

Fern cracker spurs Luton

LETHAL LUTON struck twice at Villa Park to pocket both points and edge into third place in the League table at the expense of Villa. And Villa can have few complaints because, as skipper Bruce Rioch, the former Luton player, admitted: "My old team certainly played well today."

The wide open spaces of Villa Park seemed to suit ball-playing Luton. And once Villa's opening fire cooled, it was Luton who looked the more impressive side.

The 13th minute was unlucky for Luton. Peter Anderson, the man who missed last week's match at Pompey because he missed the train, showed perfect timing to send in a shot that had Villa goalkeeper Jim Cumbes in trouble.

INCHES

Cumbes had to turn back as the ball slithered through his legs and only managed to save it inches from the line.

But in the 22nd minute Luton roared in front. Villa defender Ian Ross failed to cut off a right-wing cross from Jimmy Ryan and Rodney Fern powered a left-footed drive that rifled to the back of Villa's net.

Villa for all their huffing and puffing, had to rely on the power shooting of Rioch for their main assaults. One shot had Luton goalkeeper Keith Barber clawing the ball away from the line at the second attempt.

Gloucester referee David Smith booked Luton left-back Bobby Thomson for one over-

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vigorous tackle, but generally it was a fierce but fair battle.

Villa's problems were added to when winger Willie Anderson had to limp to the touchline for treatment. Anderson did not resume and Pat McMahon substituted from the start of the second half.

Andy Lochhead was a hard-working leader for Villa, but all too often it was an uphill, go-it-alone fight.

Luton's thoughtful approach hit the jackpot in the 70th minute when Luton wrapped up this match with a John Aston goal after a five-man movement. The interchanging play on the right flank was taken up by Vic Halom who slipped the ball into the middle. There, Fern ran to the right and took Villa centre half Chris Nicholl with him.

This left the gap for Peter Anderson to break through the middle, draw goalkeeper Cumbes, and slide-rule a pass to Aston who cracked the ball into the inviting net.

ASTON VILLA. Cumbes; Ross, Aitken, Rioch, Nicholl, Turnbull, Graydon, Evans, Lochhead, Vowden, Anderson. Sub: McMahon.

LUTON.—Barber: John Ryan, Thomson, Slough, Faulkner, Garner, Jimmy Ryan, Anderson, Fern, Halom, Aston. Sub: Goodeve.



Rodney Fern's left foot drives a shot into the Villa net to put Luton one up after 23 minutes. Rushing across, but failing to cover, are Chris Nicholl (left) and Ian Ross.