

Anderson keeps Luton hopes high

by PHILIP OSBORN

Luton 1 Aston Villa 0

VILLA'S promotion aspirations are fading rapidly. They have now dropped nine out of their last 10 points.

Yet a revival seemed possible in a bright first half in which they outshone Luton for attacking ideas.

Veteran full back Charlie Aitken, who equalled Billy Walker's record of 478 League games for the club, created three good chances with exciting overlaps.

From the first, Neil Rioch, who showed plenty of clever touches, muffed a header. Then Brian Little just failed to control a fine pass and later Rioch shot over after another Aitken onslaught.

Though Alan West was an inspiring and cultured midfield grafter for them, Luton's clear-cut openings were rare.

Credit for this goes to ex-Kenilworth Road pivot Chris Nicholl, unbeatable in the air and dominant on the ground. Nicholl also forced a brilliant save from Graham Horne with a header from a corner.

There was enough enterprise and entertainment from both sides to encourage the watching Sir Alf Ramsey and League secretary Alan Hardaker.

Smart header

Peter Anderson maintained Luton's promotion surge with the 53rd minute winner which brought Town's haul to 12 points from the last eight games and pushed them into second place.

He moved up smartly to head in a John Aston corner. It was his eighth goal of the season and edges him to the top of Luton's scoring chart.

Barry Butlin went close to scoring just before and after Anderson's winner and there were other promising attempts from West and Jimmy Ryan.

In a late Villa flurry, Little, always eager and menacing, was only fractionally wide with a gallant equalising attempt.

Villa manager Vic Crowe drew some comfort by pointing out: "This was our best performance for weeks and should give the boys confidence."

And he added that he was hopeful that key men Sam Morgan, Ray Graydon and Bruce Rioch, who have been badly missed recently, would be fit for Saturday's match against Notts County.

LUTON.—Horne: Shanks, Thomson, Anderson, Faulkner, Garner, Ryan (Jim), Fern, Butlin, West, Aston. Sub: Ryan (John).

VILLA.—Cumbes: Gidman, Aitken, Hockey, Nicholl, Ross, McMahon, Brown, Rioch, Hamilton, Little. Sub: Turnbull.