

The away bogey strikes again

**Crewe 2
Luton Town 0**
By **ROGER
DUCKWORTH**

IF YOU WANT IT in one sentence — Luton Town were run off the rails by Crewe Alexandra after the Northerners had taken the lead by default.

Now the Town's promotion chances are as slender as Twiggy, and even their most ardent supporters must be able to see them bending under the breeze of failure.

The display last night, in which they lost 2-0 to one of the least rated sides in the Third Division, was a-la-Shrewsbury, where they also played as if they had something on their minds, and lost 3-1.

When you are chasing titles, you cannot leave places like Crewe and Shrewsbury pointless. You must expect at least a draw and quietly think you are going to win.

They began at great pace last night, but few chances were created. Crewe surprised their own fans by matching Luton for pace, and often outdoing them when it came to skill and honest endeavour.

Outshone

Everything was done at great pace, and the Town might have benefitted had they slowed down to think. After 20 minutes Luton began to fade. They lost every bubble of their early fizz as their passing became abominable.

Most horrible thing of all arises when you tot up the cost of Luton's attack last night: Lewis (£20,000), Keen (£18,500), Buxton (£12,000), Allen (nothing), Harrison (£9,000). That's £59,500 worth of forwards — and last night they couldn't hold a light to Crewe's low-priced triers.

What was missing was basic effort — and the will to succeed. You could see the smile spreading right across Crewe's face as they realised they could win, and skip away from the grasping fingers of relegation.

After Crewe had held Town's initial show of aggression, they had little to worry about, and very nearly went ahead in the 25th minute when goalkeeper Sandy Davie committed himself on the edge of the box, only to be beaten by McHale. Alan Slough did well to head a Curley centre off the line, and then Tarbuck's tremendous shot was blocked on the line.

Six minutes before half time Keith Allen pushed a peach of a pass, through for the speeding Slough, but he banged his chance over the top as Mailey, who very nearly didn't play, rushed out at him, arms waving like a bogey man, to spoil his aim.

Clouted

And that was the first half, that was. Early promise between Ian Buxton and Mike Harrison fell away as Buxton found himself well and truly trapped by centre half Barnes, who played him like a master. Allen worked hard with good intentions, while Lewis achieved little as a winger under the firm handling of full back and captain Leigh.

Crewe went ahead six minutes after the interval in a most unsatisfactory manner. A Curley corner sparked off a goalmouth tangle in which Davie did well to collect the ball. But he was then clouted lustily in the small of the back, and the ball shot out of his hands like wet soap.

It dropped invitingly to the feet of Stott who drove it

gleefully into the roof of the net. Referee John Yates of Redditch would not listen to Luton's protest. He told Town skipper Terry Branston: "I saw nothing and my linesman did not flag."

Half a minute earlier it had been the flag of that same linesman that brought about the goal. Slough and Hollett rose together to head a high-bouncing ball. The referee, in close attendance, awarded Luton a free kick. But the linesman signalled that it should be the other way, and it was from this move that the corner arose.

Luton tried to fight back, and Keen had hard luck with a couple of headers, and Buxton and Slough combined well to no avail.

Dishevelled

Then, in the 65th minute, the nippy Tarbuck chased a neat through pass from Bradshaw, and shot low at Davie. The Luton goalkeeper seemed to have the ball covered, but it somehow slithered under his chest into the net.

From then on dishevelled Luton had nothing to offer. They were outplayed in attack and owned a defence that was always willing to work, but was always liable to make mistakes. Crewe's confidence mounted with every Luton move that faded — usually around the halfway line.

Why can't Luton play away from home? That is one of the imponderables of the season. It's got something to do with lack of effort from the attack leaving the defence over-worked.

Full backs Max Dougan and Jack Bannister had fair nights, as did Terry Branston in the middle. Enough said!

Crewe: Malley; Lowry, Leigh; Stott, Barnes, Gannon; Curley, McHale, Hollett, Tarbuck, Bradshaw. Sub. Inglis.

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

Referee Mr J. Yates (Redditch).

Attendance 5,053.



MIKE HARRISON
... best forward