

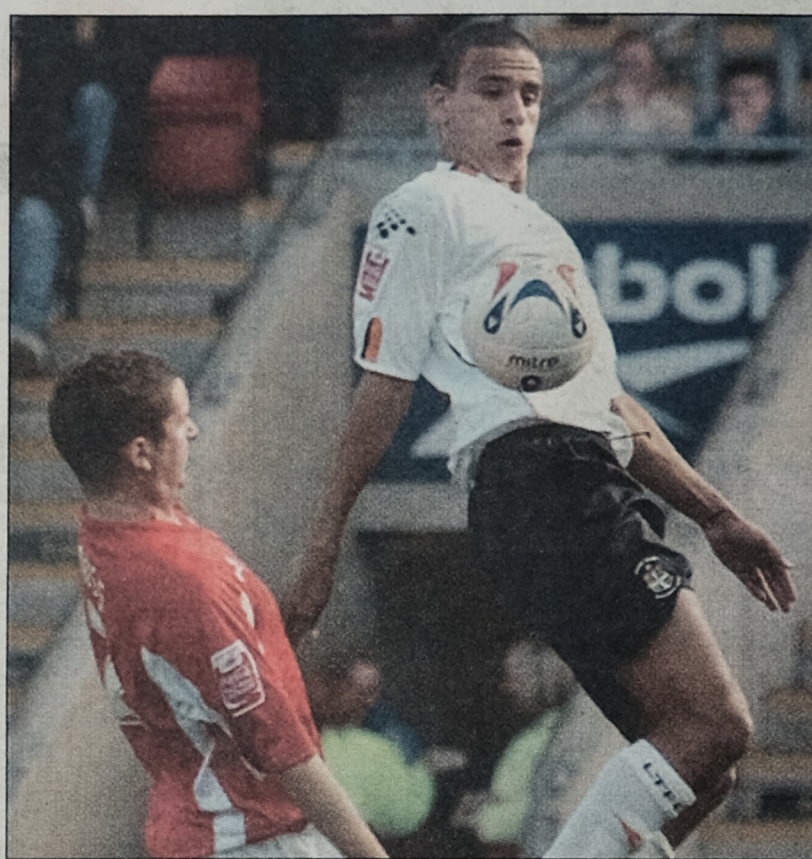
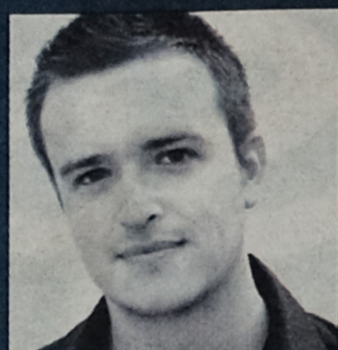


Luton Town FC

Crewe 3 - Luton 1

TOM LEECH reports

from Gresty Road



Subs: Foley (Morgan 65m), Showunmi (Feeney 70) Subs not used: Brill, Perrett, Vine

MAN OF THE MATCH

CARLOS EDWARDS

Professional job filling in at right back, a threat going forward

■ Action shots of Dean Morgan who put Hatters ahead in controversial circumstances

Hatters off the rails at Crewe

05/06

LOWLY Crewe Alexandra snatched only their second home win since the start of the season with two goals in the dying minutes as away-day specialists Luton Town were made to pay for spurning a series of chances in the first half.

The Hatters had won four games on the road before yesterday and after a storming opening 45 minutes were favourites to toast victory again as Dario Gradi's Crewe went in at the break fortunate to be on level terms.

But the home side took full advantage of a series of missed chances by Luton when captain Kenny Lunt and substitute Luke Varney struck late on.

Manager Mike Newell insisted that his men had just had an 'off day'.

The former Crewe player said: "I could smell a problem was coming in the dying minutes. You feel you've had your chances but not taken them and their 'keeper's made some great saves and that the luck's not with you."

"But we've been guilty of not taking our chances today. The way we're playing is good but there's no end product at the moment."

"The lads have had an off day - it happens. We've played 12 games and now people expect us to come to places like Crewe and win

easily. But in this league teams have the quality to hang in there when they're under pressure then punish you.

"They didn't have a lot to cause us problems but if you don't take your chances it will come back to haunt you

"Defeat always hurts but sometimes you need one to remind everybody of what we've achieved so far this season."

Newell's starting 11 remained unchanged from the side that beat Cardiff 2-1 before the international break, and began full of confidence.

Despite Crewe's helpful defence Hatters were finding it harder to beat on-loan goalkeeper Ben Williams. Feeney was thwarted on a couple of occasions and Steve Howard's goal-bound header was clawed away by Crewe's agile shot-stopper from Manchester United.

Brilliant

A brilliant piece of skill by Dean Morgan on 22 minutes deserved to break the deadlock but Williams was there again to block the winger's powerful drive after he'd left his marker for dead with a clever dummy.

Morgan finally did put Luton ahead on 29 minutes but in controversial circumstances.

Ahmet Brkovic crossed to the far post for Morgan to chest past his marker and prodded the ball wide of the on-rushing Williams.

The Gresty Road crowd were adamant Morgan had used his arm to control the ball and subsequently booed him until he

was substituted on 65 minutes for Kevin Foley - back for his first appearance since late August after injury.

Crewe hit the crossbar twice in the first half through Mark Rivers' shot and Stephen Foster's header and in the 37th minute Lunt's long free kick bobbled around the penalty area for Billy Jones to slide in to exploit Luton's hesitancy.

Feeney should have put the Hatters back in the driving seat just before half time when put through by Howard but the Northern Ireland international's weak effort was comfortably saved.

The first half of innovation and flair made way for a second period of boredom. Neither looked like making any headway and on 75 minutes Howard missed a chance that summed up a frustrating afternoon.

A corner was floated in and the normally lethal striker was unmarked on the penalty spot. But his shot was so off target it sailed past the stands and on to the railway track behind it.

And Luton's gameplan went totally off the rails on 88 minutes when Crewe sub Luke Rodgers broke into the box before crossing on to the head of the diving Lunt who beat Marlon Beresford all ends up.

It got worse just before the final whistle as Luton pushed forward looking for a point.

Rodgers was again the provider as he beat Markus Heikkinen before laying the ball off to fellow substitute Varney. The midfielder made no mistake from 15 yards out coolly slotting past Beresford.



■ Ahmet Brkovic and Chris Coyne are beaten to the ball