



**BALL GAMES:** Man-of-the-match Mitchell Thomas challenges Blackpool star man Steve Banks in the first-half of Saturday's 1-0 victory for the Hatters at Kenilworth Road. The game was Thomas' first this year after a groin injury.

## Gerry stays for now

GERRY HARRISON'S loan stay at Kenilworth Road has been extended to a third month.

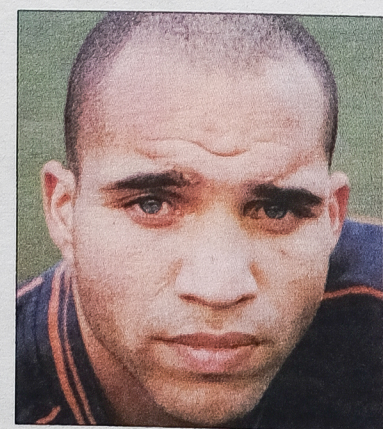
But manager Lennie Lawrence had to first ask for permission from outgoing chairman David Kohler and all three directors Cliff Bassett, Chris Green and Nigel Terry before an extra month was sanctioned.

Sunderland can recall Harrison at any time during the third month stay and accept any offers from interested clubs before the March transfer deadline.

If Harrison stays the full month, Luton will also have to agree a permanent deal for the former Burnley utility man in four week's time to avoid him returning to the Stadium of Light.

Lawrence is hoping to come to a similar arrangement with Bristol City over Sean Dyche, whose second month loan finishes after the Fulham game next Tuesday, but the Ashton Gate club are thought to be reluctant.

The Hatters striker is also set to miss this Saturday's trip to Walsall after the Irish FA enforced the five-day rule which means Doherty must report for national training



**THIRD MONTH:** Gerry Harrison.

tomorrow. It is a decision that baffles Lawrence, who said this week: "I can't believe that attitude. It's staggering. To lose him to that rule is nothing short of scandalous."

"He might not have started on Saturday but he's a handy man to have on the bench."

●Luton's junior team went down 2-0 to Colchester in Saturday's South East Counties League match.

## Chris in new deal talks

LENNIE LAWRENCE entered negotiations with Chris Willmott's agent this week to discuss a new contract for the 21-year-old defender.

Willmott's present deal runs out this summer and Lawrence sees no reason to delay discussions any further after his confident display against Blackpool on Saturday.

Lawrence had always intended to offer the Bedford-born centre-half an extension this summer.

"He was always staying even if he'd never played for the first team this season," the Hatters boss said.

"There was no way we'd release him. You have to wait longer for centre-halves and goalkeepers."

"He also lost nine months with a cruciate knee ligament injury."

"In fact, Trevor Peake, a well-respected judge of centre backs, would have put him a tad in front of Matthew Upton before his injury."

"He did well on Saturday and he's another one I now know can go in and do a job."

"He'll be a Luton player, there's no doubt about that."

Despite his impressive debut, Willmott is likely to be replaced for Saturday's trip to third-placed Walsall with Marvin Johnson (groin) and Sean Dyche (bruised ribs) both making encouraging progress this week.



**STAYING:** Chris Willmott.

## Sorry Seasideers sent packing by super Stuart

LUTON TOWN took their first steps towards putting the trauma of the last fortnight behind them with a nervous 1-0 victory over Blackpool.

Stuart Douglas' excellent individual goal split the two sides at the end but, for 80 minutes, there was only one side in the game.

The Hatters peppered Steve Banks' goal in a one-sided encounter but almost paid for their failure to build the comfortable margin they deserved when the visitors pressed for a late equaliser.

Kelvin Davis was redundant in an impressive first-half performance from the home side which only lacked goals.

Lennie Lawrence dropped Paul McLaren and Gavin McGowan from his starting 11, bringing in Liam George to operate down the left flank in front of the recalled Mitchell Thomas.

Matthew Spring was pushed out wide right with Gerry Harrison and Ray McKinnon forming an effective and solid central-midfield partnership.

Thomas' aerial presence, strength and occasional forays upfield were welcome qualities in a makeshift Hatters defence that went on to keep the club's first clean sheet for 19 games.

In the absence of Sean Dyche, Marvin Johnson and Gary Doherty, 21-year-old Chris Willmott made his debut alongside Alan White in the centre and made an assured start to his league career.

Up front, Phil Gray returned to the side and could have grabbed a hat-trick before the break.

The Northern Ireland international hit two tame efforts at Banks and saw a speculative 30-yard shot dip over.

Graham Alexander's venomous 25-yard volley also shaved Banks' crossbar and George and Harrison exchanged passes to carve open a mesmerised visitors defence, only for the harassed Blackpool keeper to save well at George's feet.

### matchfacts

#### LUTON 1 BLACKPOOL 0

●HATTERS: Kelvin Davis, Graham Alexander, Mitchell Thomas, Matthew Spring (Gavin McGowan, 75), Chris Willmott, Alan White, Gerry Harrison (Paul McLaren, 90), Ray McKinnon, Stuart Douglas, Phil Gray, Liam George (Jimmy Cox, 84).

●BLACKPOOL: Steve Banks, Marvin Bryan, John Hills, Clarke Carlisle, Ian Hughes, David Bardsley (Phil Thompson, 36, Adam Nowland, 66), Michael Connolly, Phil Clarkson, Martin Aldridge (Junior Bent, 66), Steve Bushell, Brett Omerod.

●Shots on target: Luton 7, Blackpool 4.

●Off target: Luton 9, Blackpool 5.

●Corners: Luton 5, Blackpool 7.

●Attendance: 4,466.

●Referee: Roger Fumandiz (Doncaster).

●Top Hatter: Thomas - solid return.

■HATTERS fans aged under 16 can watch the Gillingham home game on March 27 for just £1. The weekend has been designated as a Football League Centenary Day promotion. Kick-off is 11.30 with England taking on Poland in the afternoon. All youngsters are invited to join in by painting their faces in club or England colours.

■MIDFIELDER Sean Evers will be out for six weeks after having an operation on a torn stomach muscle. The 21-year-old joins former Hitchin school-mate Andrew Fothergill on the sidelines at Kenilworth Road. Fotiadis is also not expected back until late March with ankle ligament damage sustained in the 2-1 home defeat against Wrexham.

Douglas finally gave the Hatters the lead on 55 minutes with his first goal in seven games.

It was the Hatters leading league scorer's best of the season. After dismissing defender Clarke Carlisle, Douglas sped past Phil Thompson before slotting his shot past Banks into the bottom corner.

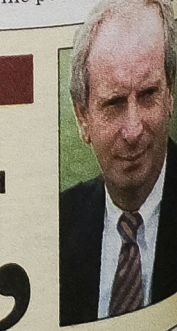
At 1-0 the home side's advantage was slender and a 10-minute wobble at the end threatened to undo all their hard work.

After a quiet afternoon, Douglas was called into action twice in the minutes, palming around and then minute Phil Clarkson shot and then saving Brett Omerod after following a suicidal Fothergill Alexander back-pass.

Substitute Junior Bent thought he had earned the Seasideers' place on 87 minutes but his close-range volley was ruled out by an offside flag and Luton held on for their welcome points.

## Lennie Lawrence's verdict

"I was as bold as I could be with the team selection and the players responded. It was as well as we've attacked for a long time at home. The only thing lacking was goals. Stuart got one from probably the hardest chance of the game. The fear factor came when victory was in sight but we had some fortune and Kelvin was good in goal."



## Free Stoke game

LUTON TOWN visit Kenilworth Road on Saturday and you could be there to see them for free.

The National Building Society has agreed to fund the News-Gazette with two tickets for the game.

For this question and they could be there for the game.

The former Hatters striker moved to Stoke last summer.

Tickets must be sent to: Tickets Department, Sports Desk, News-Gazette, 100-102, Luton, LU1 3JQ.

Needham, of Leygreen Close, Fulham, identifying Tony Thorpe as the winner of two tickets for the school-mate Andrew Fothergill on the sidelines at Kenilworth Road. Fotiadis is also not expected back until late March with ankle ligament damage sustained in the 2-1 home defeat against Wrexham.

Resort Stadium prices are £12 for adults and £5 for juniors/O.A.P.s. Tickets for the next two home games against Blackpool and Stoke are on sale now at £10 each.

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## 98-99 Story so far...

### Appearances (Subs)

Lge Cup Lge Cup

Nathan Abbey 1(0) 1(0) 0 0

Graham Alexander 23(0) 9(0) 3 2

Hervé Bacqué 2(5) 2(2) 0 0

Emmerson Boyce 0(0) 1(0) 0 0

Jimmy Cox 3(4) 1(1) 0 0

Tyson Davis 30(0) 9(0) 0 0

Steve Davis 20(0) 9(0) 0 0

Simon Davies 2(0) 0(0) 0 0

Gary Doherty 4(9) 2(2) 5 0

Stuart Douglas 27(0) 7(1) 8 2

Sean Dyche 8(0) 1(0) 0 0

Sean Evers 27(0) 10(0) 3 1

Andrew Fotiadis 6(8) 2(2) 2 1

Stuart Fraser 1(1) 1(0) 0 0

Liam George 3(3) 0(2) 0 0

Phil Gray 23(3) 9(0) 6 5

Gerry Harrison 9(0) 1(0) 0 0

Marvin Johnson 28(0) 8(0) 0 1

Tyson Kandol 0(1) 1(0) 0 0

Dwight Marshall 3(1) 3(0) 0 0

Gavin McGowan 20(2) 9(0) 0 0

Michael McIndoe 9(3) 3(3) 0 0

Ray McKinnon 22(1) 6(1) 2 0

Paul McLaren 11(5) 4(3) 0 1

Kofi Nyamah 0(0) 1(1) 0 0

Andre Scarlett 2(4) 0(2) 1 0

Paul Showler 2(1) 0(0) 0 0

Matthew Spring 30(0) 8(1) 1 0

Mitchell Thomas 12(5) 3(0) 0 0

Chris Willmott 10(0) 0(0) 0 0

Alan White 10(13) 2(3) 1 0

L'Andry Zahana-Oni 2(2) 0(0) 0 0

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## Games and goals

### Appearances (Subs)

Lge Cup Lge Cup

Nathan Abbey 1(0) 1(0) 0 0

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Hervé Bacqué 2(5) 2(2) 0 0

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## Bad boys

WHERE the red and yellow cards have gone...

Y R

McGowan 12 3 0

Alexander 7 2 0

Johnson 7 1 0

Thomas 4 1 0

Davis (S) 6 0 0

McLaren 8 0 0

Douglas 5 0 0

Gray 2 1 0

McIndoe 4 0 0

Davis (K) 1 1 0

TOTAL 66 66

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## Good boys

LUTON News Player of the Year standings (the Top Hatter awards given by Town reporter Dave Flett)...

Alexander 5 McKinnon 2

Davis (S) 5 McLaren 2

Spring 5 Thomas 2

Johnson 4 Abbey 1

Gray 3 Davis (K) 1

Douglas 2 Douglas 1

Evers 2 Scarlett 1

Harrison 2 Showler 1

McGowan 2 TOTAL 41

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McGowan 2 TOTAL 41

## HOT STU: Hatters striker Stuart

Douglas fires past plucky Blackpool goalkeeper Steve Banks for the only goal of a tense 1-0 victory at Kenilworth Road on Saturday.

Douglas had earlier dismissed defender Clarke Carlisle (pictured left) before rounding Carlisle's team-mate Phil Thompson and shooting past Banks for a super individual effort.