



• So close — defender Julian James hurls himself at a first-half corner.

DALEY EXPRESS SPELLS AGONY!

INJURY-HIT Hatters had the misfortune to meet England wing-wizard Tony Daley on his day.

The 22-year-old — called into the England B squad and named young player of the month just hours before the game — destroyed Luton with one moment of first-half genius.

Daley exploded into action on the half-way line leaving Mick Kennedy and Tim Allpress in his wake as he sped into the box and beat Alec Chamberlain from the tightest of angles.

Villa boss Graham Taylor said his starlet was likely to score a goal like that "once a season" — a mark of Hatters' bad luck at the moment.

Even Daley was quick to admit: "Things are going for me at the moment."

"Most days I'd have sent that one into the crowd."

Luton boss Jim Ryan — who was forced to throw two more debutants into Hatters' starting line up — said: "You are always going to have problems with players who can run that quick with the ball."

"You have to give them credit. I always like to see players score great individual goals like that — though not when it's against us!"

ASTON VILLA 2 LUTON 0 By MICHAEL WEINSTEIN

ASTON VILLA: Spink, Price, Gage, McGrath, Gray, Nielsen, Daley, Platt, Olney, Cowans, Williams. Subs: Birch and Gallacher. LUTON: Chamberlain, Breacker, Allpress, Kennedy, James, Dreyer, Rees (Poutch), Nogan, Dowie, Hughes (Gray 65), Black.

• Attendance: 22,505.

Top-of-the-table Villa were a pretty ordinary side and for all their possession had to rely on a second-half blunder by John Dreyer to make sure of the points.

The midlanders should have made more of an impression against a ridiculously inexperienced Luton side.

With an injury list including Lars Elstrup, David Beaumont, Darron McDonough and Graham Rodger, Ryan could ill afford to lose skipper Danny Wilson,

David Preece and Richard Harvey before the kick off.

Kennedy — relieved to be playing after his expected two-match ban for a red card at Charlton was cut to one game — was placed in charge of a line up containing league debutants Allpress and Ceri Hughes.

Villa were first to threaten when Gareth Williams forced Chamberlain into emergency action after just three minutes.



• New boy — debutant Ceri Hughes takes on England star David Platt.

But Hatters hit back with a sustained spell of pressure and it was only when Daley netted after 29 minutes that Villa took charge.

Julian James was a whisker away from giving Hatters the lead after 19 minutes. Hughes' tremendous persistence won a corner and James met it with a flying header that whistled just past the post.

The youngster was hauled down after 25 minutes and Kurt Nogan met Kingsley Black's free kick with a header which flashed only inches wide.

But Daley's sensational goal changed the flow of the game and Villa took charge.

For a few desperate minutes James looked to be the next name on the injury list when he

lost his boot in a crunching clash with David Platt but good work by physio Dave Galley soon had him back on his feet.

Villa defender Chris Price should have done better when he ploughed into the box but screwed his shot wide with only Chamberlain to beat.

The home side made the game safe on 49 minutes when Dreyer misjudged a long ball from Paul McGrath and Platt nipped in to score in style.

Neil Poutch became Hatters' third debutant when he came on for Jason Rees on the hour.

Hatters' best chance of a goal came in the 83rd minute but Dreyer failed to capitalise on a goalmouth scramble following a corner.

REMEMBER folks our deadlines mean your reports from weekend matches must be at our offices by Monday lunchtime for them to be included in the paper.



• Skippers clash — Mick Kennedy and David Platt.