

ROVERS (4-4-2)

Nick Culkin — Well protected by his defence, he didn't have a lot to do **6**

Che Wilson — Another sound performance at right-back **6**

Steve Foster — Led by example at the back where he literally shed blood for the cause **7**

Scott Jones — Should have been the matchwinner but for that mysterious flag **6**

Trevor Challis — Another wholehearted performance down the left **6**

Marcus Bignot — Patchy at times, but his effort couldn't be faulted **5**

Dwayne Plummer **STAR MAN 8**

Simon Bryant — Battled hard until being stretchered off **5**

Mark McKeever — Had a growing influence as the game wore on and went close with a volley **6**

Nathan Ellington — Lively again as Rovers looked the likelier winners **6**

Ansah Owusu — Worked hard again without much reward up front**5**

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.

Star Man

DWAYNE PLUMMER — His best game yet for Rovers. He excelled in midfield.



Substitutions

Vitalijs Astafjevs (for Bryant, 39) **6**
Clinton Ellis (for Owusu, 84 mins)
Not used: Justin Richards, Lewis Hogg, Ryan Clarke.

Opposition file

Luton (5-3-2)

Nathan Abbey **6**
Petri Helin **5**
Emmerson Boyce **6**
Julian Watts **5**
Richard Dryden **5**
Matthew Taylor **6**
Adam Locke **5**
Paul McLaren **6**
Keith Rowland **5**
Liam George **5**
Mark Stein **4**

Substitutions

Stuart Douglas (for Stein, 67) **5**
Jude Stirling (for McLaren, 79) **5**
Not used: Andrew Fotiadis, Peter Thomson, Scott Ward.

Who's next?

MARCH		
6	Northampton	(A)
10	Bury	(H)
13	Peterborough	(H)
17	Rotherham	(A)
20	Port Vale	(A)

Luton Town 0 Bristol Rovers 0 Nationwide Division Two, Kenilworth Road, Saturday, March 3



Controversy: The assistant referee, far left, keeps his flag down as Scott Jones beats former Bristol Rovers defender Richard Dryden in the air to head past Luton goalkeeper Nathan Abbey, above, for the goal that never was

Jones is mystified

GET down the bookies now and put some money on Rovers to grab a flukey winner at Northampton tomorrow.

Because there seems to be a distinct pattern of bad luck followed by good luck emerging from the Pirates' recent away games.

Their previous 0-0 draw on enemy soil came at Wigan last month when the referee later admitted he made a howler in not awarding the visitors a clear-cut penalty.

But at Bournemouth last week, Garry Thompson's battling troops had luck on their side when they nailed down a vital 2-1 win over the Cherries.

Lady Luck was again definitely dealing cards from the bottom of the deck at Kenilworth Road, with defender Scott Jones admitting he was as puzzled as everyone as to why his second-half header from a Marcus Bignot corner was ruled out.

"I've no idea," admitted the Yorkshireman. "There were bodies everywhere and I'm sure Luton had people on the posts. "The referee was only five yards away, the linesman was 25 yards away but he's given no goal. He said it was offside, but I can't see how."

Thompson too was bemused, saying: "The referee said he thought Ansah Owusu was interfering with play, although I don't know how as Scott headed the ball straight in.

"But the official has made a decision and there is nothing we can do - apart from get on with it."

Rovers have indeed been getting on with it quite nicely over the past five games, and could be

forgiven for feeling slightly aggrieved that they did not take all three points on the balance of play - especially after the break.

The early signs had been ominous as Luton made by far the better start and had Rovers on the back foot in the opening minutes, Paul McLaren clipping the angle of post and bar with a sixth-minute floater from 25 yards.

But Rovers then began to settle and impose themselves, stifling the Hatters' front men as they strengthened their grip in midfield.

Much of that was due to the impressive efforts of Dwayne Plummer, who had clearly been busting a gut to return to action after his dismissal at Millwall a month ago - and marked his reappearance with an outstanding display.

Things looked bad for his midfield colleague Simon Bryant when he was caught by an ugly challenge by McLaren late in the half and left the field on a stretcher, and it was something of a mystery how the Luton man escaped with just a lengthy talking-to from referee Paul Danson.

But Rovers gave a hint of what was to come shortly before the break when Nathan Ellington rose to meet a Che Wilson cross and saw the ball bounce off the crossbar via a deflection from Julian Watts.

It was Watts who squandered one of Luton's few clear openings early in the second half when he was badly off target with a free header from a corner.

But the impetus then started to go firmly Rovers' way as the home side spent long spells trapped inside their own half, angering their fans by frequently giving the ball away.

Apart from another misdirected header by Liam George, the remaining openings belonged to the visitors with Mark McKeever seeing a left-foot volley bounce a foot wide and the rock solid Steve Foster having a close-range chance blocked by the grounded Watts, who had also taken the full force of a stinging strike from substitute Vitalijs Astafjevs.

"We're looking like a side again and the fact we're on a bit of a roll has given us more confidence," reflected Jones.

"Perhaps we could have been a bit more direct because we had the ball a lot in the middle of the field without creating too many shots on goal, but that's something we can work on.

"We were delighted with the clean sheet. Steve Foster came off with his eye split open and that sums up what we are doing at the moment - throwing our bodies in the way and making it hard for teams.

"We knew it was a six-pointer coming into the game and feel we could have won it. But we stopped Luton making any ground on catching us up, so we're happy with that."

Post Verdict

ANOTHER useful point for Rovers, who looked the likelier of the two sides to grab all three. It's a result that stands them in good stead to Sixfields.

Chris Swift



Match facts

2	SHOTS ON TARGET:	6
5	SHOTS OFF TARGET:	6
5	CORNERS:	7
18	FOULS CONCEDED:	14
2	OFFSIDES:	2
ATTENDANCE: 7,405		
Atmosphere Entertainment		
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10		

Bookings

Luton	Rovers
None	Challis (dissent, 8) Ellington (foul, 48) Foster (foul, 60)

Sendings-off

None

Goals

Luton	Rovers
None	None

Referee

PAUL DANSON ... Poor



On the slide: Luton's Emmerson Boyce takes out Rovers striker Nathan Ellington

Pictures by
JEFF
DAVIS

IT'S YOUR SHOUT

A fan's view, by Tim Blake, of Redfield, Bristol

We should have won

“ I THOUGHT there was only one team who could win it in the second half, and I couldn't see why Scott Jones' header was disallowed. I was right behind the goal and didn't see anything wrong.

Neither team looked like they ought to be in the bottom five given the football they tried to play, but I don't know how Paul McLaren wasn't sent off for that horrible tackle on Simon Bryant. The ref spent about five minutes talking to him and then didn't even book him.

"I thought Steve Foster was superb with some of his tackles and in the way he read the game, and Scott Jones did really well too.

"I'd probably have taken a draw before the game – although in the end I don't think it was a fair result. But it's five games unbeaten now and it bodes well for Tuesday's trip to Northampton.” **”**

by disallowed goal

Your turn

WE hope you enjoy It's Your Shout, the fans' feature which gives you the chance to air your opinion on Rovers matches.

If you would like to be considered for this slot in the future, contact us:

By Post – Sports Desk, Evening Post, Temple Way, Old Market, Bristol, BS99 7HD.

By Fax – 0117 934 3575

By e-mail – epsport@bepp.co.uk

EVENING POST GREEN 'UN

We welcome fans' views on any sporting issue. So don't forget you get any sporting matter off your chest in the Green 'Un every week – just use the above methods of communication.

The table

Nationwide League, Division Two										
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts			
Millwall.....	34	21	6	7	67	32	69			
Rotherham.....	33	18	8	7	55	39	62			
Reading.....	32	18	6	8	62	35	60			
Walsall.....	35	17	9	9	59	40	60			
Wigan.....	35	15	14	6	42	30	59			
Stoke.....	33	15	12	6	53	33	57			
Bristol City.....	33	14	10	9	53	36	52			
Notts County.....	33	15	7	11	44	46	52			
Northampton.....	35	13	10	12	39	43	49			
Brentford.....	33	11	12	10	37	45	45			
Bournemouth.....	33	11	11	11	52	42	44			
Wrexham.....	32	12	8	12	45	49	44			
Oldham.....	34	11	10	13	40	45	43			
Bury.....	33	12	7	14	34	42	43			
Peterborough.....	33	11	9	13	40	44	42			
Wycombe.....	30	11	8	11	31	32	41			
Colchester.....	33	10	9	14	37	43	39			
Cambridge Utd.....	34	10	8	16	44	55	38			
Port Vale.....	30	9	8	13	34	38	35			
ROVERS.....	30	7	13	10	32	34	34			
Swindon.....	32	8	9	15	31	50	33			
Luton.....	32	8	7	17	40	59	31			
Swansea.....	32	5	9	18	31	54	24			
Oxford Utd.....	32	4	4	24	32	68	16			



Carried away: Midfielder Simon Bryant is stretchered off



Point gained: Garry Thompson acknowledges the travelling fans



Holloway looks on the bright side after defeat

NEW QPR manager Ian Holloway remained positive despite his side's 3-1 home defeat against Sheffield United which dropped them back into the First Division relegation zone.

Holloway, sacked by Bristol Rovers at the end of January, remains without a home League win this season.

Michel Ngonge had given his QPR side an interval lead but two goals by Georges Santos inspired the Blades to victory.

"The big thing is that we have another game on Wednesday where we can come back from this," said Holloway.

"What we need is more confidence and more faith in the players' ability. It's all in the mind and I think that when they came back at us it looked like we didn't want to be asked any questions."

Holloway was quick to suggest he can improve the side.

"I would have liked 46 games to work with but I haven't so we just have to get on with it," he said.

"I have a couple of loans and a little bit of money to spend but it was only right that I had a look at the players here first.

"We know what to expect from Watford on Wednesday so we have to dig deep and work hard on our game and things will get better quickly."

Sheffield boss Neil Warnock felt his side thoroughly deserved their victory, although he admitted: "It needed a few words from me at half-time.

"I felt even in the first half we were a better side than QPR. They were playing the best they could but I thought we were only in third gear.

Matches that matter

THE next four games for the teams down with Bristol Rovers around the foot of the Second Division are as follows:

OXFORD
Mar 10 Swindon (h), Mar 13 Port Vale (h), Mar 17 Luton (a), Mar 24 Rotherham (h)

LUTON
Mar 6 Cambridge (h), Mar 10 Millwall (a), Mar 17 Oxford (h), Mar 23 Brentford (a)

PORT VALE
Mar 10 Peterborough (h), Mar 17 Northampton (a), Mar 20 Bristol Rovers (h), Mar 24 Wigan (h)

SWANSEA
Mar 7 Stoke (a), Mar 10 Northampton (h), Mar 17 Swindon (a), Mar 24 Wrexham (h)

SWINDON
Mar 6 Oldham (h), Mar 10 Oxford (a), Mar 17 Swansea (h), Mar 20 Colchester (a)