept the Town defending with

McHale shooting a couple of feet wide.

Most danger to the Crewe goal came from a long free-kick by Dougan for a foul on Lewis, and Mailey somewhat haphazardly, punched over.

A better movement by the Town between Slough and Harrison brought a header by Buxton that struck Barnes and went for a corner.

With the Town now all out for an equaliser, this was followed by another, for which both Branston and Keen went up in the penalty area.

This left a gap in defence, utilised by a quick breakaway by Crewe, during which it was as well that Dougan was in the line of flight of a shot by Lowry.

With 64 minutes gone there came another blow, perhaps the crowning one to the Town's hopes, when TARBUCK put Crewe two up.

He fastened on to a through pass by Bradshaw, and Davie, who seemed to have the ball covered, got two hands to it, but it slipped under his hand and off the post into the net.

A desperate bid by the Town nearly brought the goal that would have put them back in the game, because Mailey went full length and just managed to finger tip around the post a header by Keen.

Keen resumed limping after a desperate Town attack in which a terrific drive by Harrison struck Lowry.

In the last few minutes the Town did make some show of defiance in attack, and they were unlucky when a corner by Harrison, taken on the right, beat everybody, and hit the outside of a post first bounce.

Attendance: 5,053.