

Sheff's icing on the cake

HATTERS 3 HARTLEPOOL 0

GARY McSheffrey stepped off the bench to seal unbeaten Luton's sixth home win on the trot with a fine opportunist goal on Friday.

And Town manager Mike Newell has admitted that he would now love to secure the services of 'The Sheff' on a permanent basis at Kenilworth Road.

McSheffrey spent three months at Hatters last season on loan from parent club Coventry City. But his current month loan deal expires after Saturday's home game against Huddersfield.

And while McSheffrey's chances of first team football have been limited by the partnership forged by leading goalscorer Steve Howard and September's League One Player of the Month Rowan Vine, Newell is keen to see McSheffrey becoming part of his squad.

Town chairman Bill Tomlins last week revealed McSheffrey had turned down six other clubs, including Sunderland and Tranmere, to return to Luton.

And Tomlins himself told of his conversations with the Sky Blues' chairman about making the 22-year-old's move to Bedfordshire a full-time one.

Boss Newell said: "McSheffrey looked sharp when he came on and we all know what he's capable of here.

"It was a very difficult decision for us to have to leave him out. But we brought him here with the intention of seeing him play games and we'd love to make it a permanent deal - we just don't know what's possible at the moment.

"It's frustrating for him being on the bench, but he came on and helped himself to a very good goal."

McSheffrey's first Luton goal since the 1-1 draw at Bristol City last November came six minutes from time against Newell's former club Hartlepool.

Gary's late goal tops off Friday night's success

A neat turn on the half-way line from The Sheff saw two Pools defenders crash into each other, but the danger seemed to be over when McSheffrey mis-placed his pass. However, the Coventry man didn't give up and capitalised on indecision in the visiting defence to win the ball, sprint clear and sidefoot home.

McSheffrey's goal followed Steve Howard's opener in the 36th minute when he crashed home Steve Robinson's corner at the far-post for his sixth of the season on his return after suspension.

Ahmet Brkovic hit his fifth of the campaign six minutes after the interval when Sol Davis crossed for Vine, whose shot was parried by Jim Provett, only for Brkovic to slam home the rebound.

But Luton's goals followed a nervy opening period where Hartlepool created numerous openings.

Alan Pouton, Eifion Williams and Joel Porter all went close in a five minute spell and Williams should have scored when Dino Seremet misjudged a long throw and the Pools winger put wide from 15-yards with the goal at his mercy.

Newell said of his half-time team talk: "What was said in the dressing room should remain in the dressing room, but we weren't pleased at all with the first-half performance so you can imagine what it was like in there.

"But the lads responded well and you can't ask for anything more from them."



SHEFF'S TOPPING: Loan striker Gary McSheffrey nips the ball off the toes of Hartlepool's Matty Robson before racing clear to score Luton's third goal in the 84th minute. McSheffrey, who came off the bench to bag his first Hatters goal of the season, has one game left during his current month spell from Coventry.

MIKE NEWELL'S VERDICT



"IT'S never easy going. We weren't happy with our first-half performance, but you have to give Hartlepool credit because they played some nice stuff and we had to ride our luck a bit.

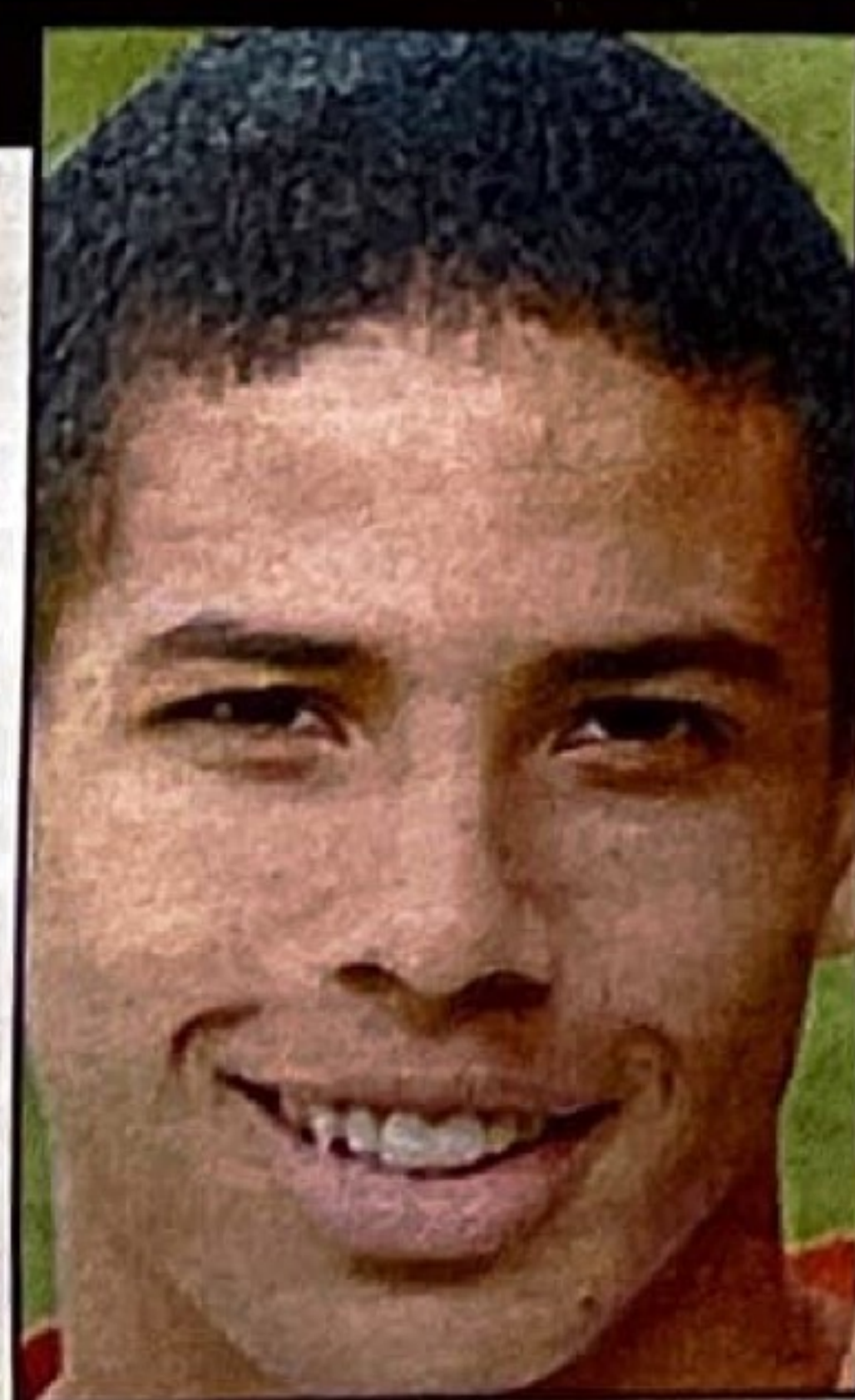
"We still didn't have them killed off at 2-0, but we did kill them off finally with the third.

"We played some better stuff in the second-

half and created chances. It will continue to get more and more difficult for us here, but if we keep playing like we did in the second-half we could be on to a winner.

"They were sharper and quicker to the second balls in the first-half whereas the only time we looked threatening was from set-pieces, which is how we scored our goal."

STAR HATTER



CURTIS DAVIES: The 19-year-old continued his fantastic form so far this season with another assured display at the back.

Although Luton were under pressure for the first half-an-hour, Davies and his fellow centre-half Chris Coyne were again a tower of strength.

Davies used his pace well to deal with Hartlepool's lively front pair of Adam Boyd and Joel Porter.

Ovendale at Tiverton

FORMER Luton Town goalkeeper Mark Ovendale will soon be lining up against Hatters' non-league neighbours Dunstable Town.

Ovendale, who cost the Town £425,000 when he signed from Bournemouth in the summer of 2000, is now playing for Devon-based Tiverton Town in the Southern League Premier Division.

Ovendale, 30, signed for the west

country side this term in a deal described as 'the most lucrative contract ever offered by Tivs'.

Ovendale will take on Dunstable Town on Saturday, December 11 when Tiverton host the Blues.

The Leicester-born stopper left Luton for a brief spell at Barry Town before playing for York City last season where the Minstermen were relegated from the Football League.

