

LUTON LEARNING THE HARD WAY

By ROGER DUCKWORTH

Luton 1 Ipswich 4

LUTON'S limitations were as exposed as a nerve in a dentist's chair on Saturday. They came up against a very good side indeed, and couldn't live with it.

They have a week to get over this thrashing, the worst of the day in the Football League, before they go to Arsenal on Saturday.

There were deficiencies throughout the team, from goalkeeper to number 11, and I would have given next month's salary to have listened to Harry Haslam's "team talk" in the dressing room at the end.

We never will know what he told his players, because he didn't appear afterwards — not for a couple of hours, anyway.

Coach Roy McCrohan admitted his team had met its match in Ipswich, the side he used to coach. But he didn't think Luton were worth a 4-1 defeat. I did.

I thought the crowd, usually quick to get at Luton's throat, was admirably lenient, and they deserve their money back for the way they roared the Town on as they ran their socks down in a late attempt to salvage something from a game already lost.

Consistent

By the time Luton retaliated, they were three goals down, the last of which was a doubtful penalty given because John Ryan pushed Gates off the ball in the box.

I know you are not allowed to do that, but when these decisions have been given in Luton's favour this season, all they've got out of have been indirect free kicks in the penalty box.

Even Ipswich manager Bobby Robson agreed they were a bit lucky to be given it. "But," he argued, "people come to football matches to see goals.

"If referees are going to give these

things, then they must be consistent and give them every time — to everyone."

Talbot and Hamilton, cracking midfield players, had put Ipswich two up in the first half with Luton offering only token resistance.

Then the penalty came, and it seemed to annoy Luton into fighting back.

For more than 20 minutes they played some great stuff, with Don Shanks raiding from the right and Jimmy Husband probing through the middle. Adrian Alston, who again gave everything, headed in a Shanks cross for his second goal in two matches, and the Luton crowd espied a forlorn hope of recovery.

Just when it began to look a distant possibility, Whymark jumped over Luton's static defence to head a simple-looking goal from Viljoen's free kick. And that, as far as Luton were concerned, was that.

Luton's attack looked soggy, and I think it's because Alston is being used as a left-winger. He's a centre-forward by trade. Butlin didn't have much joy against Hunter, who was booked or a foul on Hindson, or Beattie.

Husband tried hard, but he doesn't

seem to have rediscovered his finishing power. He hasn't scored a goal this season.

Luton spent the afternoon fighting hard for the ball, and then giving it away with exaggerated generosity. Peter Anderson, who was not at his best, was as guilty of this as anyone.

Luton's best two players were Gordon Hindson and Alan West who tried to get things right from midfield. West had more shots than any Luton forward, and Hindson pleased the crowd with his determination when all seemed lost. He was one Luton player who refused to accept the inevitable.

With goalkeeper Keith Barber shackled to his line, the Luton defence didn't seem to know what to do. John Ryan was often beaten in the air and Bobby Thomson was harried into mistakes.

Faulkner, who was the best of the bunch, also looked to have limitations, and it looked all too easy for Ipswich to score goals.

Luton are still an ordinary side. Things, I am sure, will be different when they record that elusive first victory.