

Preece blitz

Luton 1 Villa 0 : by PAUL PARISH

84/85

AT LAST Luton have something to shout about! A battle-hardened Steve Foster and diminutive David Preece, new men in the fight against relegation, were the heroes as Luton ended a six-match sequence without victory.

Fearless Foster showed all the commitment needed in Luton's struggle for survival. He ended up having five stitches in a head wound after a clash with Villa's Bresdan Ormsby, while Preece grabbed his slice of the glory with the only goal of the game.

No wonder Luton manager David Pleat was beaming as he reflected on the performances of Foster, the man he has made captain since signing him from Villa two weeks ago, and Preece, a £150,000 midweek signing from Walsall.

Said Pleat: "Preece is a tremendous prospect, a clean passer of the ball and a very hard worker. He gives us better balance in midfield. As for Foster, I am very pleased.

"We had to show some

fighting qualities. We dominated the first half, but became a bit wary as Villa threw caution to the wind in the second period. At the end, I thought we shaded the game and deserved the points."

Preece won instant approval from Luton's smallest crowd of the season as he prepared Villa's goal in a one-man first-half blitz.

He forced busy Villa goalkeeper Nigel Spink to turn one shot over the bar and go full length to save another. A third effort was drilled just wide before Preece finally found the

target five minutes before half-time.

Brian Stein and Frank Bunn opened up Villa's defence and though Preece didn't catch his shot perfectly, Spink could only turn it on to a post and into the net.

The goal put some pep into a disappointing Villa. They came out fighting in the second half and even the loss of Steve McMahon with an ankle ligament injury couldn't halt their efforts to save something from the game. Then it was Foster's turn to weld the Luton defence into a formidable unit.