

Luton love high life

Luton
Leeds

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MICK COLLINS
AT KENILWORTH ROAD

THEIR side may have failed, by a whisker, to collect a third successive Championship win, but Luton Town's fans were understandably unwilling to let it detract from the celebrations. After all, when you can enjoy your celebratory pint in the Eric Morecambe Suite, it would be rude not to.

Luton's introduction to the Championship has been better than any of their followers could have dreamed possible, and, had it not been for Steve Howard's inability to turn a first-half cross inside the near post, rather than against it, perfection would have been maintained.

As it was, the fans settled for enjoying their side's neat, controlled football, while cheerfully singing about Leeds and their slide from glory.

Just four years since they beat Lazio, to hear Luton fans reminding them that "You're not famous any more", and asking whether they might be Watford in disguise was a mark of how dramatic Leeds' fall has been.

"I'm pleased with the performance," Luton manager Mike Newell admitted, "but we're all a bit flat that we didn't get the win. Three games in, and I'm upset we didn't beat Leeds United! That's a measure of the week we've had. At the moment I'd say we've surprised people with our form. If we carry it on, then we might shock them. How's that for an aim?"

Newell's side showed no sign of feeling daunted by their opponents - quite rightly, on the evidence of the day. Leeds are a pale shadow of the team they once were and, having famously chased a dream all the way to a nine-digit debt, their present standing is no lower than it deserves to be.

With a collection of players at the extreme ends of their careers, they lack either pace

or poise, depending on where you look. The sight of Michael Ricketts, shoulders drooping from the start, summed them up.

For Luton there were impressive performances throughout, from the lively Warren Feeney to the composed and assured Dean Morgan and the physical presence of central midfielder Kevin Nicholls.

For Leeds, it seems, in addition to their other problems some discontent behind the scenes. David Healy was left out and, as Kevin Blackwell confirmed, was not injured. Was it tactical, then? "You could say that, I suppose," he admitted.

"The way Luton are playing we knew we'd be in a battle and they'd be looking at a third big scalp in a row. Make no mistake, we knew how much of a battle Luton were going to give Leeds United."

Somewhere, in comedy heaven, you could imagine a pair of glasses being wiggled gleefully, as Eric revelled in the delight of it all.