

Reply too late

THE FIRST defeat of the season came at Villa Park when the Town looked like being hammered for an hour, but then picked themselves up when they were reduced to ten men.

Brian Stein scored the best goal of the game in the 78th minute, with a header following Meka Nwajiobi's left wing run and cross.

Marc North, on as sub in place of Tim Breacker, was stretchered off in the 60th minute with an ankle injury which was at one time feared to be a fracture.

By then Villa had set up their first points of the season with two goals by Paul Kerr, and had also hit the bar through Tony Daley.

Villa had looked much the more potent attacking force in the first half, and until the Town forwards got going late in the game Paul Elliott looked well in command in the heart of the home defence.

Daley's dazzling pace kept the crowd happy and Breacker at full stretch, yet for all the speed down the wing little came of the crosses as Steve Foster soaked up the raw power of Gary Thompson.

ASTON VILLA 2 LUTON TOWN 1

After the break Foster was able to support the attack as Villa settled into a defensive shell, and got up for a header from a free kick by Rob Johnson which brought the best out of Kevin Poole.

MATCH DETAILS

TOWN: Sealey; Breacker (M. North 45 mins), Foster, Donaghy, Johnson; Wilson, Nicholas, Hill, Stein, Newell Nwajiobi.

VILLA: Poole; Keown, Evans, Elliott, Dorigo, Blair (Kerr, 15 mins), Hunt, Hodge, Daley, Stainrod, Thompson.

GOALS: Kerr twice for Villa, 24 seconds into injury time at the end of the first half, and 49 seconds into the second half; Brian Stein for the Town, 78th-minute header from Meka Nwajiobi's cross.

OTHER STRIKES: Town four saved and four wide; Villa seven saved, seven wide, one hit the bar. Corners: 6-5 to Villa.

ATTENDANCE: 13,122, 10,000 down on Villa's previous home game, against Spurs.

ENTERTAINMENT: Great for Villa fans for the first hour, with Town followers having nothing to cheer about until the ten men got cracking.

REFEREE: K. J. Breen, Burgess Hill — treated both sides equally badly with some very strange decisions.

BOOKED: Steve Foster for a trip to stop Steve Hodge on a run for goal, Gary Thompson for a foul on Foster, and Paul Elliott and Steve Hodge both for dissent. Some decisions invited questions.