

Anderson just pips Villa

by TOM DUCKWORTH

Luton 1, Aston Villa 0

73/74

VILLA, although giving an improved performance, were defeated by third-in-the-table Luton by a 53rd minute goal scored by Peter Anderson.

Villa had a good second half, with Charlie Aitken, who equalled Billy Walker's record of 478 League games, outstanding, were just as good as the Hatters in all but finishing.

Villa made two changes from the side defeated at Sunderland. Vowden and Evans were omitted to be replaced by McMahon and Neil Rioch, while Turnbull was substitute.

Luton made one late change. Husband, injured in training, was replaced by Fern.

Sir Alf Ramsey, Manager of the England team, and Aan Hardaker, secretary of the Football League, were among the spectators.

Aitken, making his 478th League appearance for Villa, equalled the club record set up by Billy Walker between 1919 and 1934.

LUTON TOWN: Horn; Shanks, Thomson, Anderson, Faulkner, Garner, Ryan (Jim), Fern, Butlin, West, Aston. Sub.: Ryan (John).

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

Referee: Mr. M. V. Sinclair (Guildford).

Villa began quite gradually and, following a good centre by Aitken, Rioch headed wide.

Luton quickly replied, Anderson making a splendid run from the half-way line only to be pulled up 20 yards out by a great tackle by Ross.

Villa came again and another Aitken centre was returned by Little into the goalmouth, but Rioch just could not reach the ball.

Opening play was fast and open and Luton were particularly lively in attack. West and Aston operated in a fine move down the left but West could not get sufficient power behind his shot when the winger centred.

Then Cumbes had difficulty in clearing a long throw-in from Garner.

West was prominent with some skilful attacking play for Luton, but Villa were first to come really close to scoring after about 11 minutes.

Close call

Garner headed away a free kick for a corner. This was taken by Hamilton and Nicholl, playing against his old club, got in a great header which Horn did well to turn over the bar.

Both teams were playing entertaining football with play swinging from end to end.

West again demonstrated his skill in another clever move down the left which he completed with a great shot from 25 yards which Cumbes did well to save.

Less than a minute later Hamilton brought Horn to his knees with a hard, low cross shot.

Luton's skilful attacking moves were giving the Villa defenders plenty to think about and a skilful dribble by Jimmy Ryan ended in his parting to Butlin who drove wide with a cross-shot.

West was giving Villa a great deal of trouble with his clever scheming and for a time the visitors were hard pressed.

Aitken eventually raised the siege with a good run down the right before parting with a perfect ball into the middle.

Little raced through but Horn just beat the Villa players to the ball and cleared.

McMahon booked

West's skilful footwork continued to trouble Villa and after 25 minutes McMahon was booked for an unfair tackle on the Luton mid-field man.

Villa defended valiantly against one of the most skilful attacks they have encountered so far this season, Nicholl and Aitken putting in particularly good work.

At the same time Luton's attacking football was providing Villa with the opportunity to make quick breaks out of defence and the game was one of the most entertaining they have taken part in this season.

Little showed his ability with a skilful dribble before making a crossfield pass to Hamilton who, from 20 yards, fired hard and low into the side netting.

Five minutes from the interval Villa had a chance when Rioch headed the ball on to Little, who lay unmarked in the centre of the goal.

The young winger tried to hook the ball over Horn's head but the goalkeeper brought off a good close-range save.

The excellent covering of the Villa defence was allowing the skilful Luton forwards few chances.

Villa continued to fall back quickly and cover up well so that Cumbes was being given few difficult shots to save.

Half-time: Luton 0
Villa 0

Cumbes was still in action in the second half, racing out and kicking the ball away from Fern's toe after Anderson had put the forward through with a beautiful pass.

Aitken was continually looking for an opportunity for Villa and from a Hockey pass he came up and centred only for Garner to clear.

Then, following another Aitken run and centre, Rioch sent a lightning first-timer whistling past the top of the post.

Villa's covering continued to be first-class and when Aston, given one of the few chances to get clear, broke away down the left and centred, Ross was there to clear.

Luton took the lead after 53 minutes through ANDERSON.

The home team forced a corner on the left and Aston placed the flag-kick beautifully for Anderson, in a near post position, to score with a beautiful glancing header into the far corner of the net.

Villa fought back but apart from a long shot by Ross which sailed harmlessly over, did not trouble the Luton defence.

Luton were more dangerous now, and following another accurate Aston centre, Butlin skimmed the bar with a glancing header.

Extra forward

Aitken, who was celebrating his 478th appearance with a tremendous game, was acting as an extra forward for Villa when required.

Luton, however, continued to put in most of the shots and Fern cleverly laid on a chance for Butlin who drove inches over.

A skilful Villa left-wing move ended with Hockey parting to Brown whose shot dropped just behind the bar.

Villa maintained the pressure for a spell but Luton managed to keep the visitors shooting to long range.

Villa were fighting back hard now and when Gidman crossed well from the right following a good touch-line run, Faulkner adopted safety-first methods and headed past the far post for a corner.

In a fast Luton break out of defence, Aston beat Gidman smartly and centred but Cumbes timed his run out well and cut out the centre.

Luton at length managed to break out of defence following Villa's heavy pressure and Fern made two good efforts but Cumbes saved well on each occasion.

Villa came close to equalising 12 minutes from the end when Little drove a first-time shot inches wide of the post after Hamilton had placed the ball accurately on to his toe.

GOALS AND THEIR SCORERS
53m. Luton 1, Villa 0. Anderson