

# CHAMPIONSHIP

## Carver fears the worst after rout

06/07

By Nicholas Harling

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NO DOUBT the absent Ken Bates would have had a word for it – most probably schiesters – to describe those dastardly fellows from Luton who scored the goals that left Leeds looking more helpless than ever, one place off the foot of the Championship.

Bates, the chairman who these days tends to heap the insult on practically everyone who crosses his path – from former fellow directors in his programme notes to just about everyone connected with Chelsea – was not at Kenilworth Road to witness his club's fourth successive defeat. But the news will doubtless have reached him in his tax haven of Monaco that Leeds were fairly pitiful.

The blame, according to the club's American left winger Eddie Lewis, should rest with the players but John Carver will probably be the man to be sacrificed this week. If ever a caretaker manager was on borrowed time, it must be Carver, who admitted to fearing the worst. Leeds need a permanent successor to Kevin Blackwell pretty soon if they are not to be doomed by Christmas.

Lewis, who clearly has Carver's best interests at heart, said: "The players are the ones responsible and it's the players' futures and careers that are at stake. The players are desperate and, in the end, it's going to take the squad as a unit to dig ourselves out. It's

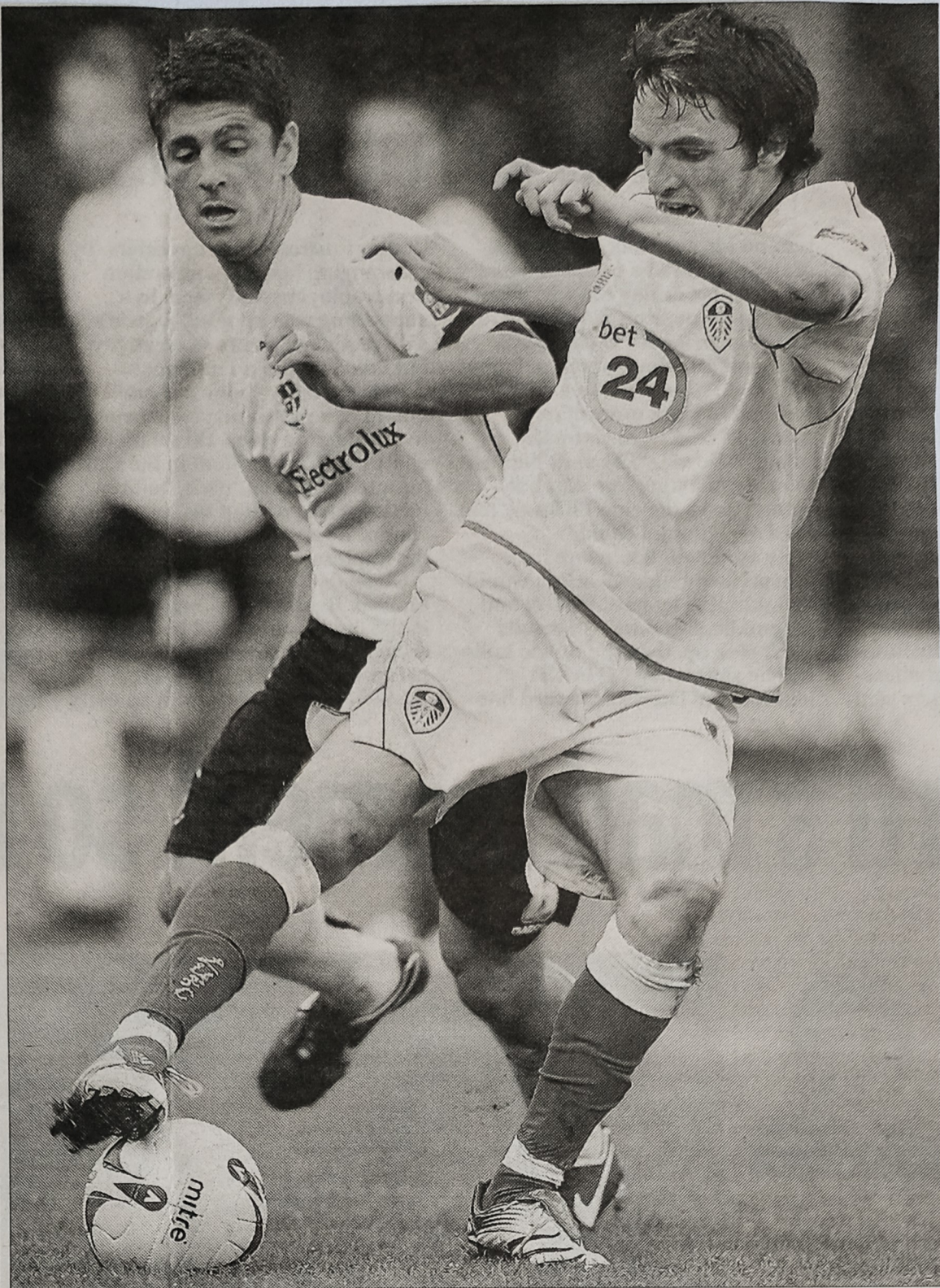
down to us and we need to find a way."

That way cannot come quickly enough. From the kick-off, Leeds put the ball straight out of play. Shaun Derry, the offender, turned out to be one of the better players for a team who improved sufficiently enough to threaten to take a point, only to give the art of defending a bad name thereafter.

With his goals that began and ended the scoring for Luton, Carlos Edwards emphasised the brittleness and lack of cover in the visitors' rearguard. He put Luton ahead with a cross-shot after charging down a clearance from Stephen Crainey and then, in the final seconds, embellished a Rowan Vine breakaway.

The very fact that Leeds were exposed at the back for Edwards' second goal spoke volumes for their bizarre tactical approach. What were they trying to do in those three minutes of added time? Make good a 4-1 deficit? Best to keep the score-line respectable, surely, or vaguely respectable, than to risk making it worse.

Leeds had actually cancelled out Edwards' first goal when Hayden Foxe headed in Adam Johnson's corner. But then came the second-half deluge. Vine chested in Warren Feeney's cross to regain the lead for Luton, who went further ahead when Vine's wayward shot from Edwards' cross turned into the perfect pass for David Bell to score easily. And then came Markus Heikkinen's first goal



**Under pressure:** Leeds' Jonathon Douglas tries to shield the ball from Steve Robinson

of the season, a towering header from Steve Robinson's free-kick.

Mike Newell, the Luton manager, was the first to concede that his team were below their best. But then no one nowadays has to look particularly good to beat Leeds, whatever the admirable defiance of their supporters. "We all love Leeds," was the incessant chant from

the visitors' end as their team subsided. It is a love that will turn sour as surely as autumn turns into winter.

**Luton** (4-4-2): Beresford; Foley, Barnett, Heikkinen, Davis; Edwards, Robinson (O'Leary 81), Bell, Morgan (Keane 84); Vine, Feeney (Boyd 82). **Subs:** Brill, Langley. **Goals:** Edwards (12, 90), Vine (55), Bell (56), Heikkinen (73).

**Leeds** (4-4-2): Sullivan; Kelly, Foxe, Butler, Crainey; Douglas, Derry, Johnson, Westlake (Lewis 71); Cresswell (Moore 77), Blake (Healy 63). **Subs:** Warner (g), Richardson. **Goal:** Foxe (17). **Booked:** Westlake, Foxe. **Referee:** G Hedgley (Herts).