

PENALTY ROW AS TOWN LOSE

ENGLISH referee Roy Capey became the scapegoat for the Town losing a match they should have won in the Anglo-Italian tournament in Northern Italy.

For as the team and club officials flew back from Venice the day after the match at Verona, they were still fuming at the last-minute decision when Jimmy Ryan went headlong in the penalty area and referee Capey ruled it was no foul.

He could have been right, but it was one of those marginal decisions which became crucial because it was very much the Town's last hope of pulling off a good result.

Mr Capey, from North Staffordshire, said afterwards that Ryan had "gone down a bit early" and he was adamant that it was never a penalty.

So the Town lost to Verona, who are in the lower reaches of the Italian First Division, and my reading of the game was that we were beaten by inexperience.

It was the Town's first competitive match on the Continent, and the Italian style, based on massed defence and rare quick breaks, left the Town

floundering even though they had more of the game.

In the first five minutes, with the Town pressing forward non-stop, it looked as though we might see a hatful of goals.

John Aston had a brilliant game, waltzed around his full-back at ease, and induced a fair amount of panic in the Verona defence every time he got the ball.

But every time he beat one or two men, there was always a third and fourth covering.

The Italians back-pedalled as the Town attacked. They happily gave up the midfield, but their mass of eight or nine players on the edge of the penalty area proved too much for the Town to break down.

And the tactics turned out to be right, because they led directly to both Verona's goals.

After six minutes, with the Town throwing nearly every-

Verona 2, Luton Town 1

By Brian Swain

one up field, Don Shanks deserted his rearguard spot to join a Town attack.

He was robbed on the Town's right, and the Italians left Town players stranded by two rapid long through-passes.



While Town defenders were scurrying back, the ball was out with the Verona left winger. He was on his own, and as defenders tried to catch him, he slung it back across the goal where Busatta was equally unattended on the right, and he scored with a low shot from the edge of the penalty area.

The Town hopes rose when, after a lot more pressure, Graham French scored the equaliser after 19 minutes. The Italians conceded three corners in succession, and from the third Rod Fern jumped high to nod the ball into the mass of

players in the goal area, and French was the first to react with a short-range shot.

So the Town were level at half-time, and looking the more attack-conscious team, but after two minutes of the second half, another quick break caught them.

A Shanks free kick was cleared by the Verona defence, and once again a deadly accurate long pass sliced through the Town defence.

The winger broke down the left, and with John Faulkner and Bobby Thomson trying to cover two men in the middle, the centre was inch perfect.

It dropped between the two Luton men, was back headed to the right of the box, and Jacomuzzi hammered in a first time shot.

And the Town spent the rest of a frustrating match trying to break down the Italian defensive play.

Alas, they did not have the

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equipment to do it. Barry Butlin might have had a field day if he had not been lying in the Luton and Dunstable Hospital.

Derek Hales, and Viv Busby who replaced him for the second half, never had a look in.

The nearest the Town came to scoring was five minutes from the end when Graham French was upended an inch or two outside the penalty area, and then when Jimmy Ryan went full length in the box in the last seconds of the game.



On the whole, it was a sporting match, but the tactful Mr Capey, no doubt keen to leave without giving any decisions which might have caused trouble, allowed a lot of niggling offences through: shirt tugging, tripping and nudges in the back.

And whatever the Town players and officials thought about that last-minute penalty incident, the truth is that the Town were beaten by the Italians' system, not by the referee.

The Town team was: Carrick; Shanks, Thomson, Faulkner, Goodeve; John Ryan, French, Fern; Jim Ryan, Hales (Busby in the second half), and Aston.



● Jim Ryan