

Sport 1

New boss is an escape expert

NEW MANAGER Lennie Lawrence quickly set out his requirements when he moved into Kenilworth Road.

BY BRIAN SWAIN

He took over a team stranded on the bottom of the table, with four wins from the first 22 league matches, and said: "My target is to keep Luton in the First Division. That means we need to win at least ten games. And that is possible. It is a great challenge, but I am confident we can move away from the bottom of the table."

He relishes the fight that lays ahead, seeing it as a kind of rerun of the job he had to do for much of his nine years when manager of Charlton. "I have had seven years as a manager in this league," he said. "I have had experience of battling against relegation, and I think I can bring that experience to bear on the situation here."

"We are in a relegation battle, and

need to face up to that. All the remaining league games will be cup-ties."

"I don't want to go into the Second Division, for the club's sake, the players' sake, the fans' sake and for my sake... in that order."

Neither the club nor the manager is saying what sort of contract has been agreed, but 48-year-old Lawrence's terms are understood to be much more generous than Terry Westley accepted for his first chance as a manager.

Lawrence has no history of operating as a duo with an assistant who has accompanied him on his career, and said he would share his time to choose his right hand man.

Coaches John Moore and Wayne

Turner are being kept on, and are among the contenders. But Lawrence said: "I have four or five people on a list in my head. Two have Luton connections."

One is Ricky Hill, currently coaching in America, and I believe the other is Trevor Hartley, once assistant to David Pleat, but now out of work after being sacked by Sunderland when Peter Reid took over at Roker Park last summer.

For the Christmas matches Moore and Turner had a heavy involvement in team preparation, with Lawrence laying down the general rules. He promised he would not settle for "bush the long ball" soccer. "We will play a passing game," he said.

He confirmed the report in these pages last week that he had made the approach to Luton Town to ask for the job when he heard Westley had left.

"I wanted this job," he said. "I just felt it was right for me and right for the club."

"I worked at Charlton on a limited budget, and I see many other comparisons."

Chairman David Kohler made a point of stressing: "The board have got the man they chose." About 20 people, many of them with Luton Town connections in the past, had made contact about the job, but the final choice came down to Lawrence or Mike Walker, formerly boss of Norwich and Everton.

Walker suggested that Leicester City had done him down by the way they handled the appointment of their new manager. He had been interviewed by Leicester three times, and it went on so long, he said, that he had to tell Luton to count him out of the Kenilworth Road vacancy.

In the end Leicester appointed Martin O'Neill, a few days after he walked out on Norwich City.

But Kohler said that despite Walker's comments, the Luton job was never his for the taking. "We carried out interviews, looked at the candidates, and all the directors came to the same conclusion," he said.

"Lennie Lawrence was the man for us: it felt right, and we knew it. We are delighted to appoint a manager with Lennie's knowledge and experience, who has seen it all done, and who is well respected within the game."

Hatters new appointment



THE CAP FITS: New Town manager Lennie Lawrence tries a club boater for size and is ready to be a Hatter

Lawrence starts with no money in the kitty

AFTER Terry Westley spend £2million in five months on players, Lennie Lawrence started his new career with no money in the kitty to fund further purchases.

He said that before he thought about the trans-

fer market, his priority was to have a good look at the whole Luton Town squad - "to get them all fit, and to try to extract everything from them."

He realised that a significant sum of money had already been laid out, and added: "I am not say-

ing that no more is going to be spent, but I will expect to generate cash from sales first."

He will also look at the wages structure at Kenilworth Road, after some steep increases in recent months.



CHOICE: Lennie Lawrence with David Kohler, as his appointment as the Hatters' 21st boss is announced

Manager thinks he is the right peg in the right hole

LENNY Lawrence described himself as "the right peg in the right hole" when he became the 21st manager of Luton Town.

Anyone who remembers his days at Charlton will know just how true that is. There, with a high profile chairman, he looked after a club that in many ways mirrors the Town - small crowds, shortage of money, low cash resources but high ambitions, with some glory days still well remembered.

His playing experience was confined to non-league teams Croydon, Carshalton and Sutton Utd. He moved into management as an assistant at Plymouth, where he also became caretaker manager, and at Lincoln City. He was reserve team coach at Charlton

before being promoted to the manager's chair in 1982. Four years later he took them into the old First Division, now the Premiership, thanks to a play-off win over Leeds.

Against all the odds Lawrence kept Charlton in the top flight for four years, despite the need to sell top players to balance the books.

After nine years he left to join Middlesbrough, and took them into the Premiership in his first season, in 1992. But they were relegated after only a year, and it was an open secret in football that when he left, in 1994, he had been squeezed out to enable Boro to recruit Bryan Robson.

Lawrence moved on to Bradford in May 1994, leaving last month. He had been out of work since then, but doing a little scouting for

other clubs.

His duties rarely brought him to Luton - the last time he saw the Town play before Saturday's home game with Huddersfield was at Bath last January, when Dwight Marshall's goal earned the Town an FA Cup replay victory over Bristol Rovers.

Marshall is one of only two players Lawrence knew personally when he came into his new job - the striker spent some time on loan from Plymouth to Aylesome Park during Lawrence's spell on Teesside.

The other who has played under Lawrence previously is John Taylor: Lawrence bought him from Bristol Rovers for Bradford for £300,000, then sold him to the Town in March, just over a year later, for £200,000.



TYING THE KNOT: Lennie Lawrence opens his ties with the Hatters in a sartorial vein

Sport 2

Great escape trick night work again

BY BRIAN SWAIN

THEY USED to call Lennie Lawrence Houdini when he was at Charlton, for his astonishing ability to escape a near-permanent threat of relegation.

And in his first game as manager of Luton Town, he proved he can be the great escapologist in 90 minutes, and showed us enough to suggest he can do it at Kenilworth Road over the second half of the season.

Not even a most unseasonable "gift" of a red

LUTON TOWN 2 HUDDERSFIELD 2 (half-time 1-0)

card for skipper Steve Davis could detract from the pleasure that walked around the stands as a ten-man team battled back from a goal down to snatch a late equaliser.

It might even have been an improbable victory, from a team given new life and a new shape

Saturday's match facts

TOWN: Fear; Patterson, Steve Davis, Marvin Johnson, Thomas; Oakes, Waddock, McLaren (Oldfield 63 mins), Thorpe (Harvey 51 mins); Taylor (Guentchev 63 mins), Marshall.

HUDDERSFIELD: Francis; Jenkins, Sinnott, Gray, Cowan (Collins 52 mins); Dalton, Bullock, Makiel, Booth, Jeppson. Unused subs: Dunn and goalkeeper Norman.

GOALS: 1-0 35 mins: Dwight Marshall after going round Lee Sinnott and the goalkeeper from Paul McLaren's through pass; 1-1 56 mins: Andy Booth, through the middle from Tom Cowan's pass seven minutes after Steve Davis had been sent off; 1-2 64 mins: Lee Makiel, through the same gap from Ronnie Jeppson's headed pass; 2-2 79 mins: David Oldfield, flying header from flare right wing

crack by Dwight Marshall.

OTHER ATTEMPTS: Town ten saved

and three wide; Huddersfield six saved and seven wide. Corners: 7-6 to Huddersfield.

SENT OFF: Steve Davis, after 49 minutes, for what looked like a very good tackle on Andy Booth on the edge of the box.

REFEREE: David Allison, a Lancashire schoolmaster who was not top of the form with the Town. The view from the Pressbox was that his red card for the Town skipper was a diabolical decision.

ATTENDANCE: 7,076, higher than for the previous two home games, despite the cold wet weather and alleged counter-attractions of Christmas shopping.

ENTERTAINMENT: A real Christmas cracker. Pity about the ref, but Lennie Lawrence's first game in charge offered plenty of promise of better things to come, especially if he can sort out the defence.

A & B Sports NHC Sunday League

PREMIER DIVISION				
	P	W	D	L
Horton	12	6	2	31
Kent Ath	12	6	5	23
St Joseph's	9	3	0	48
Luton OB	9	7	0	24
Green Man	11	4	3	25
Leavesley	6	5	0	31
FC Houghton	12	2	0	14
Crawley Sports	11	2	10	48
Slag	10	1	9	11

DIVISION ONE				
	P	W	D	L
Celtic Res	9	7	2	0
Trident Park	11	6	1	26
Houghton Town	7	0	1	29
Crawley Harriers	10	3	2	16
Crawley Rovers	8	4	0	13
Ewe & Lamb	10	2	5	17
Wyvern	8	4	1	15
Libby Str	6	2	2	8
Whitehead	8	2	2	13
St Joseph's Res	5	1	2	9
St Andrew's Res	10	1	1	9

DIVISION TWO				
	P	W	D	L
Luton OB Res	8	8	0	28
Ceddington	10	6	2	24
Crawley Harriers	8	6	2	23
CSFC	8	5	2	19
Lea Sports	11	4	3	25
Libby Str Res	13	4	3	21
NT Supton	9	4	4	17
Black Swan	13	4	1	29
Bosley	12	3	1	19
AGF Wignore	12	2	2	21
Silsoe Rgrs	11	3	7	20

DIVISION THREE				
	P	W	D	L
Magnum	10	6	3	31
Gill Windows	9	8	1	24
AFV Taverers	10	5	2	34
Tilly Topers	8	6	0	21
O Moston FC	9	4	4	22
Limbury Utd	7	4	0	17
Edison Rovers	8	4	0	13
Red Star	8	2	4	20
Trident Park Res	10	1	8	13
FC Houghton C	9	1	6	11

DIVISION FOUR				
	P	W	D	L
Lewesley Social	8	6	2	0
Arch Park	12	5	3	4
Houghton Tn Res	8	3	4	19
Britannia	5	5	5	21
Concorde 61	9	3	4	22
AFV Oakley	8	3	3	21
Laporte	10	4	1	5
Lea Sports Res	8	2	2	11
AFV Park Town	7	2	3	9
Pitt Utd	11	3	6	21
Wyvern Res	10	1	9	14

DIVISION FIVE				
	P	W	D	L
Hanscomb Cab	8	6	0	23
Markyate	8	5	1	22
AC Treppert	11	2	4	26
Barbarians	9	4	2	31
AFV Stopley	11	5	0	27
Dawn Rovers	6	4	1	25
Hexton Res	6	4	1	18
Borough Res	10	1	3	16
Wells Star	9	2	3	9
Royal Mail	8	0	3	8
Streatham Cheq	10	1	1	16

DIVISION SIX				
	P	W	D	L
Woodstock	9	6	1	28
Sporting Luton	10	6	1	30
Red Lion Sundon	10	1	1	33
Windmill	11	5	3	27
FC Tockington	9	5	3	30
Black Swan Res	10	4	1	28
Fidus	7	4	1	12
Houghton Regis	11	4	2	21
Luton HYS	7	3	2	21
Lymington	9	3	1	27
O Most H Res	10	3	1	26
Lillye SR Res	8	1	2	8
Swan Rovers	12	2	2	19
Pulsebeat	9	1	1	16

DIVISION SEVEN				
	P	W	D	L
Magnum Res	12	1	3	36
AC Hopton	12	2	3	42
Loyal Luton	8	1	5	38
Island Hill	10	6	2	30
Leagrave Vets	11	6	1	33
Sadras	10	1	4	29
O Moston FC Rgrs	11	3	2	35
Markyate Res	14	1	5	32
King William	13	5	6	27
Wellington Arms	10	2	1	15
Red Star Res	12	1	10	41
Air Express	12	1	1	41

Saturday's Big Match



LUTON TOWN FOOTBALL CLUB

Inquiry into rival stadium schemes

RIVAL schemes for a new Hatters' stadium are likely to be put under the spotlight together at a huge planning inquiry in the summer.

Luton Council chief planning officer David Watts revealed last week that the inquiry will start on July 9. The inquiry has been set up to decide whether to give the go-ahead for the Kohlerdome stadium on land near Stockwood Park and the M1 junction 10 - the London Road turn off. The inquiry is scheduled to last four weeks.

There will also have to be a public inquiry on a second application - submitted by Wyncote Developments PLC - for a stadium on the same spot. Luton Council chief planning officer David Watts told the council's planning committee last week he hoped the Wyncote application could be dealt with at the same time as the Kohlerdome inquiry. That would be better than having separate inquiries for the two planning applications, suggested Mr Watts - who told the committee that if both applications went to the same public inquiry it would last longer than four weeks.

He said that, as things stood at the moment, the council would ask at the inquiry for the Kohlerdome project to be approved. It would also ask for the Wyncote application to be rejected, as the council had not had enough details on how the developers intended to handle traffic problems around the stadium area. And the council wanted Wyncote to say how they thought shops included in the scheme would affect other shops within a wide area.

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Luton & South Beds League

PREMIER DIVISION				
	P	W	D	L
Stockwood Arms	11	7	2	32
Christians	9	7	1	33
Lewesley Social	7	7	0	27
AC Caddox	8	6	2	29
White Swan	11	5	2	27
Singh Sabha	9	6	0	24
Harveys	9	4	3	26
White Swan Res	11	2	5	19
Stadium	10	5	2	16
Markyate	11	2	0	13
Luton Eagles	11	2	0	13
Luton OB	8	0	7	13
Thorn's De La Rue	10	0	1	16

DIVISION TWO				
	P	W	D	L
Blith Church	12	11	0	1
St James	12	8	2	47
Whitbread Log	12	7	2	32
Lewesley Park	11	6	1	21
Dragon	11	3	3	26
Hockey Teachers	10	5	5	37
White Swan	12	5	2	37
First & Last	12	4	4	22
Whitehead	11	3	3	26
International	10	5	0	25
Christians	12	4	1	21
CEG Res	11	3	1	26
Filwick Town FC	14	2	10	23
Markyate	11	3	1	16
Heron Manor	12	0	4	21

Local league tables each week in the News-Gazette