



● A Bristol Rovers raid breaks down as Luton defender Bobby Thomson (right) beats Ray Mabbutt (centre) and Dick Plumb at Eastville

LUTON THE MASTERS END BY TAKING A LESSON

Bristol Rovers 3 Luton 2: by DAVID FOOT

66/67 (FAC)

LUTON'S CUP hopes disintegrated in the final minutes after they had given Rovers a lesson in football skill and seemed to be coasting to the next round. But suddenly everything went wrong with their defence and all the poise and tenacious play by Freddie Jardine, Max Dougan, and Moore was nullified by a Rovers side which is gaining a reputation for second-half endeavour—to compensate for an apparent lack of craft.

Luton were 2—0 up half-way through the second half. Both goals had been noddled in by Derek Kevan, and nothing Rovers could do looked like preventing the visitors storming home to their first away win of the season.

But the Eastville transformation act began to take shape 20 minutes from time. Winger Harold Jarman, glad to escape the close marking on the right, wandered to the left.

He brushed off an opponent and pulled the ball back for new-signing Williams to volley in from 25 yards.

Signs of anxiety were beginning to reveal themselves in the Luton defence. They were clearly surprised by the way Rovers were coming back into the game.

The Luton jitters continued as Rovers exploited their own luck—and new lease of life.

Two more goals inside 90 seconds, made a mockery of the pattern of the game.

Makeshift winger Ray Mabbutt, certainly no failure despite the only partial success of the Rovers formation, had his corner jabbed into the net by skipper Davies to erase memories of an indifferent centre-half display.

Then Jarman's acute-angled shot slithered through the mud past despairing Luton legs for a fantastic 85th-minute winner.

It will help 19-year-old debutant goalkeeper Lloyd Taylor if he forgets those nervy first-half

moments and the Kevan goal he should have saved.

But it will be a good deal harder for Luton manager Allan Brown to forget—or forgive—the way his team threw this splendid chance of Cup victory away.

The tall, lurking Kevan might easily have completed a headed hat-trick for Luton against this vulnerable Bristol defence. A third effort of his was well saved by Taylor.

But Kevan, always playing forward as the spearhead of this Luton attack, was a constant problem for Davis.



For three-quarters of the game Luton were the masters and wingers Graham French and Ray Whittaker were always a threat. As a deep-lying centre-forward Dave Pleat was less effective than usual but one fine first-half burst of his was worth a goal.

The inexperienced Taylor, stranded in the goalmouth mud, gratefully watched Pleat's 25-yard drive curl wide.

Said manager Brown afterwards: "It was an astonishing result. We should have won with ease."