



HE'S AN OLD MASTER . . . Luton's David Oldfield celebrates after stunning Crewe with a third minute opener — his first goal for over two months



GOING UP . . . Ashley Westwood beats Luton's defence

LENNIE'S LET-OFF!

Lawrence admits fortune

LENNIE LAWRENCE watched his Hatters crumble in a nightmare second half — then admitted they got off extremely lightly.

Luton threw away the lead, conceded two goals in 14 minutes and had defender Julian James red carded in a cracking Division Two play-off showdown.

Boss Lawrence admitted: "We got away with it at the end of the day. It's not a disaster.

"If Dele Adebola had scored rather than hit the bar late on, we would have had a mountain to climb.

"But we still have a chance on Wednesday."

Physical

Lawrence added: "We pulled through because of the massive physical effort.

"And to be fair, it was hard with only 10 men against a very good team who could make their advantage count."

But Crewe will go into the return clash at Kenilworth Road in a couple of days brimming with confidence after

bouncing off the ropes. Manager Dario Gradi said: "This must be our year for a bit of luck in the play-offs. I really hope it holds.

"The second leg will be a footballing match because Luton are no more capable of kicking us off the park any more than we are.

"And I think that there will be goals in it. But we've got to be content with a 2-1 lead."

David Oldfield gave Luton a dream third-minute lead by thumping in his first goal for over two months.

Crewe keeper Jason Kearton could only parry a low cross from dangerman Andy Fotiadis and Oldfield pounced from just six yards to net.

But Mark Rivers netted Crewe's 53rd-minute equaliser with a cracking drive after good work from Shaun Smith.

And then disaster struck for Luton just three minutes later with James being dismissed for his second bookable offence, a foul on Rivers.

Gradi's men, in the play-offs for the third successive year, then took the lead with a

close-range goal from Colin Little. It was his first strike since last year's play-offs.

Frontman Adebola had two great chances to fire a third for Crewe.

He was denied by a superb save from giant keeper Ian Feuer and then hit the woodwork with an effort just nine minutes from time.

Crewe also carved a number of gilt-edged chances in the first half after Luton lost skipper Gary Waddock through injury after just eight minutes.

Marginal

Adebola was given the benefit of a marginal offside verdict only to be foiled by Feuer who saved bravely at his feet.

And when central defender Steve Macauley broke forward, he just failed to latch on to an excellent low cross from Lee Unsworth.

Luton, who seemed so certain of grabbing an automatic promotion place earlier in the campaign, always looked dangerous on the break — but fell to pieces after the interval.

GORDON BURNETT at GREASY ROAD
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96/97 (90)