

Aston Villa 2
Luton 0

Collin Gibson

89/90
TONY DALEY is mounting a late challenge for a place in Bobby Robson's World Cup squad after choosing the most spectacular route to take Aston Villa back to the top of the First Division.

Daley, who was named in England's B international squad on Friday for the match against the Republic of Ireland in Cork later this month, celebrated with as memorable a goal as anyone is likely to score this season to soothe the Villa nerves which had become frayed over the past fortnight.

Defeats against Wimbledon at Villa Park and at Coventry had left Graham Taylor's side jittery even in the face of Luton's modest challenge. Jimmy Ryan's rapidly declining team had to give Allpress and Hughes League debuts and they looked prime relegation material.

Even so, they were capable of unsettling Villa until the 28th minute when Daley set off on his exceptional run from the halfway line, leaving two Luton players foundering with his remarkable pace before cutting into the penalty area and slipping the ball into the corner of the net.

It could not have come at a better time for Villa. Daley's manager Mr Taylor said: "The likelihood is that he will score a goal like that in a season because he has exceptional pace. You just have to hope that you are there to see it when he does."

From that moment Luton appeared a beaten side and had Price been a little more accurate that would have been confirmed by the 32nd minute.

As it was Luton were not put out of their misery until the 49th minute when Dreyer missed a simple clearance from McGrath's long ball and Platt, who has now scored 22 goals this season, finished with ease.

Villa now lead Liverpool by two points and they, unlike Luton, will have been delighted that Arsenal failed to beat Manchester City. "Back on top of the table again," said Mr Taylor. "Last time it lasted about seven days. We will have to see what happens this time."

Aston Villa: Spink; Price, Gage, McGrath, S Gray, Nielsen, Daley, Platt, Olney, Cowans, Williams.

Luton: Chamberlain; Breacker, Allpress, Kennedy, James, Dreyer, Rees (Poutch 60), Nogan, Dowie, Hughes (P Gray 75), Black.

Referee: J Martin (Four Marks, Hants).