



● TAKE THAT! A despairing dive by Nigel Spink as Brian Stein blasts home Luton's only goal at Villa Park.

# IT'S JEKYLL AND HYDE HATTERS

**Pleat:  
We  
were  
asleep**

## Junior Hatters Column

### **Peter Nicholas writes for you**

HELLO Junior Hatters . . . the enrollment forms for new members are coming in fast now. Keep up the good work.

We are training very hard this week for we have a tough match on Saturday when the visitors are Chelsea.

Don't forget that this is a morning kick-off, 11.30am.

Let us hear a lot of shouting from the junior enclosure this week to lift the boys and your team to victory.

The league position shows us in a good place, so with your help let's see if we can improve on it this week.

In the meantime, happy birthday to the following: David Denton, of Apple Glebe, Barton; Mark Greatorex, Christchurch Road, Tring; Barry Hughes, Althorp Road, Luton; Trevor Gordon, St Monica's Avenue, Luton; Mark Church, Tennyson Road, Luton; Scott Cowell, Ross Way, Slip End; Robert Williamson, Dewsbury Road, Luton; Nicola Cook, Rosslyn Crescent, Luton; Stephen Horsley, Lower Farm Gate, Aylesbury; Andrew Ferris, Cotefield Drive, Leighton Buzzard; Douglas Morrice, Crampion Way, Luton; Sean Hughes, Richmond Hill, Luton; Neil Hardy, Willow Way, Luton; Khalique Wahab, Berkeley Path, Luton.

Cheers! PETER NICHOLAS

HOW could Luton play some of the best football they have ever produced and then four days later dish up some of the worst?

Even master tactician David Pleat couldn't find a ready answer. "Some things you can't explain," he said.

There was no obvious reason why a team that threatened to annihilate Arsenal such a short time before should hit rock bottom at Villa Park.

The first-half display, which ended with the Town trailing by three goals and thankful it wasn't more, was atrocious.

It was a day when almost everything went wrong. Individuals made basic errors they may never repeat.

Villa were never contained and Hatters looked void of ideas when they had a chance to go forward.

The defence, midfield and attack played like three independent units, with rarely a hint of cohesion.

There were no excuses. The side that began the game was virtually the same line-up that gave Arsenal such a hard time.

The only difference was Johnson replacing Parker in midfield, although a substitution meant these two swapping places in the second-half.

On paper Villa looked beaten. Injuries

## **ASTON VILLA 3 LUTON 1** **By GRAHAM PUNTER**

meant no Williams, Evans, Gibson and Gray and Liverpool-bound McMahon was left out.

Unfortunately, former England international Mark Walters chose this day to make up for his absent friends by having the game of his life.

The gloom began after two minutes when Walters rounded Dibble as the keeper advanced beyond his penalty area and Nicholas had to clear off the line, conceding a corner.

### **Celebrated**

The corner kick was poorly defended and Walters had room to produce a bicycle kick to put Villa ahead.

Steve Hodge celebrated his home debut, following his transfer from Forest by scoring after 15 minutes, a shot deflected in by Donaghy.

The third goal which killed the game came after 34 minutes when flying winger Daley crossed from the left and Norton steered the ball past Dibble.

It was really one-way traffic with only a flash of Luton attacking to savour, notably a back header by Thomas

following Hatters' first corner of the game and a drive by Harford, well tipped over.

Dibble produced a great save from Hodge during the Villa siege on Luton's goal.

Luton started the second-half with more purpose but frankly it could hardly get worse. There was more emphasis on footballing their way forward and the familiar flowing moves began to reappear.

After 53 minutes there was reward as Breacker charged forward, found Stein in space and the striker, Luton's best performer on the day, slotted the ball past Spink.

The 10,524 crowd, Villa's lowest ever for a Division One game, saw Stein net again but given offside.

The second-half, much more of a contest than the first, featured close efforts from both sides, Dibble producing another memorable save and Harford going close twice.

But this is one the Luton contingent will want to forget.

**VILLA:** Spink, Norton, Ormsby, Glover, Dorigo, Birch, Bradley, Hodge, Walters, Walker, Daley. Sub: Kerr.

**LUTON:** Dibble, Breacker, Nicholas, Donaghy, Thomas, Hill, Johnson, Preece, Stein, Harford, Nwajiobi, Sub: Parker.

MANAGER David Pleat still managed a smile after Saturday's disappointment and there was no attempt to find excuses.

"We made some terrible mistakes and lost it before it began," he said. "We were fast asleep."

But he praised the efforts of the three strikers.

### Support

"They didn't get the support they deserved," he said.

Pleat singled out Brian Stein. "He shouldn't have been on the losing side today."

Villa boss Graham Turner thought his enthusiastic youngsters "caught Luton by surprise".