

ROVERS 4-4-2

- Lee Jones** – Didn't have much to do, but looked solid when needed . . . 7
- Robbie Pethick** – A solid start at right-back. Tackled well and produced some good passes . . . 6
- Andy Thomson** – Just shaded it as pick of the side. Rarely put a foot wrong . . . 8
- Andy Tillson** – Slotted in as though he'd never been away. An accomplished return by the skipper . . . 8
- Trevor Challis** – Back to his reliable self. He got through a huge amount of work . . . 7
- Rob Trees** – His best game for a few weeks. Looked lively right to the end. . . . 7
- Ian Holloway** – Though under the weather, he hid it pretty well. . . . 6
- Josh Low** – Found it hard - but stick from the crowd isn't helping. . . . 5
- Jamie Shore** – The youngster battled well throughout. Another good all-round display. . . . 7
- Jamie Cureton** – Another busy performance. He was a handful for the Hatters. . . . 7
- Jason Roberts** – Signs of improvement are there in every game. He worked hard again. . . . 7



98/99

Goal: Rovers defender Andy Tillson (on ground) watches as his header makes its way past Luton keeper Kelvin Davies.

Tillson's starting to drive the Hatters mad

MAYBE Ian Holloway knew something nobody else did when he told Andy Tillson at 1.45pm that he'd be playing his first game for almost five months.

The club skipper may not make the net bulge too often, but he has a habit of doing it against Luton.

Tillson had scored to help Rovers to victory the previous two times the Hatters had been in town.

And when he completed an unusual hat-trick with a match-winning 26th-minute header from the player-manager's free kick, it was the perfect way to celebrate his 200th League appearance for the club.

It's fairytale stuff, but typical of Tillson that his first thoughts went out to the man he had ousted from the side, Steve Foster.

"I really feel for Fozzie," said Tillson. "He's been unlucky to come out of the team because he's been the main man for so long.

"He's the one who has brought young lads like Mark Smith and Mike Trought through alongside him over the last few months and he's helped the side keep quite a few clean sheets this season.

"But he'll be back - we've had a chat about the situation and things are fine. It's good competition, which is obviously a healthy thing for the club."

Tillson spent much of his recovery from knee surgery watching Rovers stockpile potential central defenders.

Though disappointed not to have been involved at Barnsley the previous week, confirmation of his comeback still came as a surprise.

"I was wondering whether I might get a place on the bench," Tillson confirmed. "Just playing again was great, but getting a goal too was really nice

"It's strange the way I've always seemed to score in this fixture over the last few years, but it's a nice habit to have. I suppose I ought to be singing: 'Can we play you every week!'"

Not all that long ago, it wouldn't have been hard to imagine Rovers conceding a leveller in the final 10 minutes of this sort of match - a blustery wind, a bobbly surface, Luton throwing men forward on the break as they chased the game with the home crowd getting increasingly edgy.

But Tillson's experience and constant encouragement alongside the mobile and impressive Andy Thomson played a major part in securing a welcome if largely unspectacular win.

There may not have been too much to stick in the memory from what was often a scrappy game of relatively few chances, but Rovers looked the likelier winners pretty much throughout.

The pace and trickery of Jason Roberts and Jamie Cureton up front meant a busy afternoon

for on-loan Sean Dyche - predictably and enthusiastically baited by home fans all afternoon - and his central defensive partner Marvin Johnson.

Keeper Kelvin Davis made a notable diving save to foil Cureton after the break, while Roberts' power on the turn was a constant worry for the depleted visitors. At the other end, the only real scare of note came early in the second half when Gary Doherty saw Rovers' defence open up in front of him for just about the only time in the match, but Lee Jones pulled off a good block.

"Having Tilly back gives us that bit of extra experience," said left-back Trevor Challis, who had handed over the captain's armband.

"You know he's going to win everything for you all day and it helps everyone else. I think we looked pretty solid."

VERDICT

Not always the greatest viewing, but this was a timely win for Rovers, who dug out the points.



Chris Swift

Substitutions

Substitutions: Gary Penrice (for Low, 81 mins)
Not used: David Lee, Stephane Leoni.

STAR MAN

ANDY THOMSON



OPPOSITION FILE

LUTON (4-4-2)	
KELVIN DAVIS	7
GRAHAM ALEXANDER	7
SEAN DYCHE	7
MARVIN JOHNSON	7
ALAN WHITE	6
ANDRE SCARLETT	6
PAUL MCLAREN	5
RAY MCKINNON	6
MICHAEL MCINDOE	5
STUART DOUGLAS	6
GARY DOHERTY	6

Substitutions

L'Andry Zahana Oni (for Scarlett, 74 mins)
Tresor Kandol for McIndoe, 77 mins)
Not used: Stuart Fraser

Division Two

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Ps
Fulham	29	19	5	5	43	22	62
Preston	31	17	8	6	56	32	59
Walsall	31	17	7	7	43	34	58
Gillingham	30	13	13	4	47	27	52
Man City	31	13	12	6	38	23	51
Bournemouth	29	14	8	7	48	29	50
Stoke	29	15	3	11	37	30	48
Wigan	30	13	7	10	44	30	46
Millwall	32	12	10	10	36	37	46
Chesterfield	30	13	7	10	34	27	46
Reading	30	11	10	9	36	40	43
Blackpool	31	10	11	10	32	34	41
Luton	29	10	8	11	38	39	38
ROVERS	28	8	12	8	40	32	36
York	32	9	9	14	40	52	36
Colchester	31	8	12	11	34	45	36
Wrexham	30	9	8	13	30	45	35
Burnley	32	8	10	14	36	52	34
Oldham	31	9	6	16	30	41	33
Lincoln City	30	8	6	16	30	47	30
Northampton	30	6	11	13	25	34	29
Wycombe	31	6	9	16	29	40	27
Notts County	29	6	7	16	28	44	25
Macclesfield	30	5	9	16	21	39	24

MATCH FACTS

ATTENDANCE: 6,361	FOULS CONCEDED: Rovers 7 Luton 10
SHOTS ON TARGET: Rovers 6 Luton 2	OFFSIDES: Rovers 11 Luton 5
SHOTS OFF TARGET: Rovers 5 Luton 7	GOALS: Rovers: Tillson 26 mins
CORNERS: Rovers 9 Luton 5	Luton: None

REFEREE

GEORGE CAIN (Seaforth, Merseyside) ... good

BOOKINGS

ROVERS: None
LUTON: Scarlett (foul, 58 mins)

FAN'S VIEW



"It was great to see Andy Tillson back. He had a really good game and steadied a few others down too. "It was a hard game and although we looked as though we were going to score a few more, I think we were just happy with a home win in the end."

John Kayes, Eastville.

