

Cracker Kerr

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ASTON VILLA.....2 LUTON.....1: BY RAY MATTS

THE little-used talents of substitute Paul Kerr dramatically transformed Aston Villa's faltering start to the season last night.

The loss of experienced midfielder Andy Blair after just 15 minutes of this vital game must have seemed like a stab in the heart for manager Graham Taylor, who once more is under

pressure after three successive defeats.

Kerr, who has made only a handful of appearances for the club, replaced Blair and become the Villa hero with goals either side of the interval.

No one could possibly have imagined that Blair's early departure would have such a beneficial effect—but his misfortune galvanised the efforts of the team who proved they are solidly behind their young boss.

Garry Thompson and Tony Daley provided the first evidence of Villa's attacking intent.

But it was Kerr who achieved the breakthrough in the 44th minute. He was sent on his way down the right wing by a superb crossfield pass from Simon Stainrod. Kerr remained composed as he reached the edge of the penalty area and beat Les Sealey with a low shot into the corner of the net.

Kerr was at his business immediately the game resumed, when a cross from the left by Daley disorganised Luton's defence. A neat flick by Stainrod helped the ball on to the far post where the youngster forced his shot inside the post.

It was just the performance

Two-goal youngster gets Villa season under way

Turner wanted from his side to dispel the doubts which have crept in after their poor start to the season.

The tension was clearly visible in the opening minutes as Villa misplaced their passes and substituted too much physical aggression for the skill required to find a way through a Luton side unbeaten after

their three opening games.

Thompson was booked for a late tackle on Steve Foster and there were signs of indiscipline.

But all that changed when Blair had to leave the field with his leg injury and Villa became a much more effective force and fully deserved their lead.

Daley was desperately unlucky not to increase Villa's lead when he drilled a shot against the crossbar.

Blow

Luton's hopes of retrieving the deficit were dealt a blow when they were reduced to only ten men after 65 minutes.

Sub Marc North, who had replaced Tim Breacker at half-time, was carried away on a stretcher after an incident involving Stainrod.

There were further bookings for Paul Elliott and Steve Hodge for dissent and Villa found themselves on shaky ground in the 78th minute when Brian Stein scored for Luton from Ricky Hill's left-wing cross.

It left Villa with a tense, late struggle to protect their lead.