

CITY (4-3-3)

Billy Mercer

Star Man

8

Louis Carey

A determined display, made some telling tackles

7

Andrew Jordan

Continues to look beyond his years. Accomplished show

7

Keith Millen

Led City when they had to defend for their lives

8

Mickey Bell

Grew stronger and more adventurous as the game wore on. Thoroughly deserved winner

7

Scott Murray

Sharp and pacy, the Scot's quality goal capped another exciting performance

8

Paul Holland

A gutsy, tenacious display in the engine room by the rapidly-improving midfielder

7

Brian Tinnion

More quality passing and probing provided the culture in a gritty team display

7

Damian Spencer

Toiled hard to work openings without really getting the breaks

6

Tony Thorpe

Demonstrated some neat touches and enterprise, though quieter in front of goal than usual

6

Peter Beadle

Battled valiantly, though seldom got a good sight of Luton's goal

6

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

Matt Hill (for Spencer, 64 mins)

John Burns (for Thorpe, 90 mins)

Joe Burnell (for Murray, 90 mins)

Not used: Steve Phillips, Kevin Amankwaah

6

Star Man

Billy Mercer

Some outstanding saves and brave blocks in the heat of battle



Opposition file

Luton (3-5-2)

Ben Roberts

Emmerson Boyce

Julian Watts

Alan White

Marvin Johnson

Liam George

Paul McLaren

Matthew Spring

Phil Gray

Gary Doherty

Matthew Taylor

7

6

6

7

7

5

6

5

6

6

6

Substitutions

Adam Locke (for McLaren, 65 mins)

Stuart Douglas (for Gray, 74 mins)

Gavin McGowan (for Boyce, 76 mins)

Not used: Stuart Fraser, Nathan Abbey

6

Division Two

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Preston	42	25	11	6	68	33	86
Wigan	42	21	15	6	68	34	78
Millwall	42	22	12	8	68	41	78
Bristol Rovers	42	22	10	10	64	40	76
Burnley	42	21	13	8	58	41	76
Gillingham	41	22	9	10	69	44	75
Stoke	41	19	13	9	60	40	70
Notts County	42	18	10	14	58	48	64
CITY	42	14	18	10	53	48	60
Luton	42	16	8	18	58	61	56
Wycombe	42	14	13	15	51	49	55
Oldham	42	15	10	17	46	51	55
Reading	42	14	13	15	53	60	55
Bournemouth	42	16	6	20	54	56	54
Brentford	42	13	11	18	44	55	50
Wrexham	42	13	11	18	46	61	50
Bury	41	11	16	14	53	56	49
Colchester	42	13	9	20	53	76	48
Cambridge	42	11	12	19	60	58	45
Oxford Utd	42	11	7	24	38	69	40
Scunthorpe	42	9	12	21	39	67	39
Cardiff	41	7	17	17	40	58	38
Blackpool	42	7	15	20	42	70	36
Chesterfield	42	6	13	23	29	56	31

Luton Town 1 City 2 Nationwide Division II, Kenilworth Road, Tuesday, April 18, 2000



Three's a jolly good fellow: Mickey Bell leaves Luton keeper Ben Roberts stranded with City's second goal
Picture: Jeff Davis

Great Scott! City are back on song in style

NO sooner had the noise, colour and emotion of a packed Wembley Stadium subsided than City and their small but hardy band of followers were stepping into the tight, creaking confines of Kenilworth Road.

Mercifully, neither side believed this was a nothing game upon which little rested. The will to win was there, no doubting, with Luton making noises about wanting to finish the campaign above last night's opponents and City themselves keen to issue a pre-derby warning.

Caretaker boss Tony Fawthrop could have been forgiven for resting a few players ahead of Saturday's derby clash with Rovers.

But out trotted 10 of the 11 that began the Wembley final just two days earlier, with only the injured Aaron Brown missing with a knee problem.

In fact, the adventurous Fawthrop decided the time was ripe to inject a little excitement into an evening that couldn't have been further away from the grandeur of Sunday's spectacle.

He went for a three-pronged attack of Peter Beadle, Tony Thorpe and Damian Spencer as City set about their opponents with some neat approach work and intricate patterns.

Paul Holland and Beadle got in early headers and Luton really weren't in the game until a

promising spell around the 17th minute mark when their opponents' midfield temporarily dozed off.

Holland's slip allowed Paul McLaren to instigate a quick-fire move, which ended with Phil Gray's cross being headed firmly by Gary Doherty but straight at Billy Mercer.

Shortly after, City were again caught napping as Liam George set up Gray, who blazed over under pressure as he looked to wriggle clear.

There were two truly spectacular moments to savour in the half. The first came via Luton's on-loan Middlesbrough keeper Ben Roberts, who leapt brilliantly to his right to prevent Holland's ferocious drive from the edge of the box breaking his net. For good measure, Holland followed his effort up from the ensuing corner with another searing strike from distance that flew just over.

The second gem of the half arrived, not for the first time this season, from the boot of the flying Scott Murray. The winger took a long Brian Tinnion pass first time on the run to leave his marker for dead by breezing inside him before clipping a beauty over the head of a stunned Roberts and in for the opener in the 28th minute.

Luton almost managed to steal an equaliser seconds after the interval when Matthew Taylor's low shot took a deflection and was prevented from creeping in by the agile Mercer.

City responded and Bell caught a beauty with his left foot and was unfortunate to see the ball drift just over.

Mercer produced two more important stops, leaping well to collect George's sweet strike, then stooping low to clutch Gray's firm header close to him.

The visitors made their first change on 64 minutes, Spencer being replaced by Matt Hill, who took up the left-back spot, allowing Bell to push forward and give City a more conventional and balanced look.

And how the game came to light after that. No sooner had Bell managed to get clear of a static defence to score courtesy of Tinnion's splendid pass, than Doherty was pulling one back for Luton with a rampaging run and shot that squeezed past Mercer to set up a thrilling finish.

Verdict

City shook off the Wembley blues to fire a derby warning. It was heartening to see no-one in the mood to coast with the play-offs long gone.



Match facts

8

SHOTS ON TARGET:

7

5

SHOTS OFF TARGET:

3

5

CORNERS:

5

8

FOULS CONCEDED:

5

4

OFFSIDES:

6

ATTENDANCE: 4,771

Atmosphere

Entertainment

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Bookings

LUTON

none

CITY

Bell (foul, 88 mins)

Goals

Doherty (78 mins)

Murray (28 mins), Bell (77 mins)

Fan's view

“A very encouraging win to take into the derby. Jordan, Carey and Millen were outstanding, especially in the second half when Luton bombarded us. Every win is a positive for next season – they should give Fawthrop the job.”

Dave Gardner, Olveston

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Referee

Tony Leake (Darwen)... kept game going