

Marshall calms Luton's nerves

LUTON TOWN, whose FA Cup run last season took them to Wembley — for a semi-final with Chelsea — were fully stretched by Bristol Rovers before qualifying for a fourth-round tie at home to Southampton.

Dwight Marshall's goal 18 minutes into the second half was almost their first threatening effort either on target or off against a side that gained little reward for their neat and progressive football.

Having drawn at Newcastle last season, then played at the national stadium, Luton should not have been unnerved by Twerton Park, Bath. They took a long time to settle, however, playing up the slope in front of a packed house — the kick-off had to be delayed for 10 minutes to squeeze everyone in.

Rovers, eighth in Division Two, were left cursing the absence of striker Marcus Stewart, who had scored 11 times in eight games before sustaining a hamstring injury last Saturday, as they dominated the first half.

Two escapes within a minute reflected Luton's good fortune. Goal-

By Steve Tongue

Bristol Rovers.....0
Luton Town1

keeper Jürgen Sommer was lucky to concede neither a free kick nor a goal after rushing outside his area to retrieve Gary Waddock's wayward back pass. From the resulting corner, Scott Oakes cleared Gareth Taylor's header off the line.

Earlier Taylor's low drive had been deflected wide and Lee Archer headed over the bar as the home team threatened to exploit the inexperience of Luton's 17-year-old right-back Ben Chenery, playing his first senior game.

Two more good opportunities slipped away either side of the interval. Paul Miller, the scorer of four goals when Rovers beat their landlords, Bath City, in the first round, pulled his shot wide of the near post after leaving Marvin Johnson down and out by the touchline. Then Sommer did well to beat out Sterling's shot from close in.

Those lost opportunities looked even more costly when Luton climaxed their

first spell of any authority by taking the lead in the 63rd minute. Paul Telfer and Waddock began the move in mid-field, David Preece getting to the by-line for a cross so precise that Marshall headed it in almost without moving from his position.

Bristol Rovers: Parkin; Pritchard (Hardyman 80), Clark, Tillson, Gurney; Sterling, Browning, Channing, Archer, Miller, Taylor. **Subs:** M Davis, Higgs (g).

Luton: Sommer; Chenery, Peake, Johnson, Thomas; Waddock, Telfer, Preece; Marshall, Dixon, Oakes. **Subs:** Skelton, Woodsford, K Davis.

Referee: P Rejer (W Mids).