

LUTON ON TARGET FOR A GLORY RUN

78/79 (FLC)

LUTON 2, CREWE 1 By ERIC HARRIS

LUTON MANAGER David Pleat will be dreaming of another home tie when his team go into the hat for tomorrow's draw for the fourth round of the Football League Cup.

Crewe's hopes of glory were ruined by their 2-1 defeat at Kenilworth Road last night — but the scoreline did no justice to the Town's almost complete domination over their Fourth Division visitors.

Luton maintained their unbeaten home record against Crewe's stubborn resistance and another home draw in the next round must give them a fair chance of reaching the last eight for the first time in their history.

The slim margin of Luton's victory was, perhaps predictable.

Playing with only two front-runners, Crewe obviously came for a replay — and it was only two goals in as many minutes at the start of the second-half which prevented the Town travelling for a replay at Gresty Road next week.

Crewe's Fourth Division colleagues, Wigan Athletic, provided a similar hurdle in the third round when Luton had to wait patiently for the goals.

Crewe came to enjoy themselves and played well above their lowly Football League status.

But their manager, Harry Gregg, was bitterly disappointed after the match.

"Moral victories don't count in my life," he said. "I have no time for people who say 'Luton won 2-1 and should have done.' We conceded two goals in two minutes and that killed us."

Patience was the key to Luton's passage into the next round.



■ The clincher! Bob Hatton (right) jumps to nod Luton's vital second goal

One-two kills Crewe

Showing flair in their build-ups from midfield, the Town were continuously frustrated by Crewe's packed defence in the first-half.

Apart from their goal — scored from a penalty in the second-half — Crewe managed to test Milija Aleksic only twice throughout the whole game, while his opposite number, Peter Caswell, was on the receiving end of a continuous barrage of shots and crosses.

It would have been easy for Luton to have shown their frustration in the first-half.

David Moss, who gave Crewe's veteran player coach,

Warwick Rimmer, a roasting, often switched flanks and caused many problems with his pin-point accuracy.

But Crewe, with limited ability, ran at everything and, while some of their tackling showed little finesse and often went unchecked by the referee, they were clearly in no mood to give Luton anything from 50-50 balls.

Luton survived an early scare in the fifth minute when Kevin Tully's shot was parried by Aleksic.

The ball ran loose to Denis Nelson, but the keeper caught his angled chip.

That was the total of Crewe's first-half attacks.

After 30 minutes, the Town almost scored following a brilliant move which stemmed from a long ball from Ricky Hill which found Moss wide on the left.

He supplied Bob Hatton with a precision pass and, although he had only an angled view of the goal, shot just wide with a fierce drive.

And so it continued. Mark Aizlewood's low shot was saved, Paul Price shot over and Hill pumped the ball wide.

Gregg was satisfied to go in

at half-time all square. But his confidence was shattered at the start of the second half when Luton took the lead.

Alan West, who gave a perfect illustration of stability in midfield, did well under pressure to feed Fuccillo with a delicate ball.

Fuccillo, also crowded out by defenders, beat two men before finding Hill 25 yards out.

Hill briefly looked up, saw the goal, and beat Caswell's outstretched arms with a shot into the corner of the net.

Crewe didn't have time to settle before the Town

knocked in a second two minutes later.

Price supplied a cross from the left and Bob Hatton gratefully accepted an easy chance to head past the keeper.

Crewe reorganised after that two-goal blast. Gregg sent on Peter Coyne for Tully and pushed Bernard Purdy up to join the attack.

Caswell brilliantly saved Stein's diving header before the young striker had another effort disallowed.

But, after 70 minutes, Crewe were suddenly back in the game when Mal Donaghy's inexperience resulted in a penalty when he brought down Steve Wilshaw.

Paul Bowles smashed the ball past Aleksic and, briefly, that Gresty Road replay looked like reality.

But Luton's late composure allowed Moss to put in another shot which swerved wide before he appeared to be knocked off the ball by Ian Roberts.

MATCH DETAILS

LUTON: Aleksic; Price, Aizlewood, Hill, Turner, Donaghy, West, Fuccillo, Stein, Hatton, Moss. Sub: Jones.

CREWE: Caswell; Bevan, Roberts, Rimmer, Bowles, Wilshaw, Davies, Purdie, Nelson, Tully (Coyne), Robertson.

Referee: A. Gray (Gorleston).

Goals: Hill (46), Hatton (48). Crewe ... Bowles (70).

Attendance: 6,602.



■ Brian Stein in the centre of the action as he challenges for the ball