

There'll be no trouble at top

HATTERS 1 HUDDERSFIELD 2

HATTERS' first league defeat of the season may have coincided with the release of a new date for the screening of BBC documentary Trouble at the Top.

But Luton Director of Football Mick Harford insists the Town won't be suffering their own trouble at the top of League One after Saturday's home loss to Huddersfield Town.

The BBC 2 documentary, focusing on the turmoil at the club in the summer of 2003 under unpopular former supremo John Gurney, is now due to be shown on Thursday, October 28 at 9.50pm.

However, Luton have made huge progress since then, setting a club record winning start to the season this campaign and only just failing to match the club's previous record unbeaten start to a season of 13 games, set in 1969-70.

Paul Underwood's second-half goal on Saturday gave Luton hope of a fightback after a Junior Mendes strike and Sol Davis own goal had given the Terriers a 2-0 half-time lead. Despite Steve Howard hitting the woodwork, the turnaround didn't materialise.

But Harford said: "Some people are saying the defeat could be a good thing, but I don't think the players were resting on their laurels or expecting to win every game anyway.

"They've been working hard and a defeat is always a bad thing in my eyes. I'd have wished it hadn't happened at home because it comes before two difficult away games, but I still believe we are the best team in the league and can beat anyone on our day.

"Knowing the characters we have in our team and in the dressing room, I have every confidence they'll bounce back and get back to putting in good performances as we know they can."

Harford insists first loss won't hit the Hatters

Michael Leary made his first start of the season at the weekend, coming in for the suspended Steve Robinson, while Kevin Foley returned from Republic of Ireland under 21 action to replace Keith Keane, himself on Eire under 19 duty.

But Huddersfield had the better of the first-half and took the lead when Mendes cut inside Foley from the left flank and fired an unstoppable shot into the corner from 20 yards in the 14th minute.

Davis came close to his first ever professional goal when he headed Leary's cross over from 10-yards in the 32nd minute. And two minutes later Davis was unfortunate to instead find the net at the other end when Mendes dummied Tony Carss' corner and the ball flicked in off the Town full-back.

Gary McSheffrey came on for Leary before half-time and immediately went close with a 25-yard free-kick. It was Underwood who eventually brought Hatters back into contention with a wonderful curling effort from 15-yards that found the net off the post in the 57th minute after Rowan Vine's pass.

Howard hit the post in the 71st minute from Foley's cross and Ahmet Brkovic blazed the rebound over, but Mendes should have scored for the Terriers six minutes later when he robbed Curtis Davies and sprinted clear, but shot wide.

Harford added: "We could have been more than two down at half-time. We created chances in the second-half, but we gave ourselves too much to do."



COYNE'T QUITE GET THERE: Chris Coyne challenges Nathan Clarke.

MIKE NEWELL'S VERDICT



"WE'VE lost a game, but I don't agree that it had to happen sooner or later.

"We put in a poor performance, particularly in the first-half, and it could have been more than two at half-time.

"We weren't in the game at all and we got a bit desperate at times.

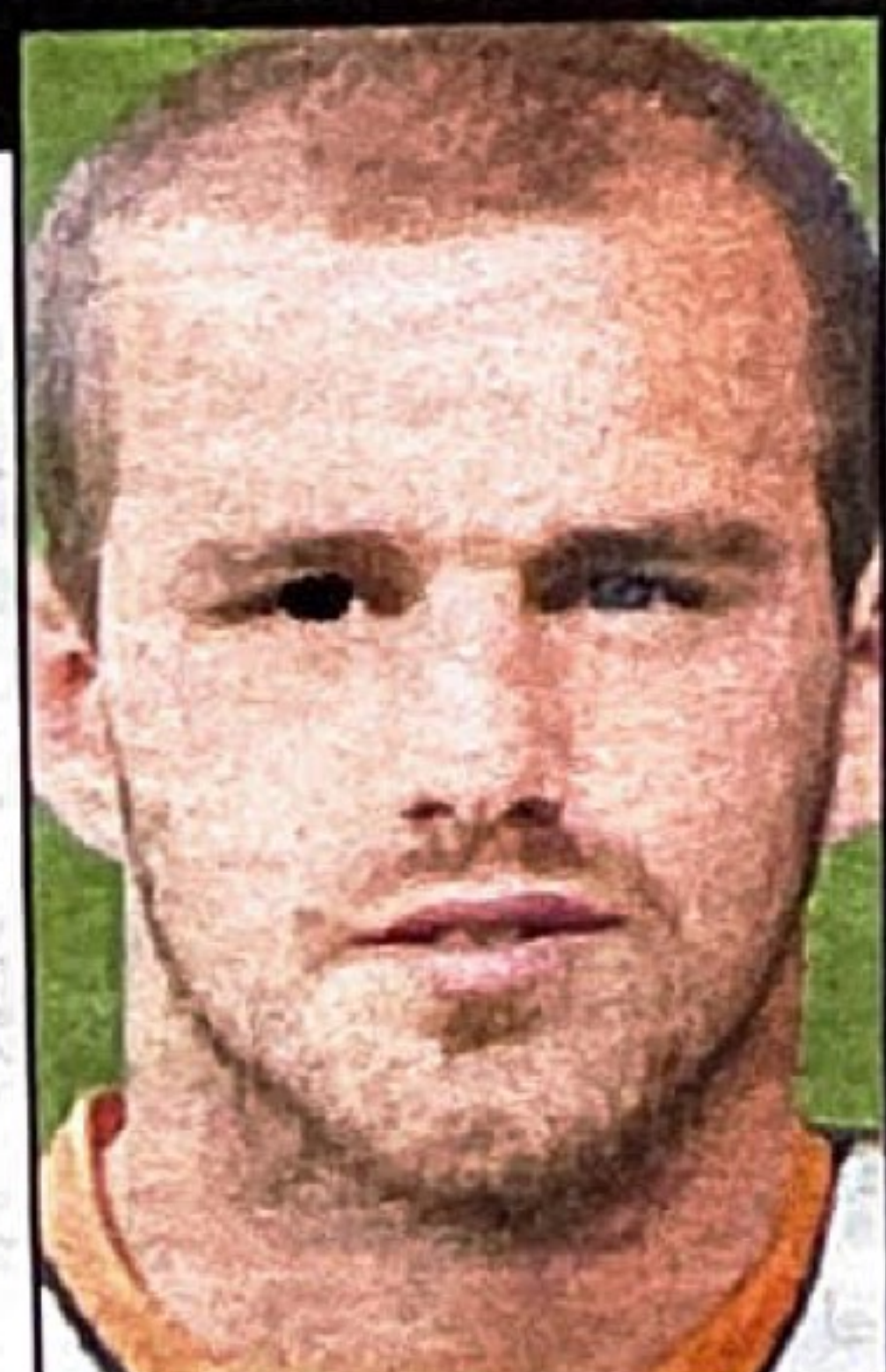
"We didn't show any patience or play the sort of football I know we're capable of.

"We ended the game with four strikers on the field and maybe that wasn't the best way of going about things.

"But at the end of the day, you're trying to change the game and make something happen and sometimes it doesn't work out for you.

"We lost our shape a bit, but it's something we can learn from if we get in that situation again."

STAR HATTER



ROWAN VINE: The Pompey loan striker again worked tirelessly for the Hatters cause throughout.

Vine's pace was always an outlet up-front and he found himself Luton's main attacking threat as Huddersfield aimed to stifle the aerial power of Steve Howard.

The 22-year-old set up Paul Underwood for Luton's goal and was never far from the action as Town pressed in the second-half.



Win Hatters tickets

THE News-Gazette has teamed up with Football League sponsors Coca-Cola to offer Hatters' fans the chance to win two pairs of tickets to see Luton host Bradford on Saturday, October 30.

Town tickets are in hot demand following their super start to the season that saw them go 12 matches unbeaten before Saturday's loss to Huddersfield.

To be in with a chance of winning a pair of tickets to see the table-toppers, just answer this simple question: How many matches had Luton remained unbeaten before Saturday's loss?

Send your answers to Hatters ticket competition, News-Gazette Sportsdesk, Media House, 39 Upper George Street, Luton, LU1 2RD, by Monday of next week.