



■ **ABOVE:** Steve Banks turns away Stuart Douglas' effort
 ■ **RIGHT:** Mitchell Thomas gets back in the thick of the action



Fans are ejected after a half-time showdown

UP to ten members of the Loyal Luton Supporters Club were given a police escort out of Kenilworth Road after an extraordinary half-time showdown with the press.

The men – angry at press reports linking a LLSC leaflet with a police investigation into the planting of a firebomb in former chairman David Kohler's letterbox – threatened programme editor Brian Swain, used racist language to describe Mr Kohler, and showered reporters with coffee.

Trouble flared in the Nick Owen lounge bar underneath the main stand – which reporters share with supporters – during the half-time break.

Several members of the LLSC singled out 60 year-old Mr Swain for a confrontation and pointed to an article in the match programme which reported the resignation of its president, former Hatters star Mick Harford.

The article quoted a letter Harford wrote to Mr Kohler in which he 'apologised for any personal distress' caused by the 'unsavoury remarks about yourself which are attributed to myself.'

The leaflet in question – 2,200 of which were distributed before a home game against Wrexham six days before the petrol bomb was

**Luton Town 1
 Blackpool 0
 By PETE KENYON**

planted – was highly critical of Kohler's regime and questioned the former chairman's financial commitment to the club. Harford's name was on the letterhead.

Harford, now a coach at Premiership Wimbledon, wrote to Kohler: "Let me assure you that I was not personally contacted before this publication went to print and had no prior knowledge of its content. Consequentially I wish to totally and absolutely distance myself from any comments contained in it."

"In the meantime I shall be writing to the LLSC to let them know of my annoyance that they printed material attributed to me without my prior consent and to relinquish my presidency of their association forthwith."

As reported exclusively in this newspaper last week, Metropolitan Police and Bedfordshire Police's Football Liaison Officer Peter Palmer are considering the leaflet as part of their investigation. The ejected supporters protested their innocence as they were led out of the ground by PC Palmer.

They claimed they only wanted an 'exchange of views' with Mr Swain, who is a former Luton News sports editor and has reported on Luton

Town for 40 years.

During Tuesday night's home clash against Notts County the LLSC handed reporters a disclaimer in which it vehemently denied its leaflet might have incited the petrol bomb incident.

But the scenes in the Nick Owen lounge yesterday were nothing short of a disgrace.

Mr Kohler was dismissed as a 'Jew Boy' as tempers nearly boiled over. A partition wall separating supporters from the press was jostled as the angry supporters tried to get closer.

Club secretary Cherry Newbry, who took the decision to eject them, was taunted with the question: "Who's going to watch this load of rubbish when we've gone."

Mr Swain said afterwards: "I feel very sad for Luton Town today. You try to report the facts and this is what you get."

On the pitch a superb solo goal by Stuart Douglas – his first since early January – sealed the points for crisis-hit Hatters.

After a first half in which Hatters created a series of chances without putting any of them away, it looked like being a familiar story of an opportunity lost.

But ten minutes after the break Douglas caught Martin Bryan in possession. After carrying the ball to the edge of the box unchallenged, the number nine looked to have shown too much of it to substitute defender Phil Thompson.

But Thompson failed to seize his opportunity

to get in a tackle and Douglas took the ball wide before firing home under the impressive Steve Banks from a tight angle just as the chance seemed to have gone.

Phil Gray, who made an impressive return from injury, missed a sitter a few minutes later when he completely missed Liam George's super low cross while unmarked in a central position six yards out.

But Luton just could not find a killer second, and Blackpool, who would have conceded a hatful but for the heroics of Banks in goal, gradually took control of the end game.

Kelvin Davis pulled off a magnificent diving save at full stretch to deny Phil Clarkson with just ten minutes left, and five minutes later Davis had to be on the top of his game once again to ensure Alan White's suicidal backpass did not result in a late equaliser.

Substitute Adam Noland gratefully received White's appalling act of generosity but could not find a way past Davis with debutant Chris Willmott, playing in a central defence missing both skipper Marvin Johnson and Sean Dyche through injury, making a timely clearance as the ball ran loose.

Team: Davis, Alexander, Thomas, Spring, (McGowan 74), Willmott, White, Harrison, McKinnon, Douglas, Gray, George (Cox 80).
Sub not used McLaren.

Man of the match: Thomas.

Attendance: 4646.