

O'Rourke's three can save Luton

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Luton 4 Bristol Rovers 2 : by GRAHAM BUXTON

TWO defeats in two days have finally killed Bristol Rovers' promotion hopes, but Luton, collecting their third point of the holiday, can now be fancied to retain their Third Division place.

The knock-out blows for the Rovers came in the first four minutes when John O'Rourke, a free-transfer signing from Chelsea, scored twice.

The first was a header from a corner, the other a speculative shot from the edge of the penalty area that Bernard Hall fumbled and allowed to go in off the foot of a post.

Nor was that the only time Hall was at fault, for after Alfie Biggs had put Rovers back into the game with a terrific drive from 30 yards the goalkeeper made the most elementary mistake possible.

Seven minutes from half-time Luton were awarded a free kick which was clearly indicated as indirect by referee Geoffrey Roper.

Gordon Turner chipped the ball over the defensive wall, and had Hall not made a move for it all would have been well for Rovers. Instead he made a despairing grab at the ball and it went off his hands into the net for Luton's third goal.

Rovers, strong and insistent, were always a danger, but Luton's defence was ably marshalled by centre half for the day Dave Pacey.

Gordon Turner and John Reid worked cleverly in the Luton attack, and Turner was right out of luck with one header that smacked against the bar.

Ray Whittaker, the former

Arsenal youth international, gave the Rovers' defence a lot of trouble, and it was his shrewd pass that enabled O'Rourke to score his third goal 11 minutes from the end.

That goal was badly needed, for six minutes earlier Biggs had pulled the score back to 3-2 by blasting a penalty, awarded against John Bramwell, well wide of Ron Baynham.

In the end Luton won well and their form suggests that they can now achieve safety—especially if O'Rourke continues in the sort of form that makes him look one of the most promising young centre forwards in the country.