

Luton pass the Lawrence test

96/97

LENNIE Lawrence, Luton's manager, laid things on the line before the coming of Crewe to Kenilworth Road. "Without a doubt," he forecast sternly in the match programme, it will be "one of the most difficult tests of the whole season."

Then his players made him look a bit of a chump. Luton won 6-0 while Crewe, obligingly, had two men sent off and defended horribly. Crewe, by and large, were not much of a crew.

Lawrence, however, was unruffled. He surfaced an hour after the game, hair-dryer in hand, to say: "Crewe simply caught us on a good day. They found us in irresistible form."

Luton's 10th win in 12 home games lifted them into third place in the Second Division, and if they were even moderate travellers they would now be sitting comfortably on top. They have lost twice at home but won only twice away.

Crewe never looked quite sure what day of the week it was. They were three goals down before they were reduced to 10 men; and five adrift before they lost a second man. They allowed Luton almost more space than they knew what to do with; and even 50-50 balls seemed to be 70-30 in Luton's favour.

Words of caution
are unnecessary
says **Bryon Butler**

Luton, nonetheless, maintained a strong shape, played intelligently from the back, supported well and always had a tidy touch. "They were brighter and technically better," said Crewe manager Dario Gradi.

Tony Thorpe, who began the season as a midfield irregular, was the main beneficiary. His hat-trick was cockily taken and raises his total for the season to 16, which makes him the division's leading scorer.

Crewe, whose away form is even poorer than Luton's, were left without excuse, though Luton's third goal, Thorpe's second, from the penalty spot was rough justice. Once referee Steve Bennett had decided that Shaun Smith's tackle on Dwight Marshall was out of order then the Crewe defender, his side's last in line, had to go.

Luton: Feuer; James, Davis, Johnson, Thomas; Alexander, Waddock, McLaren, Showler; Marshall (Grant 72), Thorpe (Oldfield 76). **Sub:** Linton. **Goals:** Thorpe (21, 30 pen, 61), Alexander (2), Showler (65), Oldfield (90).

Crewe: Kearton; Barr (Unsworth 33), Westwood, Macauley, Smith; Garvey (Little 67), Murphy, Charnock, Launders; Moralee (Billing 76), Adebola. **Booked:** Charnock. **Sent off:** Smith, Westwood.

Referee: S Bennett (Dartford).