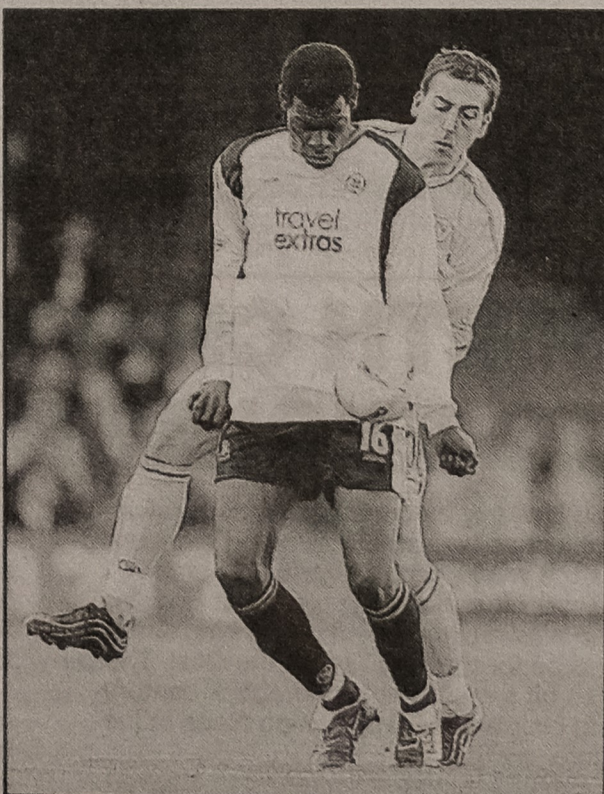


# Mellon seizes

## Rovers go for jugular against depleted



**WE'RE THROUGH:** Brian Little congratulates goalscorer Mickey Mellon (above) while Iain Hume shoots (below left) and Gary Jones closes down Enoch Showunmi (below right)



**NICK HILTON**  
reports from  
**Kenilworth Rd**



**LUTON TOWN... 0**



**TRANMERE.... 1**

(Mellon 81)

**LUTON TOWN:** Beresford, Foley, Coyne, Boyce, Davis, Nicholls (Crowe, 85), Holmes, Leary, Mansell (Keane, 60), Brkovic, Showunmi. Subs: Davies, Brill.

**TRANMERE ROVERS:** Achterberg, Taylor, Sharps, Allen, Jones, Roberts, Harrison, Mellon, D Beresford, Hume, Dadi (Hay, 91). Subs: Howarth, Connelly, Navarro, Linwood.

**BOOKED:** Luton's Holmes and Leary. Tranmere's Sharps, Mellon and Taylor.

**REFEREE:** Mr Matt Messias, South Yorkshire.

**ATTENDANCE:** 8,767.

**H**AVING established a reputation for giant-killing on previous ventures into the last 16 of the FA Cup, Tranmere Rovers are becoming the competition's opportunists this time around.

In round three, they progressed by taking advantage of Bolton Wanderers' decision to rest most of their Premiership stars in both the original game and the replay.

On Saturday, they squeezed home at the first attempt against fellow Division Two opponents whose ranks were also seriously depleted, this time by injuries and suspensions.

Rovers made hard work of their task at first, although supporters won't be complaining about it when they gather around their radios this lunchtime, hoping to hear that the fifth round draw has given them a glamorous tie against one of the Premiership giants.

Perhaps Tranmere's mauling at the hands of a stronger Luton team three months previously had something to do with their initial caution in contending with a home side containing many raw, enthusiastic youngsters.

Once Tranmere took a more assertive approach after a half-time talk from manager Brian Little, the greater depth of experience in their ranks began to count.

The visitors looked the team more likely to win the game by the time Mickey Mellon struck the only goal in the 81st minute. Thereafter, they saw the job through in professional fashion.

Luton manager Mike Newell conceded he would have settled for a draw on the day in the knowledge that a number of his senior players, not least the suspended Steve Howard and Steve Robinson, would have been available for a replay at Brenton Park next Tuesday.

But he had few complaints, save for one about a penalty claim dismissed by referee Matt Messias.

**N**ewell said: "Tranmere set their stall out and they made it difficult for us. It worked for them today. Our shortage of senior players was always going to catch up with us at some point. I can't fault our lads for effort but we just lacked that cutting edge."

In the absence of Howard, who gave Rovers' defenders a buffeting on that previous visit to Kenilworth Road in October, Luton's attack was led by the unlikely figure of Enoch Showunmi.

The 6ft 5in centre-forward was playing amateur football for Willesden Constantine in the Middlesex County League last season and has become a cult figure among the Luton fans. He

# golden chance

## Luton to open door for glam tie

## Little keen to take on the giants



TRANMERE ROVERS boss Brian Little is wishing for a "tie to remember" when the draw for the fifth round of the FA Cup is made this afternoon.

After scrambling past the challenges of non-League Hornchurch, Premiership Bolton Wanderers and Division Two rivals Luton Town on away soil, Little wants Tranmere to be rewarded with a treat for the Prenton Park faithful.

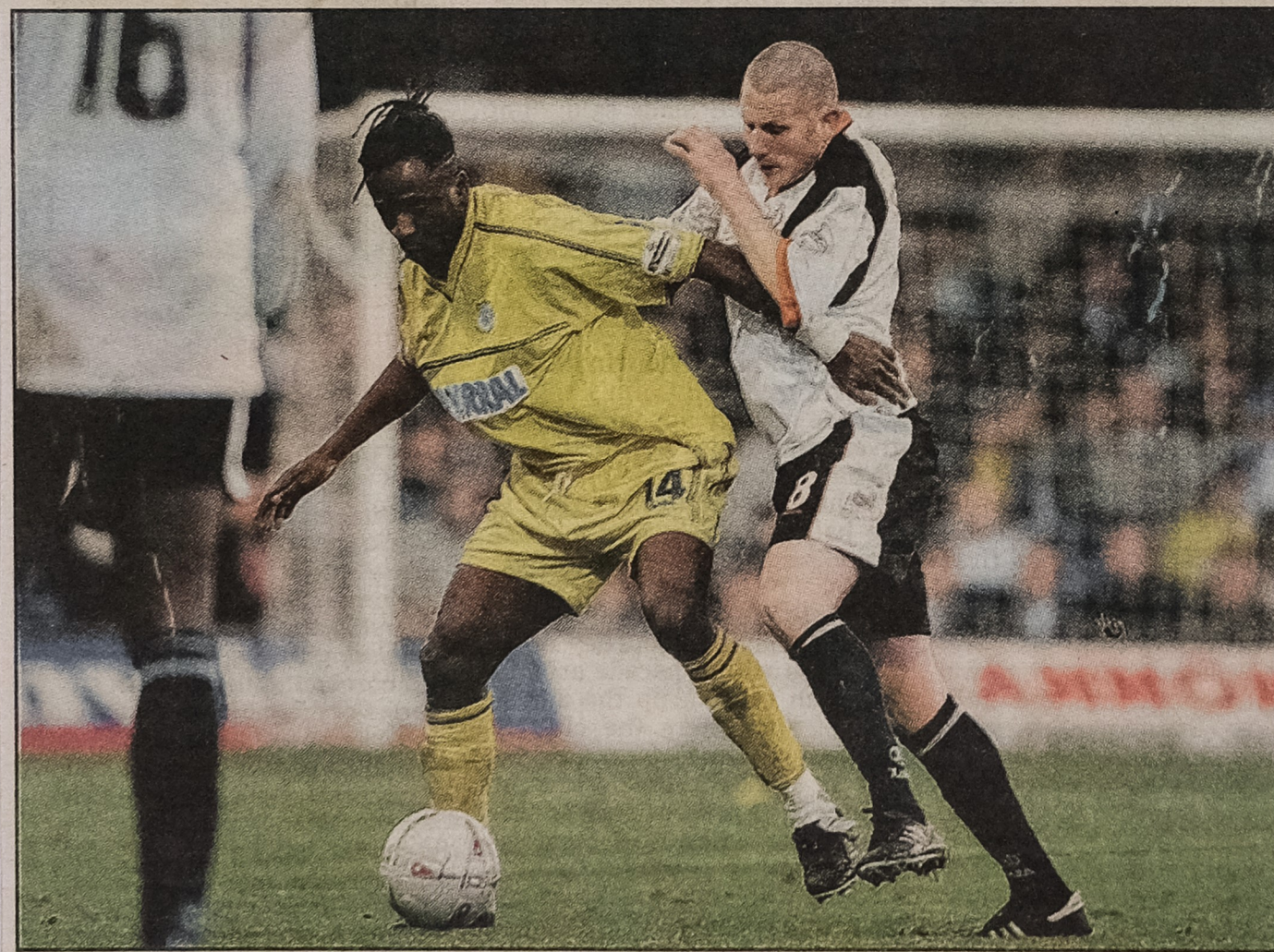
He said: "It would be nice to be given a home tie with a Premiership club. That would be best for our fans."

"I'd like to think we could get some attention for our efforts in the FA Cup this season."

"To reach the fifth round is good going for a second division club. To go beyond it would be an achievement in itself."

"It would be good to have a tie we could all remember."

Little said he was pleased with Tranmere's second half performance at Kenilworth Road. Skipper Mickey Mellon's 81st-minute strike proved decisive against a



**CLINCHER:** Mickey Mellon celebrates with Gareth Roberts and Eugene Dadi after the final whistle at Kenilworth Road (above) while Eugene Dadi holds off Luton's Kevin Nicholls as he bids to start another Rovers attack (left)



**MINE:** Graham Allen

Luton team seriously depleted by injuries and suspensions.

Little said: "I was very happy with our second half performance, although I'll concede Luton were the better side in the first half."

He added: "We said before the game that Luton were a good side but this was a good day to play them on because they had a number of their senior players missing."

"We did not have much information on many of the players we were up against but by half-time we knew what they could do."

"We needed to move the ball more quickly and get our wing-backs forward in the wide positions. It worked."

Little conceded he was grateful to see Rovers survive a penalty appeal when Luton substitute Keane went over a challenge by Gary Jones.

He said: "If I was honest I would have hated that decision to go against us."

Mellon said: "I got the winner in the first round against Chesterfield so it's great to do it again."

"We were not given enough credit for beating Bolton in the last round so hopefully now we can show everyone we are a decent side."

Meanwhile, Tranmere are due to return to league action tomorrow when they play host to Stockport County in a rearranged fixture, kick off 7.45pm.

even has his own website.

Showunmi gave his all and won a good share of flicks and touches in the air.

Inexperience showed up most clearly in Luton's inability to convert pressure into scoring opportunities in the face of determined defending.

The home side had a near miss in the first minute when Emmerson Boyce's first-time shot from a corner was deflected wide by team-mate Lee Mansell.

Tranmere goalkeeper John Achterberg was forced into his one testing save of the afternoon on 31 minutes when he tipped a Mansell header over the bar.

Rovers, often reluctant to venture far from their defensive trenches, caused only one moment of serious alarm in the Luton penalty area before the break, when Graham Allen nodded Ryan Taylor's corner into a melee of legs in the six-yard box.

However, once Tranmere began to push wing-backs Taylor and Gareth Roberts further down the flanks, the tide of

battle turned and Luton lost control of the midfield.

Taylor, with his ability to run past opponents and deliver dangerous crosses posed a threat that grew more potent the longer the game went on.

**T**he goal, however, was carved out by a move through the middle, instigated by Danny Harrison. The midfielder won a fierce challenge with Luton's Kevin Nicholls and suffered a painful knock for his trouble. But he succeeded in releasing midfield partner Mellon into a run on goal.

### MAN OF THE MATCH

**Ryan Taylor.**  
Helped turn the tide with his attacking wing-back play



Luton's retreating defenders invited Mellon to shoot and the Scot's crisp right-foot effort from 20 yards clipped the inside of the right-hand post on its way into the net.

Luton had a couple of penalty claims turned down either side of the goal, one of which, for substitute Keith Keane's trip over a Gary Jones' challenge on 68 minutes prompted Newell to have strong words with Mr Messias.

"It was a penalty, no doubt," Newell afterwards. "I don't need to look at a video replay."

The crowd were indignant on 83 minutes when Mr Messias rejected a claim for handball against Ian Sharps and awarded a free-kick against Showunmi for pushing.

Tranmere wasted an opportunity to double the margin in injury time when substitute Alex Hay, breaking clear of Luton's offside trap, unselfishly set up Mellon, whose close-range effort was smothered by keeper Marlon Beresford.