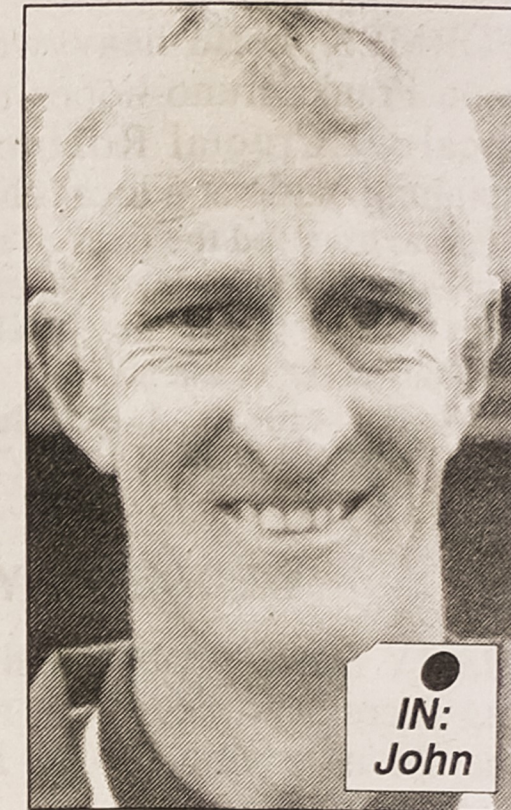
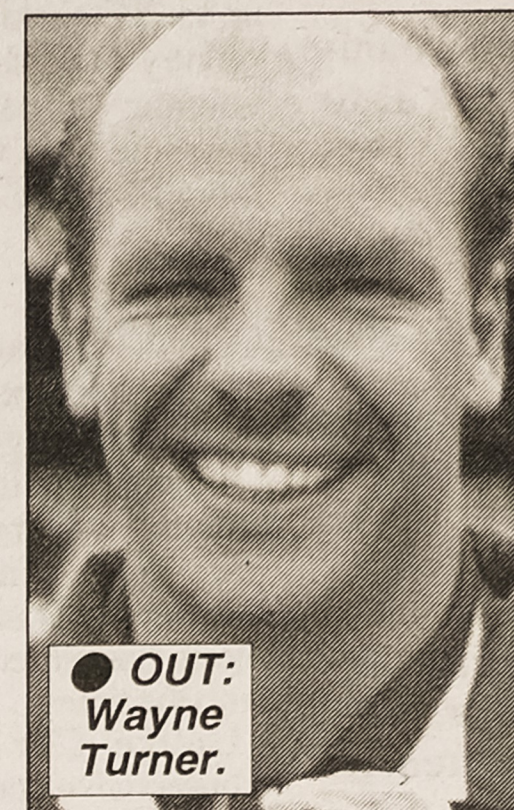


Turner carries can for crisis



87/98

Luton Town 0 Walsall 1
By PETE KENYON
WAYNE Turner has been sacked as coach as Hatters' boss Lennie Lawrence searches desperately for a winning formula.

Youth team coach and former manager John Moore was Lawrence's right-hand man on the bench yesterday – and is expected to take the job full time as from next week.

Moore, who is maybe the sort of disciplinarian hard man Luton need to despatch the much needed kick up the proverbial, has led Hatters youth team to the top of the South-East Counties League table and masterminded last year's highly successful FA Youth Cup semi final run.

He also led Luton to their highest-ever place during his only season in charge – seventh in the old division one in 1986/7.

Turner, meanwhile, is understood to be considering his future at the club after being offered a coaching run at a lower level.

A full announcement will be made tomorrow.

But despite the changes – less than a week after Hatters' fans were calling for Lawrence's head on a plate – Luton plummeted to a fourth consecutive home defeat.

A spectacular John Hodge volley from an acute angle was enough for Walsall to take all three points from yesterday's battle of the basement.

Once again it was the same old story – plenty of possession but as much attacking idea as a hastily retreating Italian army.

Again the defence, and Alan White in particular, defended the trenches heroically only for the heavy artillery up front to fire more blanks than a neutered donkey.

Four shots on target may be a 100 per cent improvement on last week's defeat by third

division Torquay, but it simply is not good enough.

If snatching defeat out of the jaws of victory was an art form Hatters would be the Salvador Dalis of football.

In a promising first half Walsall's diminutive goalkeeper Jimmy Walker had to use every available millimetre to deny Paul McLaren's goalbound chip, then had to race out of his box to smother Tony Thorpe's effort.

But despite some pretty passing it was all too predictable.

Mystic Meg does not need a crystal ball to see into Luton's future: Fotiadis and Thorpe, with their backs to goal every time they received the ball, and midfielders totally unwilling to run into space from deep positions.

If Gary Waddock could pass as well as he could bark orders he



● **MISSED:** David Oldfield fires over during the first-half yesterday, while Lennie Lawrence (right) looks a worried



● **MINE:** Tony Thorpe in action. Pictures: ANDY HANDLEY

would be playing Premiership football.

Unfortunately he can't, and surely the time has come to give

McLaren the holding role and bring in Matthew Spring to add a creative spark.

After the match Lennie

Lawrence confessed that Waddock would have been dropped to the substitutes' bench but for central defender Darren Patterson's injury which reared its ugly head on the morning of the match.

"This season is unprecedented in terms of injury and bad luck" said Lawrence. "If I was a manager here for another 30 years this run would not happen again."

"I have been in charge at Charlton where there has been a transfer embargo, no ground, and poor results, but this situation is even worse than that."

"In the first hour we did better than we have done recently. Our performance was acceptable but we did not create enough chances. Once the goal went in you saw the classic situation of a team without confidence."

"That game had 0-0 written all over it and if it had stayed like that it would have been a start for us. Their goal was a wonderful strike but it was totally out of the blue and totally out of place in this league let alone this game."

Meanwhile striker Tony Thorpe called on fans to get off his back saying, "They can say what they want and I wouldn't mind people having a go if I had the chances, but I haven't."

And he warned "We have got to start getting results or we are going to get into a relegation battle and Luton are not very good at those sort of battles."

Team: Feuer, James, Small, Waddock (Spring 74), White, Davies (Douglas 65), Fotiadis, McLaren, Oldfield, Thorpe, Alexander. Sub not used: Harvey. Booked: James (55).

Attendance: 4,726.