



● High-flying duel — Richard Harvey takes on Brian McClair

Dressed down!

DISAPPOINTED boss Jim Ryan locked his players in the dressing room for more than half-an-hour after Tuesday's defeat at the hands of Manchester United.

Ryan was fuming after Hatters failed to take advantage of Steve Bruce's first-half dismissal for a professional foul which denied Iain Dowie the chance of an equaliser.

The manager refused to pin-point the exact causes of his displeasure but high on his list would have been the lack of cover as Mark Robins headed United's winner.

Ryan admitted: "Yes, I did give the players a bit of a lashing.

"I'm very disappointed to have lost. I think the game was there for us to win but a mixture of our poor play and United's good play denied us.

"I was annoyed with certain individual players and a couple of things from a team point of view but that's really between me and the players."

Hatters should have gone in front as early as the third minute when David Preece unlocked the United

LUTON 0 MAN UTD 1 By MICHAEL WEINSTEIN

LUTON: Chamberlain, Breacker, Harvey (Johnson 79), James (Rees 45), Beaumont, Dreyer, Elstrup, Preece, Dowie, Hughes, Black.

Man Utd: Sealey, Irwin, Blackmore, Bruce, Philan, Pallister, Webb, Ince, McClair, Robins (Hughes 79), Beardsmore (Donaghy 60).

● Referee: Ray Lewis.

● Attendance: 12,576.

defence with a superb ball but Ceri Hughes blasted wide of the far post with only ex-Hatter Les Sealey between him and a first-ever league goal.

Kingsley Black ran fully 50-yards before firing straight at Sealey in the 16th minute.

Hatters' bright start gradually began to fade and United got the crucial goal after 24 minutes when Robins fed Denis Irwin and sprinted into the box to head home the full back's cross.

Bruce was given his marching orders five minutes from the break when he wrestled Dowie to the ground as the striker raced clear.

Ryan sent on Jason Rees for Julian James at half time to give Hatters four front runners and the youngster was booked before he'd touched the ball.

Hatters were agonisingly close to an equaliser when Dowie crashed a header into the angle of post and bar on 56 minutes.

Black hooked the ball into the box after 71 minutes and after the big men had challenged for it, the ball fell to Hughes who smashed his shot into a crowd of legs for a corner.

Rees hammered a powerful effort just over the bar after 76 minutes.

But there was still time for another great chance to go begging.

Lars Elstrup laid a long ball off for Hughes who bent his shot wide