

CROWD TURN ON SAD LUTON

By **ROGER
DUCKWORTH**

Luton Town 1
Plymouth Argyle 1

IN HIS programme notes last night, Luton boss Harry Haslam thanked his team's fans for being good losers. He praised them for taking the home defeat against Bolton "on the chin."

He wrote: "There was no booing, no slow hand-clapping, no banging of feet." Last night these "model" fans turned nasty, and booed the Luton players off the Kenilworth Road pitch after an inept second half performance had failed to bring the win that was promised in the first half.

After bubbling and boiling through a marvellous first half, Luton went tepid and flat in the second, ran out of steam and ideas, and kicked bad passes round the pitch to the rising anger of the fans.

But the reaction from the terraces did not please the Luton boss. "I thought they were terrible," he said. "They started giving the lads stick when Plymouth scored, and there was still 30 minutes to

go. When players are struggling to put things right on the pitch that just makes it worse."

While I agree with the Luton manager, I can also understand the ire of the fans as they watched a near-certain looking victory turn into a scramble against possible defeat.

Had the Town been three or four up at the interval, not even Plymouth could have complained. Jimmy Husband, the man who found goals as hard to collect as penny blacks last season, stamped his mark on the game and scored in the 19th minute.

Rebound

It came after a Jimmy Ryan free-kick had been pushed to John Ryan, whose blast through the defence bounced off goalkeeper Aleksic, and Husband sped through to control the rebound and score.

King and Ron Futchter had efforts blocked, and Husband, put through by Ron Futchter, brought a good save out of Aleksic.

John Ryan went close, Buckley had one blocked and Husband had a worthy effort

saved just before half-time.

With things going right up front, with target man Ron Futchter controlling the ball well on the turn and laying it off deftly to colleagues; with John Seasman making a fast and skilful start, Luton looked all set to put their recent dreary form right.

Ridiculous

Anderson, King and Jimmy Ryan worked hard to prompt from midfield, full-backs John Ryan and Buckley helped the attack from the flanks, and Paul Futchter and Faulkner were in total command at the back.

In the second half most of

these attributes were reversed. Luton's performance went from the sublime to the ridiculous.

It was as if Luton had been given something nasty in their half-time brew. They became sluggish and mistake prone and soon after the break Paul Mariner headed Plymouth's first real chance inches wide. Barber had to make a frantic save after Jimmy Ryan had made a goalmouth mistake and Rafferty shot a chance badly wide.

And the rot set in. After an hour, Luton presented Plymouth with their first away goal of the season. It was the daftest thing we saw all night.

Barber threw the ball to Ron Futchter who, instead of clearing, tried to turn round a challenge and pushed the ball to Faulkner, who was covering him.

Without checking that there was no approaching traffic, Faulkner rolled the ball square across the face of the penalty box — into the path of a somewhat surprised Brian Johnson.

He recovered his composure quickly and placed a shot into the side of the goal, with the amazed Barber rooted to the spot. It was all over in seconds. So was Luton's chance of a first win since August 30.

The crowd began to bay for Adrian Alston to be sent on. Harry Haslam refused to be swayed.

To be fair to Luton there was no shortage of effort. In fact they began to get frantic at times as they tried too hard.

Said Mr Haslam: "It started going wrong with square passes across the box. This led to their goal and then spread through our midfield players to the attack. By the end of the match everyone was doing things wrong."

You can say that again Harry.

MATCH DETAILS

Luton: Barber, John Ryan, Buckley, Anderson, Faulkner, Paul Futchter, King, Husband, Ron Futchter, Jim Ryan, Seasman. Sub: Alston.

Plymouth: Aleksic, Hore, Burrows, Horswill, Green, Delve, Randall, Johnson, Mariner, Rafferty, McAuley. Sub: Foster (for Mariner, 67 minutes).

Referee: Clive Thomas (Treorchy).

Goals: Husband (Luton, 19 minutes); Johnson (Plymouth, 60 minutes).