

WILL THEY? WON'T THEY? YES, THEY DID!

TOWN'S GOALS WERE A VERY LONG TIME COMING

Turner Marks His 200th League Appearance

By Chilern

Luton Tn - - - 3 Aston Villa - - - 0

THE Kenilworth-road attendance slumped again this afternoon, when the Cup-holders, Aston Villa, were the visitors, despite the tonic of that draw at Wolverhampton last Saturday. Wide open spaces were apparent all round the ground when the teams came out, and it looked perhaps as if that Cup-tie dismissal hangover had still not been dispersed.

Villa, hit by injuries, particularly to stalwart defenders Dugdale and Aldis, had to make a late change in the end. Pat Saward, Eire International, had not recovered completely from an attack of flu, and Trevor Birch came in at centre-half for what was only his second game in the side this season.

After all, Manager Eric Houghton decided not to bring in the 16-years-old inside-left, Hazelden, and the forward line showed only one change, Southren coming in at outside-right for Smith.

On the other hand, the Town were fielding the same team for the fourth consecutive match and this marked the occasion of Gordon Turner's 200th appearance in League matches.

The pitch had dried considerably in the last 24 hours and looked to be in much better condition than had been expected.

The Town defended the Kenilworth-road end and were the first to make progress with a long through pass by Pearce running just too fast for Brown and Sims was able to watch it trickle wide of the post.

Pearce, suddenly popping up at inside-right, was again dangerous, but this time he turned his pass inside tamely straight to the feet of Birch.

Hitchens and McParland both looked dangerous early on but were stayed off by sound defensive work.

NARROW ESCAPE

Then came a narrow escape for Villa in a crisp raid which began with Pearce sending Brown racing down the left wing.

Carefully Brown made his centre low and Turner, racing up at top speed, looked a certain scorer as he crashed into a heap with Crowther and Sims.

It was his best which connected with the ball but he sent it inches wide of the post when a goal looked completely on the cards.

More good work by Pearce set the Town going again by means of a splendid cross pass to Morton, who made ground before putting in a centre that Sims punched away as Brown went up.

Crowther began a strong Villa attack that took a long time to develop, but which was dangerous in the end when Southren picked up a headed clearance by Dunne. He got no power at all behind his shot, however, and it trickled to Baynham.

Brown was often prominent, and in the course of a dribble he was badly pulled down by Crowther some yards outside the penalty area.

From the free kick, taken by McLeod, Pearce was yards wide.

TOWN LOOKING DANGEROUS

The Town were looking the more dangerous side and were good in approach, but the finish had not been there yet.

Some sparkling play by Adam had the Villa defence in a tangle

although in the end the final pass went wrong and the danger was cleared.

Full-back Lynn, who did the hat trick last Saturday, suddenly came into the picture, painfully for McLeod, who stopped a full-blooded clearance, unwittingly with his jaw. From this Lynn went through to try his skill at shooting, but was dispossessed well short of the penalty area.

At this stage, the Town's passing was going astray.

McLeod wasted an opening by putting the ball straight at Sims after Sewell had slipped in trying to clear. Then Brown, not perceiving the intention of Pearce, was caught standing still after the left-half had laid on a grand through pass.

Pearce was often seen thrusting away in attack and again he cropped up in the inside-right position to accept a pass from Brown, but did not get a kind run of the ball.

WASTED CHANCES

Well back in his own half, McParland was penalised for a foul on McLeod, who had weaved inside, and the free kick from Pearce nearly provided a chance for Brown, who could not quite get the ball under control. In the main it was the Town cutting out the work and doing the pressing but not looking impressive in front of goal.

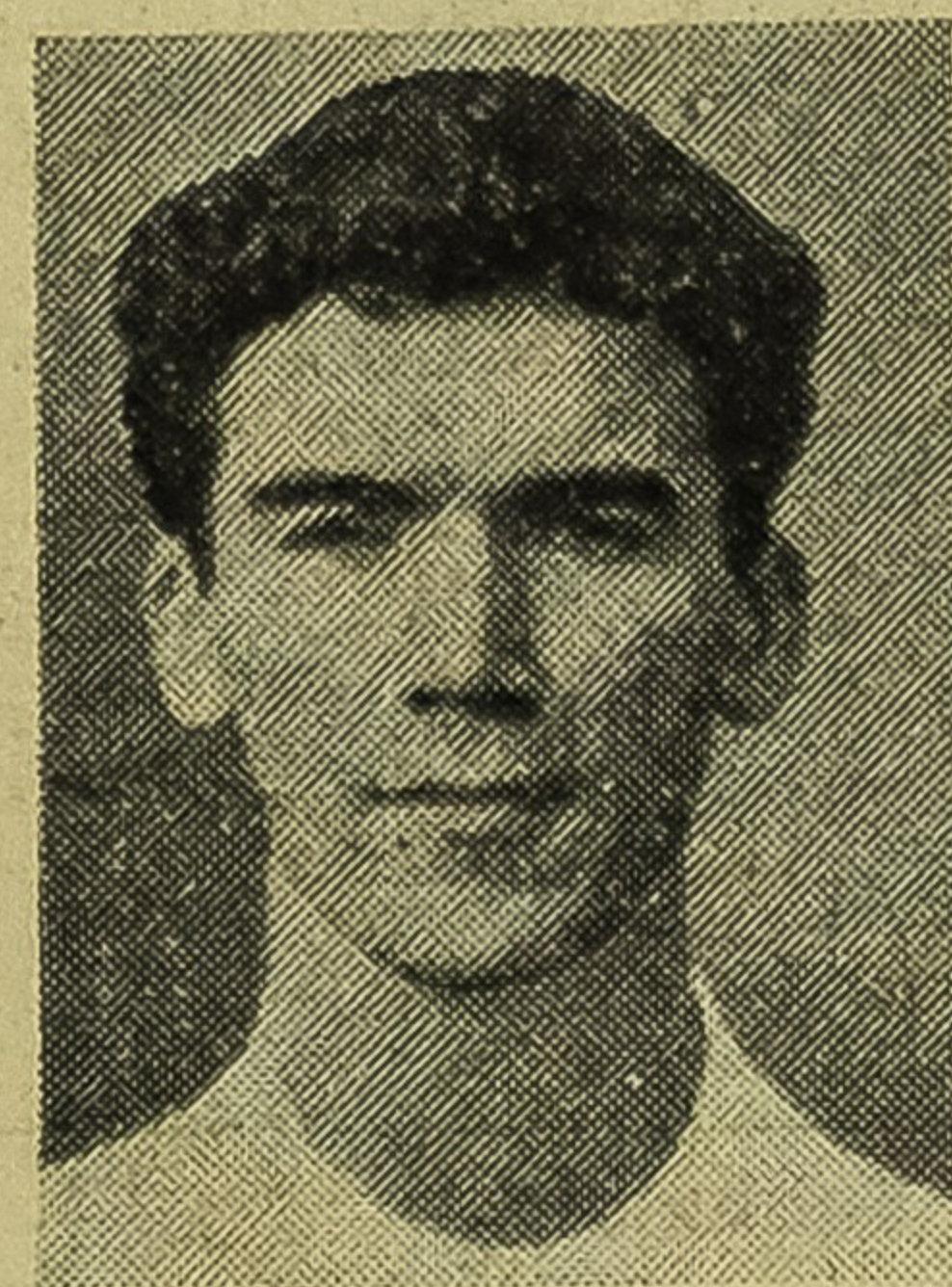
The probing of Turner and Brown continued to worry the Villa defence and the latter, challenged by three defenders, gained a corner, placed badly by Adam, who also wasted a chance to make a decisive cross in the next minute.

Play continued to be mostly at the Villa end, without Sims really being in trouble, though he was far busier than was Baynham.

In the first 20 minutes, the Villa had scarcely been in it as an attacking force, though there was a chance when Myerscough fastened on to a ball that eluded Morton. He chose to pass to Southren who was cleverly robbed by Hawkes. After this came the first really positive shot from the Villa—from Sewell who was too high.

There was no disputing the Town's superiority but the plain fact remained that they were not looking much like goals and too many passes were still going astray.

Nearest approach to a goal



Brown raced down the right wing in the 55th minute, and crossed the ball right in front of goal, leaving Adam with the simple task of tapping it in, to give the Town the lead.



Gordon Turner marked his 200th appearance in League matches with a goal in the 61st minute, putting the Town two up.

came unexpectedly from the Villa when Southren slipped past Hawkes and it took a full-length finger tip save by Baynham to prevent them going into the lead.

AWFUL HASH

For a time Villa came a bit more into it, but the Town defence was coping ably enough with their forwards.

Play settled in the Villa half once again, without any extra thrust being produced, and there were far too many cases of through passes going straight through to a grateful Sims.

From 20 yards, Hitchens tested Baynham and then the Town came back purposefully through Brown making ground down the right wing. His centre came over straight for McLeod, who made an awful hash of trying to turn the ball in with the inside of his right foot and a good chance was wasted.

Straight from this, Brown came through dangerously on the left and after closing in rammed in a low drive that seemed certain to count, until Sims stuck out a leg to divert it. From the rebound, Turner, on the half-turn, shot much too high.

It was still the Town calling the tune but showing a lack of punch.

Not sufficient urgency was being shown in their forward play, either. At the same time, credit had to be given to the Villa defence for some stout work.

Villa were lucky in one quick-fire move in which Pearce raced through the middle ready to accept a pass by Brown, and Sims, coming out, slipped and finally fell on the ball to baulk the left-half.

WELL OVER

Going through strongly, Morton was badly obstructed by Southren and taking the free kick himself he found Groves in an open space and also in an offside position.

With limited opportunities, the Villa forwards were at least having a crack at goal whenever

possible and Sewell was well over the target from 20 yards.

For a long time there was little excitement, and a general scrappiness about the play.

There was no doubt at all that the Town had sufficient of the play to be comfortably in the lead by now but they had been thwarted by the number of times in which the final pass had gone astray, and lack of punch at close quarters.

Baynham came out spectacularly right to the edge of the six yards line to go up to a corner by Southren, over-reached himself, dropped the ball for a second but reacted so quickly that Villa never had the chance of cashing in on the slip.

More heavy pressure by the Town followed, with Morton carefully nodding the ball out to Adam, whose low cross, with three or four Town players inside the penalty area, went straight to Crowe.

Just on half-time the Villa were forced right back on the defensive and stuck to their task gallantly. Then Brown, bending low, headed well wide from a centre by Adam.

Half-time:

LUTON TOWN 0
ASTON VILLA 0

How The Goals Came

ADAM for Luton after 55 minutes.

TURNER for Luton after 61 minutes.

MCLEOD for Luton after 77 minutes.

It had been a disappointing first half with the Town failing to cash in on their superiority through lack of directness. However, they began the second half smartly with Brown just failing to connect with his head, and Groves made just about the best attempt we had had so far with a fine drive that beat Sims and unfortunately rose just too high.

Villa hit back and Baynham had no difficulty in getting his body squarely behind a drive by Hitchens who, a few minutes later, mis-hit the ball from the edge of the penalty area and it went well off the target.

Pearce made a shot but found it cannoning off the packed wall of defenders.

A long free kick by Lynn, awarded when Hawkes charged Southren, fairly I thought, was comfortably caught by Baynham and then, in the 55th minute, the Town did what they ought to have done a long time ago and took the lead.

ADAM was the scorer and he was left with the simple task of tapping the ball through after Brown had taken a pass from him, raced down the right wing and crossed it right in front of goal after smartly beating Ashfield.

Miss of the match so far came when Hitchens was put through brilliantly by Myerscough and with only Baynham to beat scraped the outside of the post.

STERN WARNING

That let-off was a stern warning to the Town of what could conceivably happen to them and a high percentage of the passes made by the forwards continued to be intercepted.

Crowther headed behind for safety when challenged by Groves going up for a centre from Adam and a corner brought an escape with Groves and Sims both going for the ball together. They missed it and it skidded well away from the goal area. At first it looked as though Groves was injured but he picked himself up looking none the worse for the collision.

Most of the credit for the goal belonged to Brown, who had been quite the Town's best forward. Villa came back spiritedly through the persistence and determination of Hitchens, whose worrying tactics brought a chance to McParland, who was just wide of the woodwork with a shot.

Back came the Town again with McLeod slipping smartly past Lynn before pulling the ball down for Brown, who carved out for himself a shooting opening and then pulled the ball well wide.

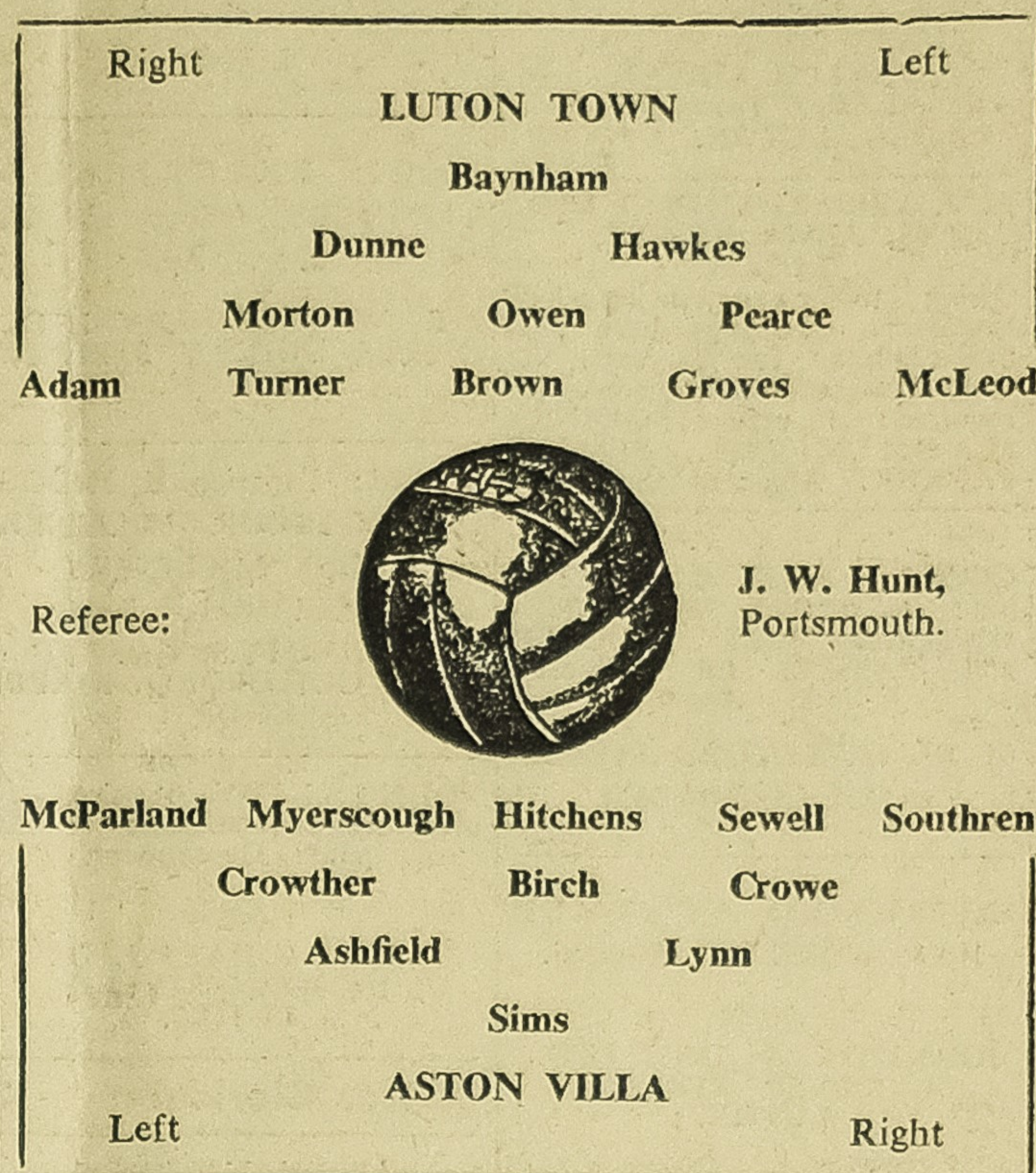
Crowther and Crowe had switched and almost immediately the Town went through a huge gap in the middle of the Villa defence and Adam, racing down the middle, over-ran the ball, something that gave Sims just that split second extra in which to make the ground necessary to smother the shot.

Then Turner, who had been having a quiet time, sliced the ball badly wide. At this point Turner was at outside-right with Adam inside, but the purpose of the move was not clear.

LEAD INCREASED

Then, in the simplest possible manner, the Town increased their lead through TURNER, after 61 minutes.

It was a peculiar goal altogether, with Turner left from a cross by Groves almost on the goal line with no one near him and all he



had to do was to tap it into the net.

Villa appealed on the grounds of off-side but after a quick look at the linesman, from whom there was no reaction, the referee pointed to the centre spot.

It was nearly all Luton now, and Villa's defence, which had been so strong earlier, was looking distinctly worried under pressure. A low cross by Adam harassed them no end.

Then Brown, from 25 yards, tested Sims with a very commendable effort.

A lot of scrappy play followed this, with the Villa fighting, but not giving much promise of improving their position. Hitchens earned a corner off Adam, who was still at inside-right, and Baynham, from it, pulled down the ball just as simply as picking apples off a tree.

Two off-side decisions against Brown and Turner were disputed by the crowd.

Villa hit back through Southren, whose centre was skied by Pearce and was the forerunner of some pressure at the Town end, cleared once by Owen. But the ball came back again from Southren and it was Pearce who came out with it.

Morton came to the Town's rescue when McParland looked

very dangerous. When the Town came back again there were strong appeals for a penalty when Turner was grounded by Birch as he sought to force a way through.

The referee turned them down and a free kick for a foul on Pearce seconds afterwards brought nothing.

THREE UP

With 77 minutes gone the Town became three up through McLEOD, who took advantage of some slipshod work by the Villa defence.

In the first instance it was Birch who made an ill-judged back pass that had Sims beaten.

Crowe tried to prevent the ball running into the net. As he sought to turn it to safety, McLEOD came along, got his boot in the way and it ricocheted into the net.

It was a one-horse race now, with the Town well on top, and Turner was unlucky to be caught at the last moment after a clever, determined dribble.

Unfortunately, too, was Morton with a drive from the edge of the penalty area which rose too high, with Sims groping but just managing to reach it with his finger tips.

Only rarely were Villa looking dangerous, and Baynham again coped comfortably with a corner



McLeod took advantage of some slipshod work by the Villa defence to put the Town three up, in the 77th minute.

from Southren, after Pearce had miskicked.

Baynham went down on his knees to catch a speculative shot by Crowe and then Crowther was admonished by the referee for a foul on Groves.

What happened now was of little consequence and Villa came into it a bit thought not seriously.

The Town defence was most authoritative in its work.

As the gloom gathered, Turner was sent racing through by Brown, only to be foiled by Birch and in the same movement Adam saw a hard drive cannon off a defender.

Immediately after this Turner had a shot kicked off the goal-line by Lynn, with Sims hopelessly beaten. Result:;

LUTON TOWN 3
ASTON VILLA 0

ALL INTERESTED IN CROSSAN

Arsenal, Bolton Wanderers, Mansfield Town, Nottingham Forest, Portsmouth, Sheffield United and Sunderland have all displayed an interest this season in Derry City teenage inside-forward John Crossan.

"I have never seen a better player at his age," one scout told me enthusiastically after a trip to Ulster.

John is still an amateur, and will sign professional for an Irish club before being transferred. Whether that club will be Derry remains to be seen, for Crossan will be a free agent if the season ends without him crossing to England.

It wouldn't surprise me if John made the move via Dublin club, Shamrock Rovers. Just as did Sammy Chapman as a prelude to joining Mansfield 18 months ago.