



● WE'RE GOING UP...David Oldfield fires in Luton's second yesterday.



● OH, NO, YOU'RE NOT... Alan White tries to clear as Rovers start to overwhelm Town.

■ Behind you! Relegation trap door looms large after latest humiliating home reverse

Luton 2 Bristol Rovers 4
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KENILWORTH Road
might as well have been
the Derngate Theatre as
Hatters put on a classic
Christmas panto.

It was farce upon farce as Luton gifted lively Rovers four early Christmas presents in 25 first-act minutes – leaving a dazzled audience in disbelieving stitches of laughter.

True, the second act may have been a more mundane affair, but what a blinding first act.

Written and directed by Lennie Lawrence and performed by The Really Useless Theatre Company, *Pussies In Boots* was quite simply a magical performance for all the family.

The play starred Darren Patterson as the awful right-back, who gave an inspired performance deputising for the usual Julian James (who, until an untimely injury in Chesterfield last Saturday, had been playing the part week in, week out).

Barely a minute had been played before Patterson made his side's first mistake – and was lucky not to be punished.

Not to be outdone, left-back Mitchell Thomas was soon playing for laughs. His dreadful mix-up with the inept Paul McLaren – a Tinkerbell-like figure in the centre of midfield in the absence of Gary Waddock – led directly to Rovers taking a 31st-minute lead.

Hatters didn't watch out, Beadle (Peter, not Jeremy) was about, and it was 3-2.

But it was the central defensive pairing of Alan White and Steve Davis that stole the show.

As a pantomime cow in action they were quite simply inspirational, though which one of them played the rear end is a matter for debate.

As a pair of defenders they were about as much use to Lennie Lawrence as seven lame reindeer are to Santa on Christmas night.

Davis somehow managed to put through his own net from 10 yards to give Rovers

Pussies in boots put on panto!

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same pantomime. I thought it was superb. Manager Lennie Lawrence made the usual excuses afterwards.

"Douglas is our tenth long-term injury. It doesn't get any easier at this place. Our players today made some unbelievable decisions. That header from Douglas into his own danger area was one of the hardest I have ever seen – it came back into our penalty area at the speed of light. Ian should have cleared for the second goal, and at times we were plodding along in the second half.

"I saw some things out there that were strange to say the least, but until we get a win under our belts at home it isn't going to change.

"All I can do is try to get these players through 90 minutes without making crazy mistakes.

"I picked a team with more attacking options to try and win it, but goals were going in at the other end at an unprecedented rate of knots."

Asked about his future at the club in light of recent results, Lawrence said: "If the directors were looking to get me out they would have done it a long time ago.

"That said, there is no way I am going to leave here.

"I am not a quitter."

If Mr Lawrence were to take a peek at opinion in Hatters' fanzine, he would find this a view not shared by many supporters, who are sick and tired of his excuses.

Interestingly, former boss David Pleat, soon to be a Director of Football at Spurs, also gets a savaging for his time at Luton.

Many are wondering when Lennie will follow the same exit as Pleat.

That said, his players are letting him down badly.

Team: Feuer, Patterson, Thomas, Douglas (Fotiadis 35), Davis, White, Allen, McLaren (Davies), Oldfield, Thorpe, Alexander. Sub not used: Waddock. Attendance, 5,266. Man of the match: Chris Allen (just a shame he picked a match in which ten team-mates played so abysmally to play his best game for Hatters).

● **Pussies in Boots is currently showing at Kenilworth Road every other Saturday (non-performances begin at 3pm).**

what was then a 2-1 lead, though Ian Feuer's role in the slapstick should not be overlooked.

The way he came charging out of his goal without so much as a call had to be seen to be believed. That and five or six horse-like hoofs straight into touch could make director Lawrence think seriously about recasting the pantomime cow next year.

Shortly after the Davis-Feuer clanger, an element of dramatic tension was injected – with referee David Orr having to intervene to bring a halt to a spot of ugly sabre-rattling between team-mates David Oldfield and Davis.

One can only assume the angry words exchanged between the two (not entirely suitable for a family show, I might add) were something along the lines of: "It was your fault we let that goal in, Steve". "Oh no it wasn't". "Oh yes it was".

And so to Alan White's tomfoolery.

As he launched a Charge of the Light Brigade out of defence he should have headed a simple clearance to safety from



● **A-LADD- IN TURMOIL: Steve Davis finds the going tough.**

just inside his own half, but instead allowed the ball to bounce, missed it completely, then to cries of "Look behind you" could only watch with a face redder than Rudolph's nose as the speedy Barry Hayles opened his early Christmas present with glee. 4-2, and game, set and match Bristol Rovers.

