

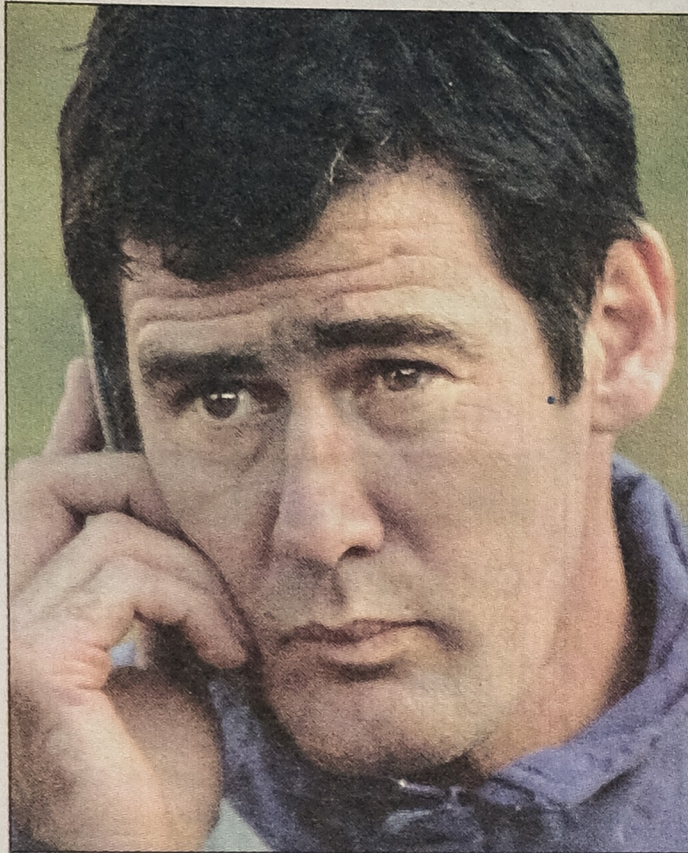


Luton Town FC

Wolves 2 - Luton 1
TOM LEECH reports
from Molineux



Newell sticks to his man-sized stance



AFTER the 2-1 defeat to Wolves, Luton boss Mike Newell (left) reiterated he has no regrets about his stance on agents that has rocked the world of football.

Newell hit out at a specific article in the national press that had patronisingly dismissed his allegations of bungs by labeling him an 'intelligent boy'.

"I'm either being brave or stupid according to some people – and I'm certainly not stupid. I'm not a boy, I'm 40 years old. I've got a wife, five kids and have been in this game for years. I don't like being referred to as a boy," growled Newell.

"I'm not trying to make a name for myself – this isn't a crusade for me. People who know me know I don't like attention or having headlines written about me."

The Hatters manager, who is to face the FA next week to back up his claims, told the media pack he

expects the affair to be swept under the carpet. "I'm not high profile enough – it needs a Manchester United or an Arsenal to stand up and say 'no, we're not paying it'."

"But I'm not holding my breath. There's no need for an agent to be paid by the club if he's already being paid by the player he's representing."

When asked if he feared agents might tell their clients to avoid going to Kenilworth Road during the transfer window Newell defiantly replied: "I don't need agents to tell me who to buy. There are plenty of players who'd love to come to Luton Town, believe me."

One of those was midfield utility man David Bell who was signed in time to be on the bench at Molineux. Bell, 21, cost £100,000 from Rushden & Diamonds and signed a three and half year deal.



Subs: Feeney for Vine 64m
 Subs not used: Brill, Barnett, Morgan, Bell

MAN OF THE MATCH

KEVIN FOLEY

Another composed display. Can Hatters hold on to him until the transfer window closes?

Lacklustre Hatters fall to another late show

LUTON Town's abysmal away form continued on Friday the 13th when luck deserted them once again.

Wolves' veteran captain Paul Ince grabbed the home side's undeserved winner two minutes from time crashing in a superb half volley after Hatters' top scorer Steve Howard had cancelled out Mark Davies' opener.

Away from Kenilworth Road Mike Newell's men have picked up just a solitary point out of a possible 27 since a 2-1 win at Cardiff on October 1.

For Newell it was another case of Luton failing to capitalise on their

superior possession. It is a pattern that has Hatters fans worried that the club's great start to the season may count for little as they slide further away from the play-off places.

"It was the story of our season away from home. I'm having to say the same things week in week out," he lamented.

"We had plenty of the game and controlled the second half but they've scored at the death and took the lead against the run of play – unless I was watching a different game?"

Not according to Wolves boss and former England coach Glenn Hoddle who admitted afterwards: "It's the first time we've won when we haven't played well and that's a good sign."

Newell confessed Friday night's result has made him question his side's attacking spirit.

"We're not kamikaze but maybe we have to start being a bit more negative away from home. Wolves were favourites for the league at the start of the season but tonight we were the better side."

It has been a pretty miserable time following Luton on the road this season and the first half at Molineux didn't lighten the mood in the away end. Newell described it as a 'nonentity' which was being kind in the extreme. It was difficult to believe this was the same Hatters side that had TV audiences on the edge of their seats in the 3-5 thriller with Liverpool last week.

If anyone who tuned in to Sky Sports on Friday night was sitting comfortably they'd have fallen asleep in their seat after a truly dire opening 45 minutes.

Luton's only effort on target was an Enoch Showunmi daisy-cutter that



■ Steve Howard wins this aerial battle in the defeat at Wolves

keeper Stefan Postma saved easily.

The Nigerian was a surprise inclusion in the centre of midfield to partner captain Kevin Nicholls in place of the injured Steve Robinson.

The perennial 'super sub' Showunmi has featured up front or, occasionally, on the left wing but never in midfield and his inexperience showed as strikers Rowan Vine and Howard had little supply.

Wolves winger Mark Kennedy rounded off the half with his side's only shot of the game which tested, but didn't trouble, Marlon Beresford. It drew huge ironic cheers from the home crowd who have yet to warm to Hoddle's stifling 3-5-2 system.

When the referee's assistant signalled there would be two minutes added time the entire stadium rang round with boos and calls for referee Mike Dean to put us out of our

misery.

With a first half that bad the second could only be better, which it was. Just.

Luton, all in white, surrendered their clean sheet on 57 minutes when teenager Davies scored his first goal for his hometown club.

Kennedy crossed into the box from the left and as Chris Coyne went to head clear he appeared to be held back by Carl Cort's attempt to hitch a ride on the Aussie defender's shoulders.

The ball came to Cort's strike partner Leon Clarke whose close range shot was blocked but the rebound fell straight to Davies who tapped in from six yards.

The goal galvanized Hatters into action and Carlos Edwards came close with a long distance shot that just flashed past Postma.

Newell brought on a new striker in Warren Feeney but there still seemed to be no new ideas as Luton controlled possession but couldn't break through – until the 80th minute.

Nicholls' free kick from the edge of the box was charged down by the Wolves wall but the skipper was first to the rebound lofting a teasing cross back into the box. It was perfect for Howard who bagged his tenth of the season with a towering header.

A point would have been reward for Hatters' endeavours but yet again Luton were denied late on. With two minutes to go Ince was lurking 25 yards out when the ball was cleared to him and the former 'Guv'nor' of Old Trafford stamped his authority with a stinging half volley that pushed Wolves into the promotion frame and left Luton sliding into mid-table obscurity.



■ Ahmet Brkovic on the ball

WOLVES: Postma; Ross, Craddock, Lescott; Edwards, Huddlestone, Ince (c), Davies, Kennedy; Cort, Clarke. **Subs:** Oakes, Seol, Anderton, Ricketts, Ganea