

ROVERS (5-3-2)

Lee Jones— Looked much more secure and made a couple of good stops **6**

Robbie Pethick— Supplied the balls forward for the first three goals, intended or not! Did well throughout **6**

Andy Thomson— Caught slightly for Luton's goal but otherwise solid **6**

Andy Tillson— Apart from a couple of stray clearances, showed bags of composure **6**

Steve Foster— Out-paced for Luton's goal but recovered well from a difficult opening spell **5**

Mark Walters— Effective in patches. Looked better when pushed forward **5**

David Hillier— Another sound midfield display. He never stopped beavering away **6**

Vitalijs Astafjevs— Gelled better and showed some creative touches **6**

Trevor Challis—A whole-hearted display in midfield and also did well when moved to left-back **5**

Jamie Cureton— Star man **7**

Jason Roberts— A cool finish for his first goal and created his second out of nothing **7**

Ratings are compiled on the assumption that a professional footballer earning his money is worth a five. The marks are a reflection of the opinion of our reporter at the match

Substitutions

Not used: Rob Trees, Mike Trought, Stephane Leoni, Nathan Ellington, Brian Parkin

Star Man

Jamie Cureton — The quality of his two finishes just shades the verdict ahead of Roberts

Opposition file

Luton (5-2-1-2)	
Nathan Abbey	3
Emmerson Boyce	5
Gary Doherty	5
Julian Watts	4
Marvin Johnson	5
Matthew Taylor	5
Adam Locke	6
Matthew Spring	5
Liam George	5
Stuart Douglas	6
Phil Gray	5

Substitutions

Alan White (for Spring, 64 mins) **4**
 Andrew Fotiadis (for George, 71 mins) **5**
 Not used: Gavin McGowan, Stuart Fraser, Daniel Tate

Division Two

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Preston	30	18	9	3	54	26	63
ROVERS	31	19	6	6	51	25	63
Wigan	30	15	13	2	49	24	58
Millwall	32	16	9	7	47	34	57
Burnley	30	15	10	5	41	24	55
Stoke	32	14	9	9	42	32	51
Notts County	32	14	8	10	47	36	50
Gillingham	28	14	7	7	50	34	49
Brentford	32	12	9	11	40	41	45
Luton	32	12	7	13	44	47	43
Bristol City	31	9	15	7	38	34	42
Wycombe	31	10	10	11	38	38	40
Oldham	31	11	7	13	35	36	40
Colchester	32	11	7	14	41	58	40
Bury	29	9	12	8	43	37	39
Bournemouth	32	11	6	15	43	49	39
Reading	31	7	12	12	39	50	33
Scunthorpe	31	7	10	14	30	48	31
Wrexham	31	7	10	14	30	48	31
Oxford Utd	31	8	7	16	27	47	31
Blackpool	32	6	10	16	34	52	28
Cardiff	30	5	12	13	28	41	27
Cambridge	30	5	9	16	36	47	24
Chesterfield	31	4	10	17	18	37	22

Luton Town 1 Rovers 4 Nationwide Div II, Kenilworth Road, Saturday, February 19, 2000



Goal king: Jamie Cureton pounces on a mistake by keeper Nathan Abbey to put Rovers 2-1 ahead.

Rovers' roadies cash in on the Abbey habit

IT'S hardly any wonder that the prospect of having Rovers in town means home clubs can expect one of their biggest gates of the season.

Away games have been unpredictable and entertaining in equal measure, and their last four League matches on enemy soil have now produced no less than 20 goals.

This was Rovers' ninth victory on the road – no side in senior English football has won more – and although home fans might not always relish the result when Ian Holloway's men come visiting, they can at least be pretty sure of getting their money's worth.

How the Kenilworth Road faithful were licking their lips when Luton took an early lead and threatened to add to it in an opening spell that was decidedly uncomfortable for the promotion-chasers.

But the Hatters' victory hopes were knocked flat thanks to a combination of Rovers' outstanding finishing and a couple of nightmare blunders by Luton's young keeper Nathan Abbey.

"I just want to apologise to our supporters. I made two mistakes and they knocked the stuffing right out of us," said the 21-year-old, who has already been shown the door once by Luton, only to be offered another chance – although boss Lennie Lawrence made it clear afterwards the

former trainee's time is now probably up.

"It was the blackest day of our season so far, although you wouldn't have thought it possible after the first 25 minutes," said Lawrence.

"Given what happened between the two penalty areas, 4-1 is a travesty. But on what happened inside them, it's not.

"The mistakes we made inside our own box destroyed us. You can't make errors like that against a team that are definitely going to finish in the top four, possibly the top two."

Rovers never got to grips with Luton in the opening stages and when Stuart Douglas out-ran Steve Foster and crossed for Phil Gray to fire the Hatters ahead it was a warning of things to come.

Douglas saw another effort come back off the post before Abbey's first blunder handed Rovers their equaliser. Robbie Pethick nodded back a weak kick and Jason Roberts took advantage to clip the ball past the keeper as he attempted to reposition himself.

Douglas should have restored Luton's lead but hesitated before delivering a shot which keeper Lee Jones did well to stop. Then the Abbey habit struck again to leave the Hatters bankrupt at the back.

This time the youngster spilled a relatively harmless ball forward and Jamie Cureton nipped in to take control, delivering a superb curling finish into the far corner of the net.

Rovers may have been fortunate to have been ahead at the interval but they looked more at ease for most of the second-half.

Cureton extended the lead when he latched on to another good ball from Pethick and cut inside to deliver another well-measured finish.

From then on the game opened up and, although Rovers looked the likelier to add to their tally, Luton still had chances with Mark Walters and Pethick both forced to make crucial clearances deep in their own territory.

Roberts and Cureton both went close before the leading scorer ended the game in style deep into stoppage time, his persistence and eye for goal paying off again.

Advancing towards the box, he saw his first shot blocked but pounced to crash the rebound past the flailing Abbey.

Verdict

Rovers made the most of their breaks – the finishing power of Cureton and Roberts was the decisive factor.

Chris Swift



Match facts



6	SHOTS ON TARGET:	9
3	SHOTS OFF TARGET:	6
7	CORNERS:	9
12	FOULS CONCEDED:	15
7	OFFSIDES:	9

ATTENDANCE: 6,520

Atmosphere



Entertainment



Bookings

LUTON

Johnson (foul, 67 mins), White (foul, 88 mins)

ROVERS

Pethick (unsporting behaviour, 88 mins)

Goals

Gray (13 mins)

Roberts (26 mins, 90 mins), Cureton (38 mins, 58 mins)

Fan's view

"You have to say we rode our luck at times but I don't think there's any doubt we were worthy winners. We scored some great goals and it was good to see the strikers on song again. Our rivals all dropped points so this is a great result."

Tony Bulmer, Coalpit Heath

Referee

Mick Fletcher (Warley, West Midlands) ... good