

Talk of the Town with Dave Flett



FEELING THE BLUES: Hatters' midfielder Gavin McGowan grimaces as he is beaten to the ball by Chesterfield right-back Jamie Hewitt during Saturday's 3-1 defeat at Saltergate.

Alexander on his way to Deepdale

GRAHAM Alexander was expected to join Preston today for just £50,000!

The Hatters will receive further payments for Alexander after appearances but are unlikely to recoup all of the £200,000 Terry Westley paid Scunthorpe in 1995.

And as the vultures circle cash-strapped Kenilworth Road looking for bargain buys, other players could follow before - or even after - tomorrow's 5pm transfer deadline.

After Alexander, midfielder Matthew Spring is most likely to leave with Tottenham maintaining their long-standing interest.

The News-Gazette can also reveal that Sean Evers has attracted interest from the Hatters' Division Two rivals Reading this week.

Evers may be unfit now but that would not stop Reading, or any other interested buyers, signing the 21-year-old midfielder after the deadline as long as they did not play him in first team games that had a bearing on promotion or relegation.

The same applies to any approach for Spring.

About possible departures, boss Lennie Lawrence said: "I must say

that there is a more than reasonable chance Graham Alexander will go before the deadline.

"We'll miss him but if I stop the move we will lose whatever money we can gain and we'll also have an unhappy player on our hands.

"I need spirit and togetherness. If I deny him a move - and I think they've nearly agreed terms and persuaded him to go - it would be churlish because he can walk away in six weeks' time.

"I also wouldn't rule out a possible bigger sale than that before or after the deadline to a club where the player's not going to be in the first team."

But goalkeeper Kelvin Davies will not be leaving before the end of the season, according to Lawrence.

He said: "It won't be Kelvin. Even though he is excellent, there have been no offers for him. People see him as very good but not quite ready."

Two players definitely leaving Kenilworth Road this week will be Gary Doherty and Liam George who both join the Republic of Ireland under 20 squad for next month's World Championships in Nigeria.

The Hatters' manager said: "Sean



ON HIS WAY: Hatters midfielder Graham Alexander.

Dyche lined up for new loan

SEAN Dyche is top of Lennie Lawrence's transfer deadline target list, but the Hatters' manager was still waiting for board approval to make a move yesterday.

The Bristol City defender went back to Ashton Gate two weeks ago when the board vetoed a third month on loan at Kenilworth Road.

But now Lawrence is hoping to gain permission to bring Dyche back on loan despite continuing uncertainty about what he can and can't do in the transfer market.

Even as late as yesterday, Lawrence had not given up on including Dyche in his line-up to face Reading last night.

The Hatters' manager said: "Sean

Dyche would be my first choice because I need a centre-half.

"He would come and I think Bristol City would do it. I'm just waiting for clarification here of whether or not I can do it."

Lawrence is also waiting to see if he can finalise a permanent deal with Gerry Harrison.

Harrison's third month on loan at Luton finishes after Saturday's game with Gillingham and, if he is not bought before tomorrow's transfer deadline, he will have to return to Sunderland after the game.

Buying or sending back Harrison would also give the Hatters the option of bringing in another loan player.

Speaking about a move for Harrison, Lawrence said: "I have sorted it with Sunderland as far as I can, but now I must deal with the player and then see if we have got the money."

The Hatters' manager described a loan swoop for Tony Thorpe as unlikely because of wage and fitness considerations but does not rule out Gillingham winger John Hodge as a possible loan target.

Should he be given board permission, Lawrence has also lined up two free-transfer signings until the end of the season.

"I've got one or two irons in the fire. I just need the green light," said Lawrence.

Lawrence plea after crisis talk at Chesterfield

LENNIE LAWRENCE held a 15-minute emergency meeting with directors Chris Green and Nigel Terry after watching his side succumb to another dismal defeat.

Green and Terry travelled to Chesterfield on Saturday to see the Hatters lose their fourth successive league game. Phil Gray scoring a scant consolation after two Steve Wilkinson goals and one from Pat Holland had given the home side an unassailable lead.

After the game, a desperate Lawrence appealed to the board members to bring in two or three players before tomorrow's transfer deadline.

About the post-match discussion, the Hatters boss said: "I told them we need help and the best form of help would be the injection of two or three experienced players before Thursday. I need the green light."

"I've warned everybody of the consequences if I don't get it. That's all I can do. The consequences will be severe if I'm not paid attention to whether it's me or somebody else doing the job."

"It was men against boys in the second-half and we'll even lose some of them players in coming weeks. We haven't got enough to cope and we've still got a quarter of the season to play."

"One more injury and suspension and we're down to kids and we're playing a few now. People will say it's an excuse and I admit that I am struggling to restore confidence in this team, but I am managing with two hands tied behind my back."

"As Luton Town supporters will no doubt agree, there are many better managers than me but you won't find many who have been through what I have and I'm telling you we must get players in."

Certainly with suspension, international call-ups and even sales imminent, the Hatters squad could soon be threadbare but, on Saturday, a side including Graham Alexander, Mitchell Thomas, Marvin Johnson, Gerry Harrison, Ray McKinnon and Phil Gray did not lose for the lack of experienced bodies.

Matthew Spring was the only teenager in the starting 11

match facts

CHESTERFIELD 3 LUTON 1

●CHESTERFIELD: Billy Mercer, Jamie Hewitt, Shane Nicholson, Tom Curtis, Mark Williams, Steve Blatherwick, Jonathan Howard (Jason Lee, 46), Paul Holland, David Reeves, Chris Beaumont, Steve Wilkinson. Subs not used: Mark Jules, Roger Willis.

●HATTERS: Kelvin Davis, Graham Alexander, Mitchell Thomas, Matthew Spring, Chris Willmott, Marvin Johnson, Gerry Harrison (Gary Doherty, 67), Ray McKinnon (Paul McLaren, 76), Stuart Douglas (Liam George, 86), Phil Gray, Gavin McGowan.

●Shots on target: Chesterfield 11, Luton 5.
●Shots off target: Chesterfield 9, Luton 6.
●Corners: Chesterfield 8, Luton 4.
●Attendance: 3,921.
●Referee: Roy Pearson.
●Top Hatter: Douglas - honest endeavour.

and, from the others, the hard-working Stuart Douglas was man-of-the-match. Gavin McGowan has been tutored by Arsene Wenger and Kelvin Davis is a former England under-21 international.

The only player who could justifiably use the inexperience excuse was Chris Willmott and his performance was not the difference between a draw and defeat.

After a dour first-half, in which Marvin Johnson's spectacular goal-line clearance was the highlight, Chesterfield - who boast just 22 professionals on their books - went ahead on 52 minutes.

Player-coach Thomas stopped to complain about an elbow from sub Jason Lee - minus pineapple - and the ball broke free for Wilkinson to drill a low shot past Davis from the edge of the box.

Three minutes later, Wilkinson was celebrating again when he picked up McGowan's stray pass deep in his own half, ran 60 yards at a back-tracking Hatters defence and then unleashed a drive into Davis' bottom right-hand corner.

On 67 minutes, Lawrence

upset the travelling fans when he replaced an angry Harrison for Gary Doherty when McKinnon (certainly) and Gray (possibly) would have been more likely candidates.

Harrison headed straight for the dressing rooms moments after Chesterfield's third went in. Reeves latched on to Wilkinson's exquisite pass behind Alexander before sidestepping Johnson and tucking the ball past Davis.

Paul McLaren, who had more touches in 14 minutes as a sub than the off-form McKinnon, had the Hatters first second-half goal attempt with a hopeful 78th-minute chip from 40 yards that almost caught out stranded home keeper Billy Mercer.

Gray then hit a deflected low volley past Mercer after Doherty had looped the ball over him.

Ex-Watford and Nottingham Forest striker Lee should have made victory more emphatic for the Spireites at the death but twice demonstrated the woeful finishing skills that made him such a hit with David Baddiel and Frank Skinner on BBC's Fantasy Football show.

50 Boss sets the target for safety

LENNIE LAWRENCE has set a safety target of 50 points for his struggling side. That means three more wins between now and May 8 to avoid relegation.

The Hatters boss sees April as the crunch month when Oldham, York, Northampton, Lincoln and Notts County will provide the opposition among others. And underfire Lawrence is calling for everybody involved with the club to rally and help secure safety as soon as possible. "I think 50 points will be enough. Only Walsall in the bottom half have put together a run and that's because they've managed sensibly with experience in Peter Beale."

But everybody needs to pull together here. Crystal Palace went into administration four weeks ago and haven't lost a game from a situation very similar to ours. Plymouth and Oxford are in dire financial states, far worse than ours, but they're not doing badly.

"We're all in it together, so let's get out of a decent state when the situation is needed. Let's end the divisiveness and stop laughing players."

Division 2 table

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1. Oldham	37	26	6	5	63	26	84
2. Walsall	36	20	7	9	65	35	69
3. Bournemouth	36	20	8	8	51	40	68
4. Wrexham	36	18	10	8	56	33	64
5. York City	36	16	14	6	59	33	62
6. Reading	37	16	14	7	49	27	62
7. Wigan	36	15	11	10	46	45	56
8. Chester	36	16	7	10	52	32	55
9. Luton	35	17	3	15	43	42	54
10. Millwall	37	14	10	13	40	32	54
11. Wrexham	37	14	10	13	42	45	52
12. Blackpool	35	11	13	13	41	43	43
13. Luton	36	10	13	13	37	48	44
14. Chester	36	10	13	13	33	41	43
15. Notts County	34	9	13	12	47	41	40
16. Walsall	35	11	7	17	42	52	40
17. Wrexham	36	8	15	13	39	53	39
18. York City	36	10	7	19	37	50	37
19. Wigan	36	9	9	18	43	64	36
20. Blackpool	35	10	6	19	33	57	36
21. Wrexham	36	11	17	37	65	35	36
22. Notts County	36	7	12	17	28	42	33
23. Luton	35	8	9	18	26	41	33
24. Walsall	35	6	10	19	33	48	28

98-99 Story so far...

August	Opponents	Score	Scorers	Att	Pos
Sat 8	Wycombe	1-0	Davis (S) 36	5,252	10
Tues 11	OXFORD UTD (WC1)	2-3	Alexander 59 (pen), 63 (pen)	3,165	-
Sat 15	PRESTON	1-1	Marshall 54	5,392	7
Tues 18	Oxford Utd (WC1)	3-1	Gray 37, Evers 48, McLaren 70	5,099	-
Sat 22	Reading	0-3	-	18,108	12
Sat 29	COLCHESTER	2-0	Douglas 62, Davis (S) 82	5,005	9
Mon 31	Wigan Athletic	3-1	Davis (S) 41, Evers 78, Gray 81	3,778	5
September					
Sat 5	BURNLEY	1-0	Douglas 47	5,554	2
Tues 8	Wrexham	1-1	McKinnon 36	2,951	3
Sat 12	BRISTOL ROVERS	3-2	Gray 33, 53, Davis (S) 76	5,558	3
Tues 15	Ipswich (WC 2)	1-2	Douglas, 60	9,032	-
Sat 19	Blackpool	0-1	-	5,695	5
Tues 22	IPSWICH (WC 2)	4-2	Fotiadis 52, Douglas 83, Davis (S) 99, Johnson 120	5,655	-
Sat 26	WALSALL	0-1	-	5,530	7
October					
Sat 3	Fulham	3-1	Gray 3, Douglas 48, Davis (S) 65	11,856	7
Sat 10	York City	3-3	Douglas 22, Evers 43, Gray 55	3,780	4
Sat 17	OLDHAM	2-0	Gray 82, Scarlett 90	5,447	4
Tues 20	NORTHAMPTON	1-0	Alexander 19	6,087	3
Sat 24	Gillingham	0-1	-	5,602	4
Tues 27	COVENTRY (WC 3)	2-0	Gray 50, Davis (S) 78	9,051	-
November					
Sat 7	Stoke City	1-3	Douglas 81	12,964	6
Tues 10	BARNLEY (WC4)	1-0	Gray 82	8,435	-
Sun 15	Boreham Wood (FA1)	3-2	Gray 33, 53, Davis (S) 76	1,772	-
Sat 21	Lincoln City	2-2	Gray 43, Doherty 76	4,893	6
Sat 28	MANCHESTER CITY	1-1	Doherty 76	9,070	7
December					
Tue 1	Sunderland (WC5)	0-3	-	35,742	-
Sat 5	HULL CITY (FA2)	1-2	Davis (S) 36	5,021	-
Sat 12	Macclesfield	2-2	Douglas 3, Gray 90	2,905	8
Sat 19	MILLWALL	1-2	Davis (S) 69	5,939	11
Mon 28	Bournemouth	0-1	-	8,863	14
January					
Sat 2	Colchester	2-2	Alexander (pen) 7, White 72	4,694	14
Sat 9	WALSALL (AWS 2)	0-3	-	1,870	-
Tues 12	WYCOMBE	3-1	Spring 16, Evers 69, Douglas 75	5,063	13
Sat 16	Preston	1-2	Fotiadis 15	11,034	12
Sat 23	WIGAN ATHLETIC	0-4	-	4,934	13
Sat 30	BOURNEMOUTH	2-2	McKinnon 6, Doherty 53	5,426	14
February					
Sat 6	Burnley	2-1	Fotiadis 34, Doherty 87	10,285	12
Tues 9	WREXHAM	1-2	Doherty 47	4,759	13
Feb 13	Bristol Rovers	0-1	-	6,361	13
Feb 20	NOTTS COUNTY	0-1	-	4,021	13
Feb 27	BLACKPOOL	1-0	Douglas 54	4,646	12
March					
Sat 6	Walsall	0-1	-	4,508	13
Tues 9	FULHAM	0-4	-	7,424	13
Sat 13	STOKE CITY	1-2	Alexander (pen) 47	5,221	14
Sat 20	Chesterfield	1-3	Gray 82	3,921	14



...and matches still to come

Sat 27	G'INGHAM	H	11.30	Sat 17	LINCOLN
Fri 2	Oldham Ath	A	3.30	Sat 24	Notts Co
Tues 6	YORK CITY	H	7.45	Tues 27	CHES'FIELD
Sat 10	N'ampton	A	3pm	Tues 7	MAY
Wed 14	Man City	A	7.45	Sat 1	MAC'FIELD
				Tues 8	Millwall

Games and goals

	APPEARANCES (SUBS)	GOALS
	Lge Cup	Lge Cup
Nathan Abbey	27(0)	9(0)
Graham Alexander	27(0)	9(0)
Hervé Bacqué	2(5)	2(2)
Emmerson Boyce	0(0)	1(0)
Jimmy Cox	3(5)	1(1)
Kelvin Davis	34(0)	9(0)
Steve Davis	20(0)	9(0)
Simon Davies	2(0)	0(0)
Gary Doherty	4(11)	2(2)
Stuart Douglas	31(0)	7(1)
Sean Dyche	8(0)	1(0)
Sean Evers	27(0)	10(0)
Andrew Fotiadis	6(8)	2(2)
Stuart Fraser	1(1)	1(0)
Liam George	6(4)	0(2)
Phil Gray	27(3)	0(0)
Gerry Harrison	13(0)	1(0)
Marvin Johnson	32(0)	8(0)
Tresor Kandol	0(1)	1(0)
Dwight Marshall	3(1)	3(0)
Gavin McGowan	21(4)	9(0)
Michael McDermott	9(3)	3(3)
Ray McKinnon	26(1)	6(1)
Paul McLaren	11(3)	4(3)
Kofi Nyamah	0(0)	1(1)
Andre Scarlett	2(4)	0(2)
Paul Showler	2(1)	1(0)
Matthew Spring	34(0)	8(1)
Mitchell Thomas	16(5)	3(0)
Chris Willmott	2(1)	0(0)
Alan White	13(13)	2(3)
L'Andry Zahana-Oni	2(2)	0(0)

Bad boys

WHERE the red and yellow cards have gone...



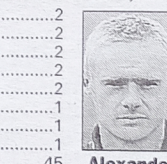
McGowan

	Y	R	McKinnon	Davis (K)
McGowan	12	1	Doherty	2
Alexander	8	1	George	0
Thomas	4	1	Cox	0
White	4	1	Dyche	0
Davis (S)	6	0	Evers	0
McLaren	6	0	Harrison	0
Gray	3	1	Scarlett	0
Douglas	5	0	Spring	1
McIndoe	4	0	TOTAL	73

Good boys

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

Alexander	5	Evers	2	
Davis (S)	12	McGowan	2	
Johnson	5	McKinnon	2	
Spring	5	McLaren	2	
Thomas	3	Thames	2	
Harrison	3	Abbey	1	
Davis (K)	2	Scarlett	1	
Douglas	2	Showler	1	
Dyche	2	TOTAL	45	Alexander



Alexander

Talk of the Town with Dave Flett



EYES DOWN: Hatters striker Stuart Douglas concentrates on the ball during Saturday's 3-1 defeat at Chesterfield. The 20-year-old forward looked Luton's best player in a generally poor team display and here looks to trick home defender Shane Nicholson during a rare first-half raid.

Pictures by GARETH OWEN