

NERVES SET IN AND LUTON STUMBLE

By RADFORD BARRETT

Southampton...1 Luton...0

LUTON'S manager, Harry Haslam, spoke only the truth when he told Keith Honey, the Southampton secretary: "You didn't win it—we lost it." No sour grapes, I hasten to add, since Mr Haslam can smile at disappointment better than any manager I know.

Luton fell at the 13th fence, after taking 23 points from 12 matches, because crisp, intuitive passing was slowly replaced by a hesitant, jagged rhythm, hyper-caution and nervous back-passes. In a phrase, their concentration went.

Mr Haslam was right again when he said Aleksic had little to do, and that the winner was a bad goal.

For, cleverly as Rodrigues pierced the offside trap with a perfectly-timed through ball to MacDougall, and though Osgood's shot from the Scot's centre was blocked, Ball was utterly unchallenged as he ran in to net the loose ball.

"We had two glaring chances," Mr Haslam went on. True, but they would have been even worse goals than Southampton's if sensible soccer is being debated.

Almost suicidal fiddling by Blyth and company gave Aston a 30-yard run at goal, but he failed to get in an effective shot, or use Ron Futcher and Husband, free and unmarked on the right.

And when Southampton's offside trap let in Ron Futcher, he

rounded Wells but skied his shot.

Young Jones, Fuccillo and Chambers briefly outshone Osgood, Ball and the hard-running Williams, who was booked after a series of over-zealous tackles, but the Southampton midfield got on top, and it was a pity MacDougall failed by a whisker to make it safe at 2-0 off a delicate flick by Channon, a golden touch amid a deal of dross.

Paul Futcher booked

Paul Futcher, too, was booked near the end for a foul, an expression of Luton's disgust, perhaps, that their own inadequacies were interrupting an exciting surge of success.

Southampton. — Wells; Rodrigues, Peach, Holmes, Blyth, Waldron, Ball, Channon, Osgood, Williams, MacDougall.

Luton. — Aleksic; Price, Buckley, Chambers, Faulkner, Futcher P., Husband (Geddis, 55 min), Jones, Futcher R., Fuccillo, Aston.