



FINAL

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Luton Town v Scunthorpe United
5th April 2009, Wembley Stadium, Kick Off 1.15pm

Official Matchday Programme £5.00



WEMBLEY STADIUM



THE FOOTBALL LEAGUE

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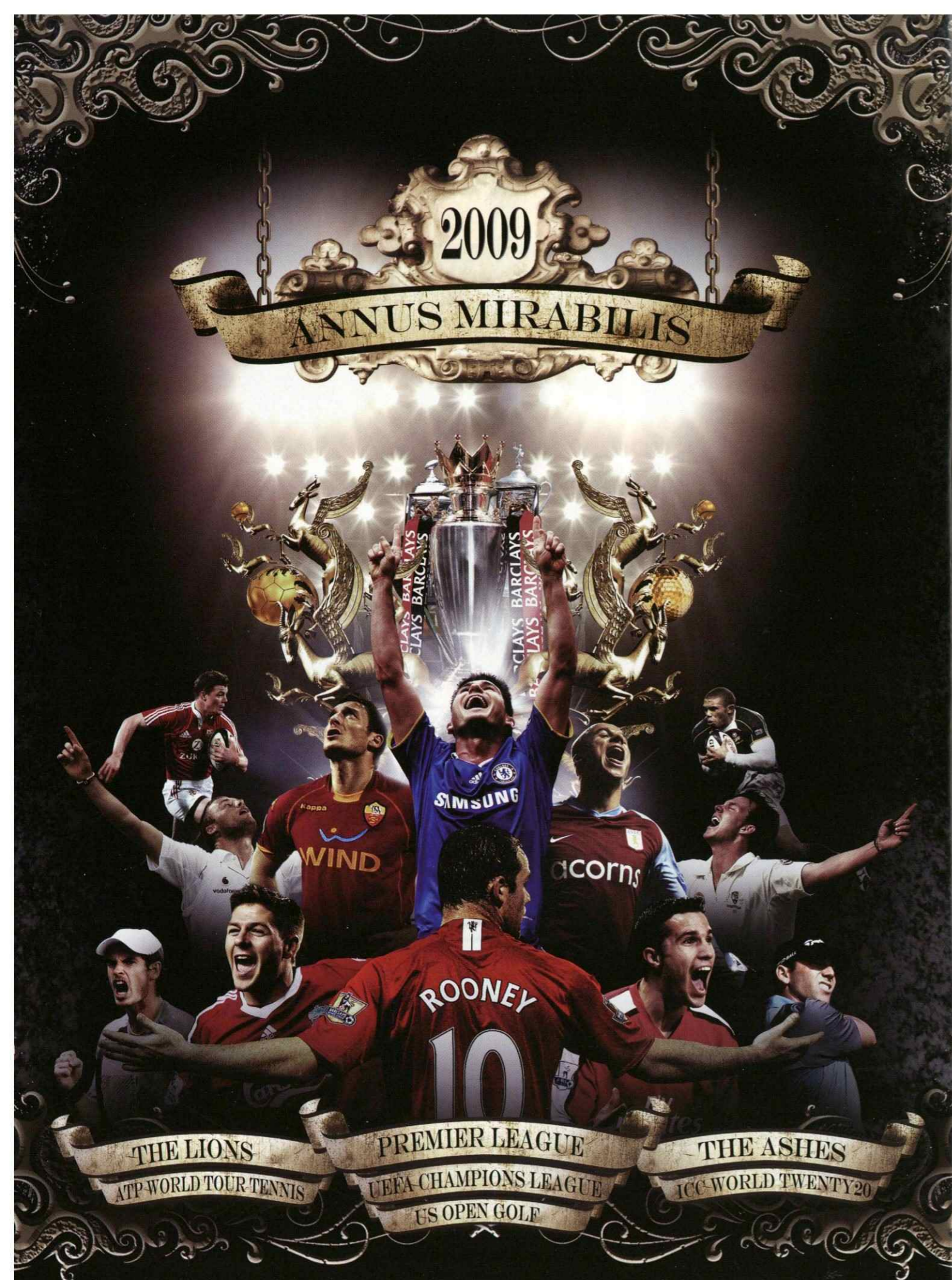
Today's pre and post-match entertainment is produced by event360 on behalf of Johnstone's Paints and The Football League. For more information visit www.event360.co.uk.



Order of Events

- 11.00am **TURNSTILES OPEN**
Pre-match entertainment commences
- 11.20am **THE FOOTBALL LEAGUE UNDER-13s GIRLS CUP**
The Priory School (Crystal Palace) v Lees Brook Community Sports College (Derby County)
- 12.00pm **THE JOHNSTONE'S PAINT 5-A-SIDE**
Glenwood v Super Nova
- 12.25pm **PLAYERS WARM-UP**
- 1.05pm **TEAMS ENTER THE STADIUM**
Presentation of the teams and match officials to:
Greg Molyneux, Managing Director, Johnstone's Paints
Lord Mawhinney, Chairman, The Football League
- THE NATIONAL ANTHEM**
Led by Jenny Williams 
- 1.15pm **KICK-OFF**
- 2.00pm **HALF-TIME**
- 2.15pm **SECOND HALF**
- 3.00pm **END OF MATCH***
Presentation of the Johnstone's Paint Trophy and medals by:
Greg Molyneux, Managing Director, Johnstone's Paints

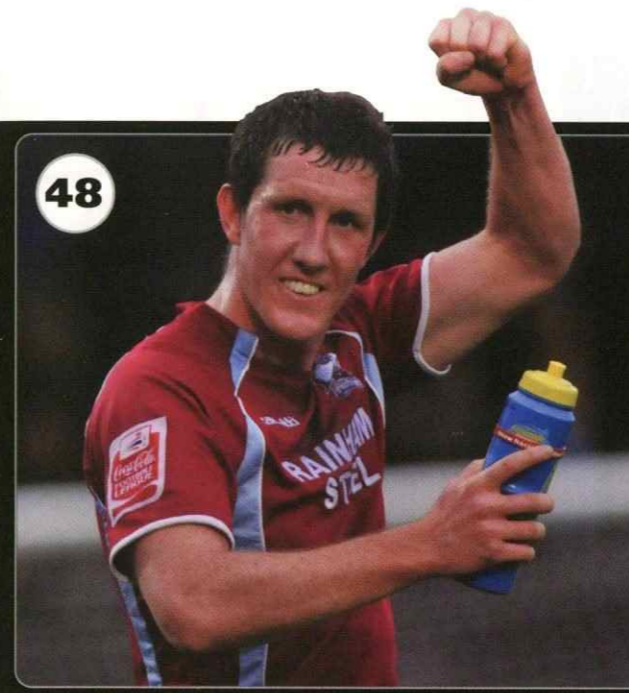
*In the event of the scores remaining level after 90 minutes, half an hour of extra-time will be played. Should the score remain level at the end of extra-time, the winner will be decided by the taking of kicks from the penalty mark at an end of the stadium to be determined by the referee.



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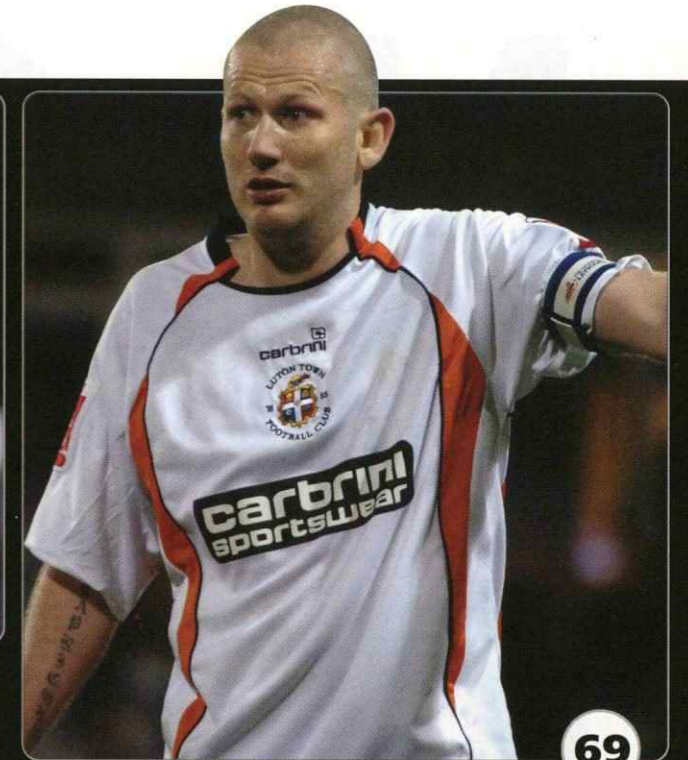
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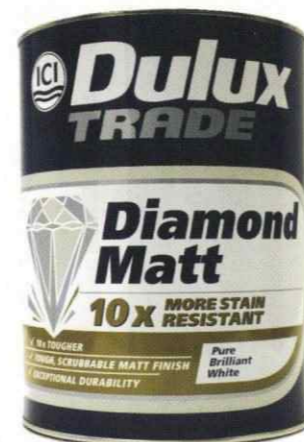


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* All statistics in today's programme are correct as of 27 March, 2009

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LORD MAWHINNEY
CHAIRMAN
THE FOOTBALL LEAGUE

Welcome to the Johnstone's Paint Trophy Final 2009 between Luton Town and Scunthorpe United.

Today's match is the 26th final of a competition that continues to go from strength to strength. Each season, the Johnstone's Paint Trophy gives clubs from Leagues 1 and 2 a great opportunity to carve out their own piece of cup final glory at the home of football.

More than 50,000 passionate supporters are expected to be at Wembley Stadium this afternoon. This figure demonstrates the strength of English professional football in its widest sense. Where else would a crowd of this size watch a match between clubs from the third and fourth tiers of the domestic game? It also demonstrates the extraordinary attachment that Football League clubs have to the towns and cities whose names they bear. It is a particular pleasure to welcome the directors, management and

players of the two clubs. I hope you have a great day and, win or lose, take home many happy memories.

For both clubs, this is a first ever final in this competition and a first visit to the new Wembley Stadium. However, each club enjoyed success at the 'old' stadium. The Hatters won the 1988 League Cup Final and the Iron, the 1999 Division Three Play-Off Final.

I would like to offer my grateful appreciation to our sponsor, Johnstone's Paints, for the outstanding support they have given this competition, once again. I am also delighted that they have extended our partnership for a further three seasons. On behalf of League 1 and 2 clubs, I thank them for their continued commitment.

I would also like to welcome schools representing Derby County and Crystal Palace, who are here today for the final of The Football League Under-13 Girls Cup. I am sure this will be an occasion that these young players will remember for the rest of their lives.

Last but not least, I would like to take the opportunity to extend a warm welcome to both sets of supporters. Occasions such as these are the reward you get for following your club through thick and thin. It is great that so many of you are here today.

Thank you for the support you have given your club and the Johnstone's Paint Trophy this season. I hope your team does you proud.

Enjoy the match.

Welcome to Wembley

THE FOOTBALL LEAGUE AND JOHNSTONE'S PAINTS WISH A WARM WELCOME TO THE DIRECTORS, MANAGEMENT, PLAYERS AND FANS OF BOTH LUTON TOWN AND SCUNTHORPE UNITED



GREG MOLYNEUX
MANAGING DIRECTOR
JOHNSTONE'S PAINTS

After 48 games, 115 goals and 12 penalty shoot-outs, the Final of the Johnstone's Paint Trophy is all set for an enthralling climax at Wembley Stadium this afternoon.

On behalf of everyone from the Johnstone's Paints team, we would like to welcome you all to what promises to be a fantastic game of football to conclude a wonderful 2008/9 competition.

It will certainly be a day to remember for both clubs and I would like to wish Luton Town and Scunthorpe United the very best of luck.

Both teams have overcome some hefty obstacles in reaching today's final, not least when Scunthorpe defied the odds to overcome Notts County in the first round when facing near certain elimination.

Luton Town's path to Wembley has been similarly nail biting, and no less emotional for everyone involved at Kenilworth Road, with two penalty shoot-outs deciding their fate along the way.

Our aim in everything we do is to bring colour to this beautiful game. We have worked with schools in your local communities and teamed up with both clubs to promote the trophy in the run up to today's final.

This year, we are also celebrating the beginning of a successful charity partnership with World Emergency Relief, which aims to bring football to a South African community with new sporting facilities. We have already helped secure hundreds of football kits from kind hearted football fans.

As a national brand, selling paint via our comprehensive network of decorating centres and stockists, Johnstone's Paints is delighted to support football in so many regions.

The Johnstone's Paint Trophy continues to go from strength to strength and we were delighted to agree a sponsorship extension for a further three years earlier in the season.

The announcement underlines our passion and commitment to the competition, which more and more fans will relate to in the coming seasons. I would like to thank the team at Johnstone's along with The Football League and Wembley for ensuring that today will be a fantastic day out for everyone.

I would also like to thank our many customers and staff for making the journey to Wembley to be here to celebrate with us.

Finally, I would like to extend my appreciation to all the fans for showing their support and dedication throughout the competition.

You are the reason Johnstone's sponsor the competition and without you it would not be what it is today.

Best of luck and enjoy the game.

An impressive 57,000 fans attended last year's Final as Milton Keynes Dons overcame Grimsby at Wembley



Up for the Cup

THE APPEAL OF THE JOHNSTONE'S PAINT TROPHY IS BIGGER THAN EVER, AS THIS SEASON'S GAMES SHOW

WORDS PHIL SHAW, DAILY TELEGRAPH

Here's your starter for ten. Which of the following drew the highest attendance to its Final last year: the Copa del Rey in Spain, the Coppa Italia, the Dutch Cup or the Johnstone's Paint Trophy?

The answer comes not from Madrid, Rome or Rotterdam, but from Wembley Stadium, where nearly 57,000 saw Milton Keynes Dons take the silverware against Grimsby Town. The figure underlines the strength in depth of the professional game in England – in no other country could two fourth-tier teams attract such a crowd – and the burgeoning appeal of a competition which today completes the first year of its second quarter-century in the rudest of health.

By coincidence, this afternoon's showcase also pits the Home Counties against Humberside as Luton Town from League 2 and Scunthorpe United of League 1 take to the greatest stage. However, the success of the

Johnstone's Paint Trophy – which has persuaded the sponsor to extend its support for a further three years until the 2011/12 season – runs far deeper than a single glittering event at the national stadium.

This is a competition at the cutting edge of innovation, constantly adapting and evolving to enhance its appeal to spectators, especially the next generation. In a sport that often pays lip service to the concept of the "family audience", it has actively heeded many of the suggestions by supporters about how to create an experience which parents and children can enjoy together.

Among the changes that helped the Johnstone's Paint Trophy increase its crowd figures by 69 per cent in its first two years were the extension of regionalisation in the early rounds. That has produced enticing local derbies such as last September's meeting of Leeds United and Bradford City, which pulled in 20,128, just 2,000 below the best attendance in the competition for any match apart from the Final, set when Stoke City met Port

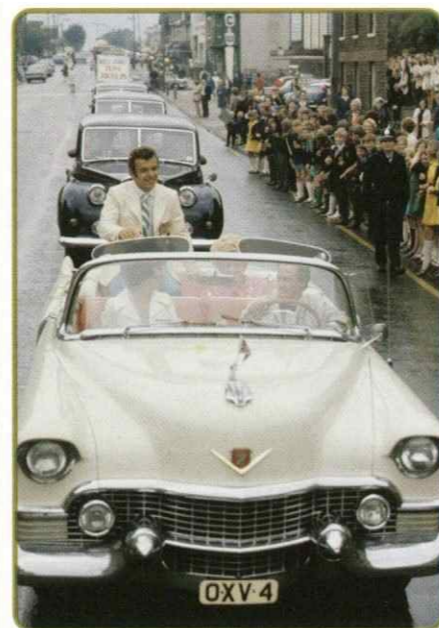


Steve Foster and current Luton Town manager Mick Harford lift the League Cup in 1988 as Alex Calvo-Garcia and Brian Laws (above) celebrate Scunthorpe's Play-Off victory in 1999





Former Luton Town director Eric Morecambe unveiling the Hatters' new kit in 1980.



Tony Jacklin (above) headed a motorcade through the streets of Scunthorpe after being crowned US Open golf champion in 1970, while England legends Ray Clemence (below, right) and Kevin Keegan (below, left) made a name for themselves at the Old Show Ground before joining Bill Shankly's Liverpool

Vale in 1993. Free and discounted tickets for under-16s have also added to the allure.

Another new rule, aimed at giving value at the turnstiles, required managers to name at least six of the 11 first-team players with most appearances this season. Then came the scrapping of extra-time and an experiment with earlier kick-offs, designed to allow younger fans to attend evening games without getting home late and yawning their way through school the following morning. Fixtures have also been scheduled to avoid clashes with big live TV matches, such as Champions League or England fixtures.

This season, befitting the competition's title, has been more colourful than ever. The bare facts show that 46 games have produced 115 goals and a dozen shoot-outs, but as ever, the players have painted a mural rich in drama with additional coats of passion and poignancy.

The very make-up of today's Final epitomises the competition's capacity for conjuring the unexpected. Despite an aggregate of 216 years as professional clubs, Luton Town and Scunthorpe

"DESPITE AN AGGREGATE AGE OF 216 YEARS, LUTON AND SCUNTHORPE HAVE BEEN VIRTUAL STRANGERS"

United have been virtual strangers. Although they met in the first fixture of the new millennium, they have spent a mere six seasons in the same division and have never, until now, tangled in any cup competition.

Only one player, current Burnley and Scotland defender Graham Alexander, has ever moved from one club to the other, leaving Glanford Park for Kenilworth Road. The list of those who have served both is also unusually short, though it does include Richard Money, Danny Wilson and the England defender of the 1940s, Frank Soo.

The clubs are connected by one piece of history, even if Luton fans may not wish to be reminded of it – 44 years ago this month their team capitulated 8-1 at Scunthorpe's previous home, the Old Show Ground, a result which remains the Iron's record victory.

Barrie Thomas rattled in five goals in that Third Division fixture, still the best single-game haul by any Scunthorpe player (although with substitutes

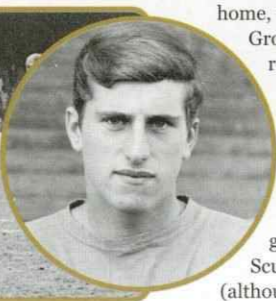
yet to be sanctioned Luton had to play the last 35 minutes with 10 men after John O'Rourke was injured).

In 1961/62, when the club finished fourth in a Second Division won by Bill Shankly's Liverpool, Thomas struck 31 times. His total would have been excellent had it been amassed between August and May; remarkably, he was sold to Newcastle in January and scored another ten for them!

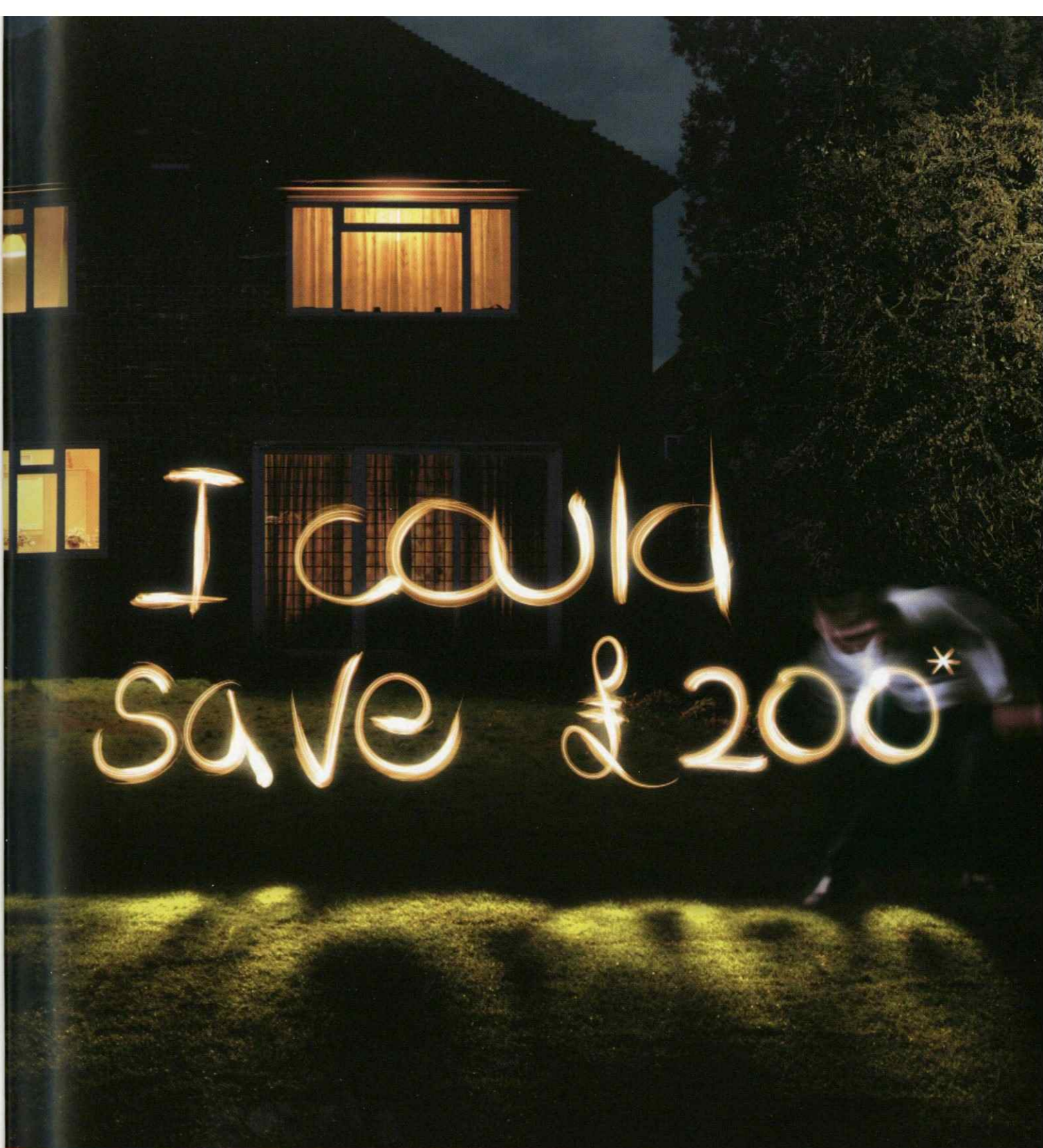
Scunthorpe finished five-points short of promotion to the top flight, leaving fans to wonder what might have happened had they not cashed in their prize asset. They spent the next 45 years in the lower divisions even though two future England legends, Kevin Keegan and Ray Clemence, passed through the ranks en route to glory with Liverpool.

Clemence, a Notts County reject, came to Scunthorpe's notice in 1965 when playing for Skegness Cosmos. In only his fourth game he let in seven in a derby at Grimsby, but Shankly paid £18,000 for him three years later. Two years on, the Scot went back for Keegan. Rejected by Doncaster and Coventry, he made his Scunthorpe debut at 17 and played 124 times before moving for £35,000, a fee Shankly later confessed was "daylight robbery".

The only current England player at the time to turn out for Scunthorpe, however, was Ian Botham. "Beefy" lived at nearby Epworth and against a backdrop of deep disquiet at Lord's he made 11 appearances for the Iron over a five-year period from 1980, the period when he was at his peak as a Test cricketer. »



Pictures courtesy of Scunthorpe Telegraph



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TESCO



Botham is a vice-president of the club, as is Scunthorpe-born former British and US Open champion golfer Tony Jacklin. The 1985 Ryder Cup captain headed a motorcade in a convertible Cadillac around the streets of the town after his 1970 US Open win – and the Iron could be given that very treatment if they are successful today.

In 2003/04 they finished one place away from relegation to the Conference – and yet three seasons and two promotions later they were back in the second tier for what proved to be a single year.

Luton have also known life at the foot of the league, which is of course where they currently lie. Unlike their opponents, they have sampled football at the top level, finishing seventh in what is now the Premier League in 1987 and rubbing

shoulders with the elite as recently as 1992.

May marks the 50th anniversary of their run to the FA Cup Final, in which they lost 2-1 to Nottingham Forest, and 21 years ago this month they overcame Arsenal 3-2 in an epic League Cup Final, Andy Dibble saving Nigel Winterburn's penalty at 2-1 down and striker Brian Stein scoring a late winner.

Alongside Stein that afternoon was Luton cult hero Mick Harford, who returns today as manager thanks to fresh spot-kick heroics by Lewis Price. The on-loan Derby keeper stopped two in a shoot-out after a tied Southern Area Final against Brighton.

At the same time, home and away wins over Rotherham saw Scunthorpe manager Nigel Adkins lead the club where he was previously the physiotherapist to Wembley for the first time since their League 2

play-off triumph in 1999.

A decade on, and 15 years since the Hatters' last Wembley visit when they succumbed 2-0 to Chelsea in the FA Cup semi-final, these very occasional rivals are back to contest a most handsome piece of domestic silverware.

"Bringing colour to the beautiful game," runs the Johnstone's Paint Trophy slogan. As the late, great Eric Morecambe, a Luton director, used to say to Ernie Wise, they're not wrong you know. ★

Cricket legend Ian Botham has his studs checked by the referee before making an appearance for Scunthorpe in 1980 and (below) a rare clash between today's finalists in 2001 as Luton Town's Ian Hillier and Scunthorpe midfielder Peter Beagrie (right) battle for the ball

PREVIOUS WINNERS

- 2007/08 Grimsby 0-2 Milton Keynes Dons
- 2006/07 Bristol Rovers 2-3 Doncaster
- 2005/06 Swansea 2-1 Carlisle
- 2004/05 Wrexham 2-0 Southend*
- 2003/04 Blackpool 2-0 Southend
- 2002/03 Bristol City 2-0 Carlisle
- 2001/02 Blackpool 4-1 Cambridge
- 2000/01 Port Vale 2-1 Brentford
- 1999/00 Stoke 2-1 Bristol City
- 1998/99 Wigan 1-1 Millwall
- 1997/98 Grimsby 2-1 Bournemouth
- 1996/97 Carlisle 0-0 Colchester*
(Carlisle win 4-3 on penalties)
- 1995/96 Rotherham 2-1 Shrewsbury
- 1994/95 Birmingham 1-0 Carlisle*
- 1993/94 Swansea 1-1 Huddersfield*
(Swansea win 2-0 on penalties)
- 1992/93 Port Vale 2-1 Stockport
- 1991/92 Stoke 1-0 Stockport
- 1990/91 Birmingham 3-2 Tranmere
- 1989/90 Tranmere 2-1 Bristol Rovers
- 1988/89 Bolton 4-1 Torquay
- 1987/88 Wolverhampton 2-0 Burnley
- 1986/87 Mansfield 1-1 Bristol City*
(Mansfield win 4-3 on penalties)
- 1985/86 Bristol City 3-0 Bolton
- 1984/85 Wigan 3-1 Brentford
- 1983/84 Bournemouth 2-1 Hull
(*After extra-time)



JOHNSTONE'S PAINT TROPHY

Top Hatter

NOW IN HIS FIFTH STINT WITH HIS BELOVED LUTON TOWN, MICK HARFORD EXPLAINS WHY HIS PLAYERS SHOULD SAVOUR THE DAY

WORDS MICK DENNIS, DAILY EXPRESS

Mick Harford's reputation as a hardman is so well known that when he tells you the fresh scar over his right eye was caused by a gun, you believe him. Actually, the injury occurred on a shooting range. The weapon's recoil made the scope thump into his brow. And anyway, one more bump does not make much difference to a face that became so battle-scarred during his playing career.

You would definitely want Harford on your side in a fight – which makes him custom-built for Luton, where it has been one long scrap since he became manager in January 2008.

The club were in administration, so they had been docked ten points, could not sign players and were in the middle of a forlorn struggle against relegation. Then, in the summer, Harford learned that they would begin life in League 2 with a 30-point deduction.

So, ask him the significance of the Johnstone's Paint Trophy and he answers: "It is a bit of payback for the fans. The fans deserve to see their team play at Wembley. They turn up week in, week out, and don't have any say how their club is run. It has been run poorly over the last four or five years, and that is why we are in this situation.

But the fans just turn up and hand over some of their money to support the team. So Wembley is for them, first and foremost.

"I am also delighted for the players. We had a massive turnover in the summer, when we signed new players and brought others in on loan, and many of them came after we knew about the points deduction. They put their careers on the line by joining a club fighting to stay out of non-league football. But they have just come into training every day and got on with it. They have never moaned about the situation. I absolutely respect them for that.

"Playing at Wembley is a great thing for a footballer. Some wonderful players never get the chance and, with respect to the lads I have here, this might be the only chance for many of them.

"So Wembley is a bonus, firstly for the fans and secondly for the players, and then thirdly for the 'Luton Town 2020' consortium, who have worked tirelessly for months to get the club back on a level footing. Wembley is a reward for those people as well."

Harford, who turned 50 this year, is uniquely qualified to talk about what Wembley means to Luton, because he played at the stadium four times for the Bedfordshire club.

The first of those appearances was in March 1988, when he scored as Luton lost to Reading in the final of the Simod Cup. Next, the following month, came a defeat to Manchester United in a tournament staged at the old Stadium to celebrate the centenary of The Football League.

That same month, April 1988, Harford was part of the team who won the League Cup by beating Arsenal. The following season he was Luton's scorer again when they were beaten in the League Cup Final by Nottingham Forest.

Harford recalls: "The two League Cup Finals came in what I suppose you would say was the golden era for Luton, when we also finished seventh in the top division. I have used a video of part of the Arsenal game to motivate the team this season: to talk about the position we have found ourselves in and the fight we have needed to show.

"Against Arsenal we went 1-0 up, conceded a couple of goals and then took a battering. A different team might have conceded five or six that day, but we hung on and dug in. We got two

late goals and won 3-2. It was the mentality of the squad – men like Steve Foster and Ricky Hill – which got us through."

Harford could have added his own name, of course, but it occurs so often in the Luton Town story that he lost count of how many times he has been in and out of employment at Kenilworth Road. For the record, this is his fifth spell at the club.

When manager David Pleat signed Harford from Birmingham in 1984, he scored on his debut and then averaged better than a goal every two-and-a-half games in six years there. He even unwittingly helped Luton after moving on to Derby, because an own goal in a match between them on the final day of the 1990/91 season ensured Luton avoided relegation. Pleat

signed Harford back from Derby the following year and the striker scored on his second Luton "debut".

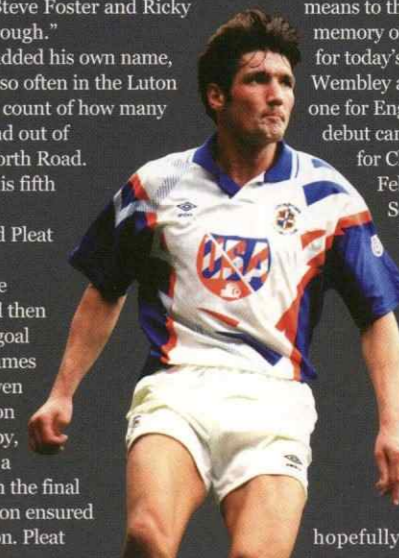
In all, his 21-year playing career took in nine clubs and ended at Wimbledon. He recalls: "At Wimbledon a group of us used to stay out after training for an hour and a half and work on stuff together – practising a technique like volleying for instance – and I was the one who used to decide what we would do. I loved that and when my career was ended by an achilles problem at 32, Joe Kinnear, who was the Wimbledon manager, put me in charge of the reserve team. That was the start of my coaching career."

When Kinnear became Luton manager in 2001, Harford joined him as his assistant. Both were sacked after a takeover (one of many controversial chapters in the club's recent history), but Harford returned as director of football during Mike Newell's period in charge. His fifth and current stint began when he replaced Kevin Blackwell as manager.

Despite all his travels as a player, and despite managing Rotherham for 30 games and having caretaker spells in charge at Forest and Queen's Park Rangers, Harford has called Luton home since joining them as a player the first time. He said: "I've rented other homes from time to time, but I've always kept a house in the Luton area."

So he really does know what a Wembley final means to the town, and he has a special memory of the stadium that he will call upon for today's team talk. As well as his four Wembley appearances for Luton, he made one for England. Harford's full international debut came when he went on as a substitute for Clive Allen in a friendly in Israel in February 1988 then, the following September, he was in the starting line-up for another friendly, against Denmark.

"I stood on the halfway line at Wembley and I kicked off, knocking the ball to Peter Beardsley. At that moment I thought, 'It doesn't get much better than this'. I will tell the Luton players that they should savour the day and the occasion and make their own memories – hopefully, winning memories."*



Mick Harford wants to add another happy Wembley memory to his list today and (right) in action for Luton in 1991

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The Adkins Diet

SCUNTHORPE BOSS NIGEL ADKINS TOOK A HIGHLY UNCONVENTIONAL ROUTE INTO MANAGEMENT, BUT IT'S A CAREER PATH THAT'S PAID DIVIDENDS

WORDS IVAN SPECK, DAILY MAIL

Nigel Adkins is different. A manager with a heart and a sense of priorities that does not feature football at the very top. If the latter might be deemed a hindrance to naked ambition, the former turns doubters into believers and gains trust from players, supporters and directors alike.

Consider his career path for a start. Adkins gave up the professional game as Wigan Athletic goalkeeper to care for his wife Angie, who had become seriously ill following the birth of the couple's second son.

He trained as a physiotherapist, working six months in the local hospital outpatients department in Bangor while he played part-time for the city's League of Wales club.

Only a matter of weeks after arriving he was made player-manager and subsequently led Bangor to two league titles and into the European Cup where they progressed defiantly to the final qualifying round.

Invited to become the physio at Scunthorpe

United by Mick Buxton, Adkins performed the same role under Brian Laws until Laws left for Sheffield Wednesday in November 2006.

In 29 dizzying months since he was installed as manager, Scunthorpe have been promoted to the Coca-Cola Championship after an absence of 43 seasons, however they were relegated but are among the play-off contenders in League 1 and today feature in the first cup final of note in the club's 110-year history.

Little wonder that the chant of 'Who needs Mourinho? We've got our physio,' became the Lincolnshire club's unofficial anthem during Adkins' early reign. And yet, to insist that Adkins is now following his true vocation would be to do a disservice to the talent he brought to his role as football club physio.

The 44-year-old was a walking Panacea, able to cure all the ills that plague those who play the game. Treating groin strains and twisted ankles

was the easy part. Adkins said: "It's a great experience being a physio because basically your door is always open. People come to you when they've got a problem. Players maybe aren't injured but they come to you as a kind of cry for help."

"I've had to deal with the drug problems, the drinking problems, the gambling problems, the women problems and the situation in which a player needs to have a groin strain just to be out

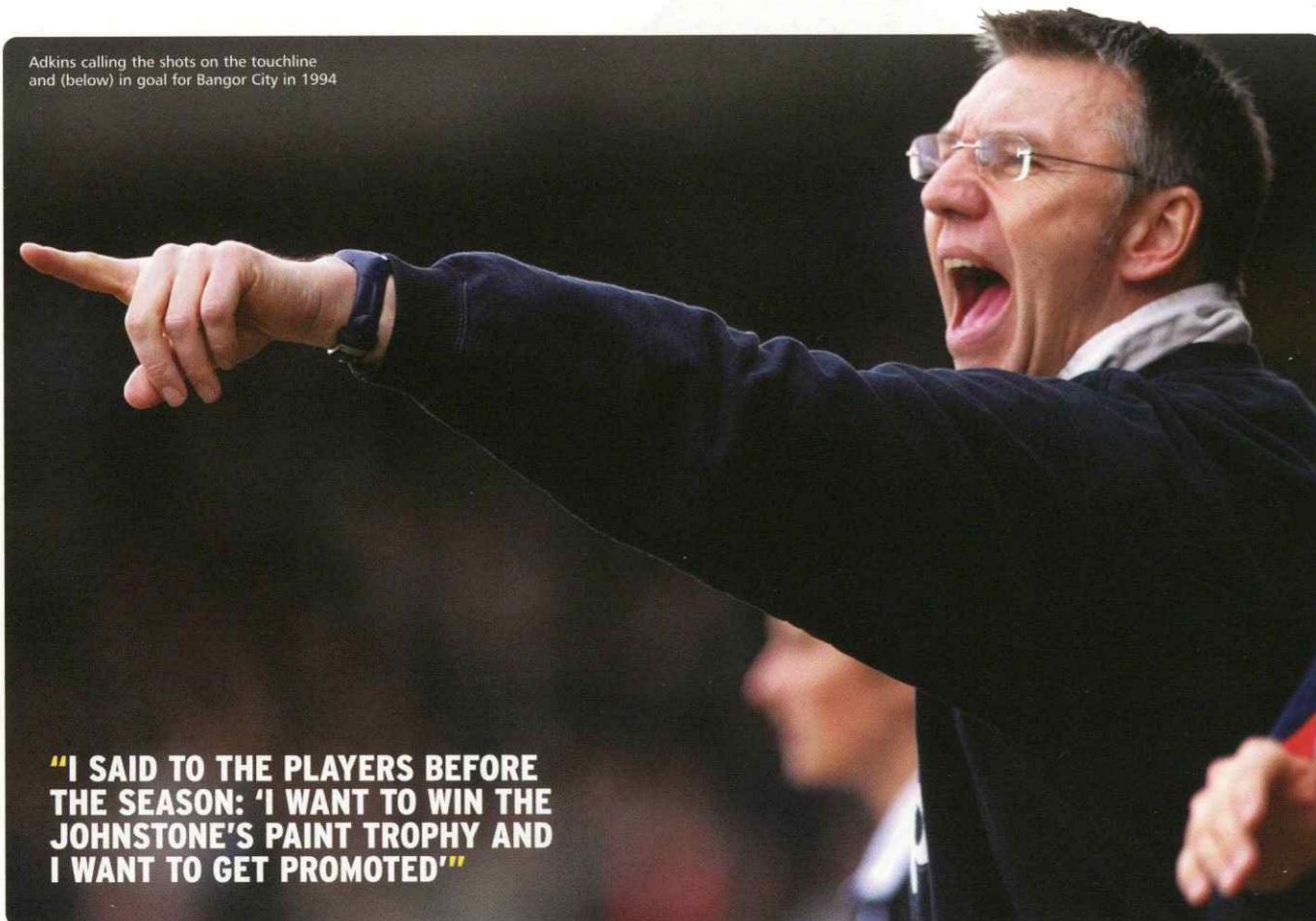
of the fishbowl of an arena in which he's getting slaughtered by supporters every week.

"I quickly realised I was more like a social worker, a counsellor if anything, so I went and did a diploma in sports psychology at Newcastle University. I have utilised so much of it."

In seven years at Wigan, Adkins suffered so many horrific injuries – he broke both cheekbones, suffered a double fracture of the spine and ruptured the patella tendon in

"IT'S A GREAT EXPERIENCE BEING A PHYSIO BECAUSE BASICALLY YOUR DOOR IS ALWAYS OPEN"

Adkins calling the shots on the touchline and (below) in goal for Bangor City in 1994



"I SAID TO THE PLAYERS BEFORE THE SEASON: 'I WANT TO WIN THE JOHNSTONE'S PAINT TROPHY AND I WANT TO GET PROMOTED'"

his knee – that his rehabilitation kindled an interest in physiotherapy.

Spend an hour in his company and you cannot fail to be impressed by a thirst for knowledge that leads him naturally to summer management courses and to the storage of newspaper articles, books and videos at home of anything that might be a useful point of reference.

He added: "Knowledge is valuable. Everything is relevant to somebody. It's all about finding a trigger to get the best out of that individual because people learn and respond in different ways.

"When Ange became ill, I made a conscious decision that I would go non-league to whoever gave me the most money. I trained or played Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, stayed at home to look after two young sons and my wife and spent a lot of time at hospitals as well doing the physiotherapy courses, which was quite demanding.

"When I got the chance to come to Scunthorpe, it was the right time to leave. I didn't really know where Scunthorpe was but moving to a sleepy little village in the countryside with fresh air was right for Ange's convalescence. It was perfect, all tied in nicely. Yes, I came in as a physio, but having been a manager with Bangor, it was beneficial that I could join in with the coaching."

Adkins has been at Scunthorpe for 11 years now. He understands the club, its



position within the local community and its financial reality. A man who exudes positivity is not about to bemoan a lack of money, however. For Adkins, every constraint offers up an opportunity for innovation and creativity.

When Scunthorpe trod among the bigger names of the Championship last season, Adkins inspired them with a video that interspersed a scene from the movie 'Gladiator.'

Nowhere is his forward thinking more apparent than in the reputation the club has forged under him as a finishing school for promising young players. In the past 12 months, Chelsea, Liverpool and Arsenal have all entrusted him with one of their precious teenagers on loan – Jack Cork, Jack Hobbs and Henri Lansbury, respectively – while then Charlton manager Alan Pardew was so delighted by the progress of full-back Kelly Youga during his stay in Lincolnshire that he publicly declared he would be happy to send all his players to Scunthorpe for seasoning.

Then there are the strikers who have been recycled, nurtured and polished at Glanford Park and either been reclaimed by grateful parent clubs, such as Jermaine Beckford with Leeds, or sold on for profit, like Andy Keogh, Billy Sharp and Martin Paterson.

The gratitude in the latter cases comes from the Scunthorpe directors, who are happy for Adkins to re-invest some of

the fees in attracting the next crop of interns, of which prolific goalscorer Gary Hooper, winger Martyn Woolford and defender Krystian Pearce are this season's bright young things.

"We try and get young, hungry players and play football the right way. People talk about mistakes and lapses of concentration but unless you're allowed to make mistakes, you're never going to improve and learn from that experience. We create a good learning environment at our club which gives the players the opportunity to play.

"It's fantastic to be able to say that Arsenal, Chelsea and Liverpool have all let us have their players. It helps their development. It's all good exciting stuff and it's because we play the right way. The principles are right and we have standards. We can't offer what some clubs can to players but we try to give them the opportunity to develop and to move on to bigger and better things.

"I'm well aware of what the club is all about. We are who we are. Our lack of strength in depth told in the end in the Championship, but I said to the players before this season: 'I want to win the Johnstone's Paint Trophy and I want to get promoted'. They were the two goals we had.

"We've set out to win this competition. We've played our strongest side in every round and approached every game very seriously. We're in the final which is great for the supporters but our intention is to win it."

He may be all heart, but in his statement of intent for today's game, Nigel Adkins proves he was born to be a manager.★

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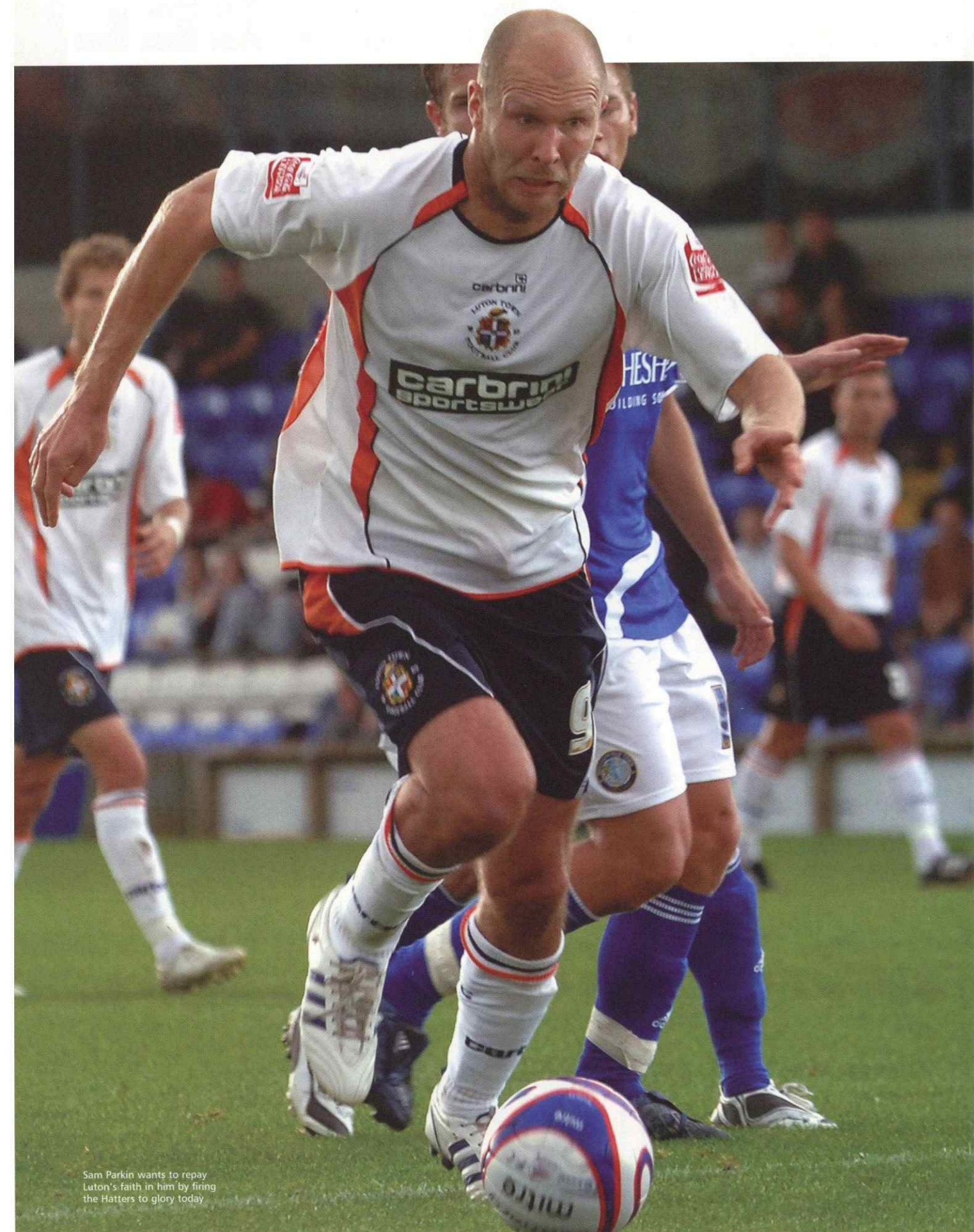


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Sam Parkin wants to repay Luton's faith in him by firing the Hatters to glory today

Parkin Life

LUTON'S SAM PARKIN ON HIS DETERMINATION TO BREAK HIS TROPHY DUCK

WORDS TREVOR HAYLETT

When you're a young player learning the trade at a club as big and powerful as Chelsea and the likes of John Terry are in the same dressing-room sharing the same hopes and ambitions, it's easy to assume your sideboard will contain a few winners' medals as the years roll by.

Yet Sam Parkin has just turned 28 and his trophy cabinet remains empty. Five years ago he came desperately close to a place in a play-off final at the Millennium Stadium but today's Wembley showpiece is comfortably the biggest game of his career. And as he faces up to the fact that this could be his last season with Luton he is determined to finish on the winning side.

So far, Parkin has been less than prolific this season and up to March 13th had registered just one goal since August – scoring in the 3-1 home victory over Shrewsbury Town that followed Luton's defeat of Brighton in the Johnstone's Paint Trophy Area Final. Nevertheless it's an indication of the other qualities he brings to the team that manager Mick Harford has demonstrated so much faith in him.

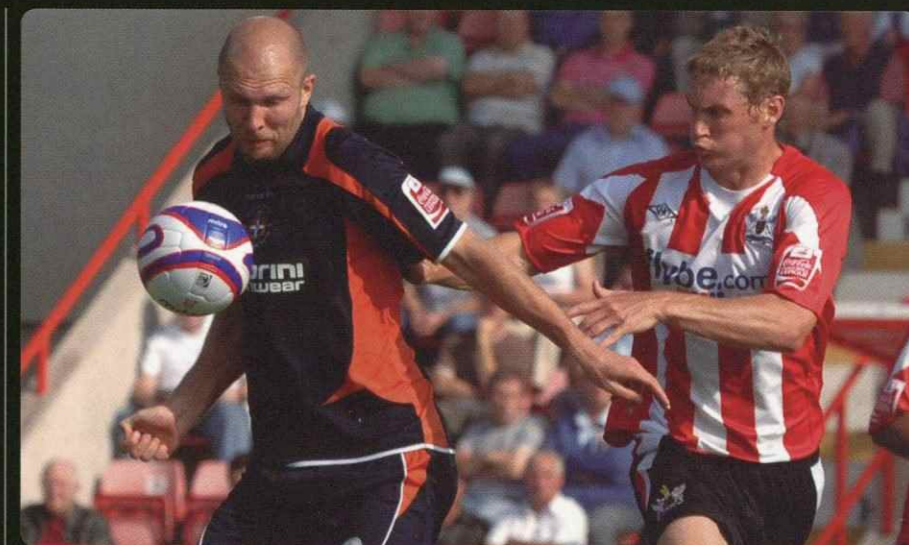
However it was fatigue rather than a lack of confidence in front of goal that led him to opt out of the initial firing line when the Brighton tie came down to a penalty shoot-out at the end of a tight and tense 90 minutes at Kenilworth Road.

"IT IS AN OVERWHELMING FEELING TO GET TO WEMBLEY BECAUSE EVERY GAME HAS BEEN A BATTLE THIS SEASON. TO REACH THE FINAL TODAY IS A GREAT ACHIEVEMENT"

"I would have taken one if it had come to it but I was a little bit out on my feet at that stage so I was happy to be sixth in line," Parkin recalled. "There are some good penalty-takers at the club so I knew we were in good hands. I've taken penalties at various times during my career and not at other times – it depends how I'm feeling."

A penalty showdown he would rather forget came against the same opponents in the 2004 Second Division Play-Off Semi-Final when his muscular presence was a prominent feature of the Swindon attack. On that occasion it was Brighton who were the ones dancing their celebration jigs.

"I've not yet won any honours in the game but that was the closest I've come," added Parkin. "We lost 1-0 in the home leg but at Brighton we managed to win 2-1 to take it to penalties. I scored late on to force extra-time and also scored in the shoot-out but Brighton won it 4-3. It is one of the biggest games I have played in so it was nice that we were able to turn the tables on Brighton by winning through to Wembley."



"Over the two games we battered Brighton that year and to lose out on a place in the play-off Final and possible promotion was really hard to take. I remember it took a summer of sitting on a beach and feeling pretty miserable to get over it."

He arrived at Swindon in August 2002 when it became clear he wasn't going to make the grade at Stamford Bridge and after a tour of the lower

divisions as a loan signing with temporary stops at Millwall, Wycombe, Oldham and Northampton.

"Ruud Gullit was in charge for my first year as an apprentice at Chelsea and then Gianluca Vialli took over followed by Claudio Ranieri. "I travelled with the first team on a couple of occasions but didn't actually make a senior appearance. At certain times you think you're getting close to a call-up and then they go and sign a new player and that puts you a little further away again."

"It was a great upbringing though and being at a club like Chelsea gives you a terrific grounding in how to be a professional footballer. I was in the same age group as John Terry and you knew when he was 16 or 17 that he was going to be a fantastic player. Jon Harley, who's now at Watford, was another in the same group."

After Swindon there was a one-season stop at Ipswich and then on to Luton. As one of the longest-serving players he admits he is on a contract that the club will find hard to sustain next season. Like some of the other higher-earners he

has been sent out on loan and had three months at Leyton Orient before returning to Kenilworth Road in January to aid their bid for Wembley.

"My contract ends in the summer and there haven't really been any talks about a new one. I'm expecting it will be off to pastures new and it's a shame because I feel quite settled here. I'm determined to go out with a bang because they have invested a lot of time and money in me."

"The lads have performed well this season and we should have a lot more points than we have. The manager has done a good job and has made some astute signings. Getting the two lads in from Norwich [Chris Martin and Michael Spillane] and persuading Tom Craddock to leave Middlesbrough shows how well he has done. Even though we have been struggling at the wrong end of the table he makes it a nice place to be around."

"It is an overwhelming feeling to get to Wembley because every game has been a battle this season. We've been playing catch-up in League 2 and the Johnstone's Paint Trophy has been a nice diversion. To reach the Final with all the problems we've had is a great achievement. Scunthorpe will be favourites because they're a good side who were in the Championship last season but we have shown throughout the campaign that we can beat anybody." ★

SAM PARKIN
 POSITION STRIKER D.O.B 14/03/1981
 2008/09 APPS 38 2008/09 GOALS 4
 SIGNED AUGUST 2006
 NATIONALITY ENGLISH



The Late Show

SCUNTHORPE STRIKER PAUL HAYES TAKES US THROUGH HIS DRAMATIC GOALS ON THE ROAD TO WEMBLEY

WORDS GRAHAME LLOYD

PAUL HAYES
 POSITION STRIKER D.O.B 20/09/1983
 2008/09 APPS 45 2008/09 GOALS 15
 SIGNED JULY 2007
 NATIONALITY ENGLISH

Better late than never...the phrase has followed Scunthorpe United all the way down the long road that started in the Johnstone's Paint Trophy against Notts County in early September and culminates at Wembley Stadium this afternoon.

Four times during their six-match run to the Final, the Iron have scored crucial stoppage-time goals – with striker Paul Hayes hitting three of them.

"Obviously, we like to leave things late but that's just the way football goes," says the 25-year-old who set the ball rolling with a double whammy in the first round.

"We'd had about 30 shots on goal against Notts County but were 1-0 down. We thought it wasn't going to be our day but I popped up with a header in the 92nd minute from our 16th corner of the game.

"We were heading for penalties but then I did it again a couple of minutes later by forcing the ball over the line after Ben May's shot had been saved. That goal set us on the road to Wembley."

Hayes is revelling in his return to Glanford Park after spending two

years with Barnsley. He joined Scunthorpe for the first time at the age of 19 after failing to make a league appearance with Norwich and with 19 goals helped the Iron win promotion from League 2 in 2005 under Brian Laws. A year later, following his move to Oakwell, Hayes opened the scoring for Barnsley in a 2-2 draw against Swansea in the League 1 Play-Off Final before firing home one of the penalties in the shoot-out which

took the Yorkshire side into the Championship.

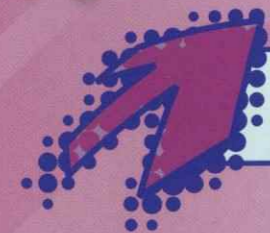
"I loved it at Barnsley under Andy Ritchie but Simon Davey came in with different ideas," recalls Hayes. "When Nigel Adkins, who had taken over at Scunthorpe, gave me the opportunity to come back, I bit his hand off."

Hayes' delight at making the return journey was mirrored by his manager who ascended to the hot-seat at Glanford Park after working as the club's physio. "I'd got to know Paul well because he was in my treatment room quite a bit," recalls Adkins. "When I took over as manager, we won the title but I lost all my strikers so it was great to get such a talented player back." »

"IT WAS GREAT TO PLAY AT THE MILLENNIUM STADIUM BUT IT'S BEEN A BOYHOOD DREAM TO RUN OUT AT WEMBLEY"

Good Luck

to Scunthorpe United from North Lincolnshire Strategic Partnership



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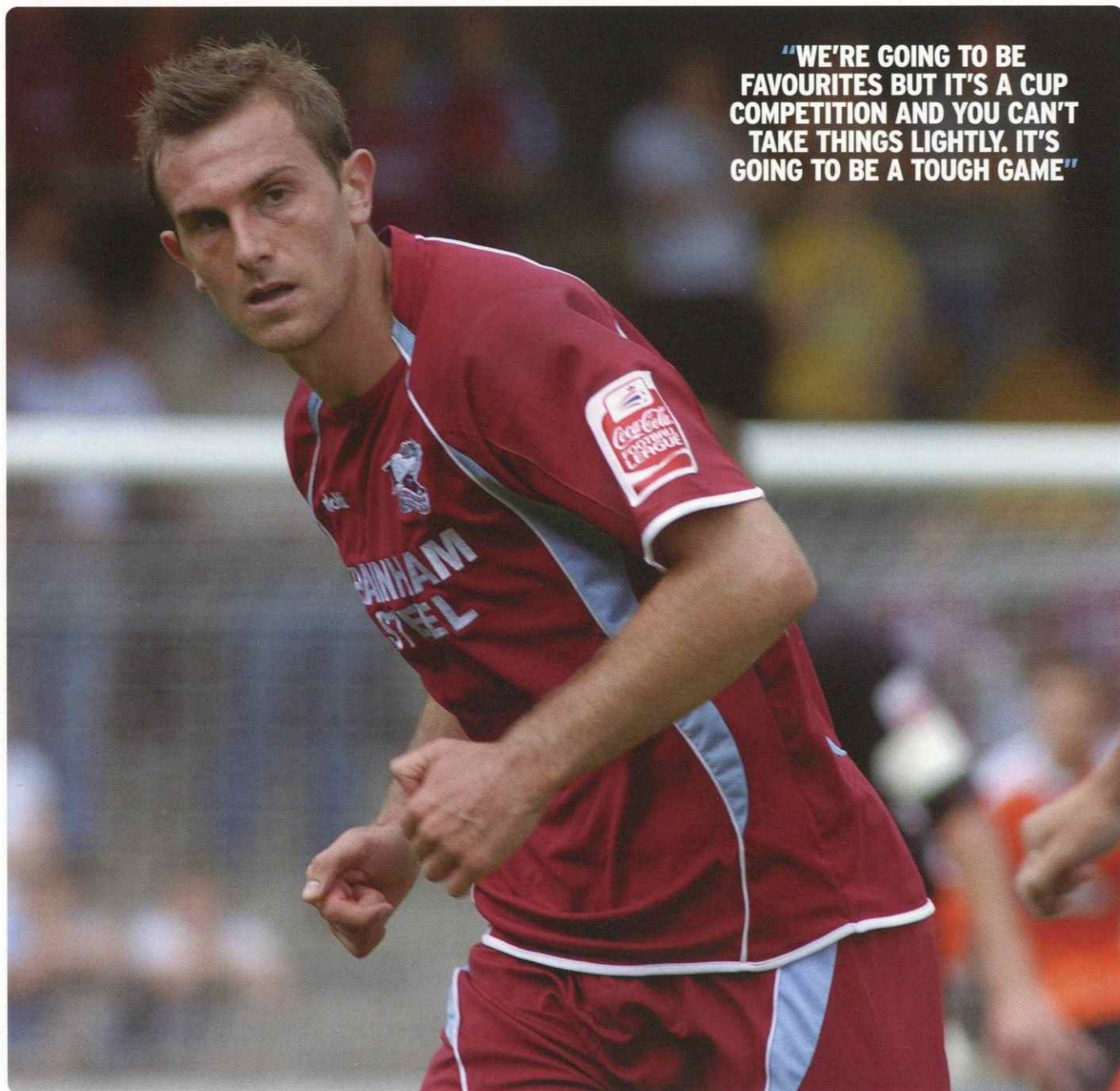


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North Lincolnshire Strategic Partnership Contact Matt Cridge - Strategic Partnership Manager on: 01724 296612 or go to www.nlspartnership.org



"WE'RE GOING TO BE FAVOURITES BUT IT'S A CUP COMPETITION AND YOU CAN'T TAKE THINGS LIGHTLY. IT'S GOING TO BE A TOUGH GAME"

The trend of late goals saw central defender David Mirfin score with a 91st-minute header to give Scunthorpe a 1-0 home win over Rochdale in the Area quarter-final. Then came Tranmere Rovers when Hayes' determination to play through the pain barrier paid handsome dividends.

"I broke my cheekbone about ten days earlier but had a protective mask fitted on the morning of the match and persuaded the manager to put me on the bench. It was 1-1 and he was going to use me for the penalties but I went on just before the end and took a free-kick in the 93rd minute which was deflected in for the winner."

After overcoming Rotherham in the Area Final, Scunthorpe's form slumped and they won only one of their next six fixtures. "After we lost 2-1 at Peterborough, we sat down to see where we had gone wrong. The average age of the squad



is 23 and a few of the younger players are in their first full season. The older lads explained to them that although going to Wembley is a once in a lifetime achievement, promotion is great to have on your CV and to experience. They've obviously taken that on board, we've got over the hangover and we're hoping to win this competition and then push on for promotion. "We're going to be favourites – as we have been for most of the rounds – but it's a cup competition and you can't take things lightly. Luton haven't reached the Final through luck but on merit and they have beaten some good sides along the way. It's going to be a tough game."

Born and bred in East London, Hayes is delighted to be returning to the capital for today's showpiece. "It was great to play at the Millennium Stadium for Barnsley in 2006 but it's been a boyhood dream to run out at

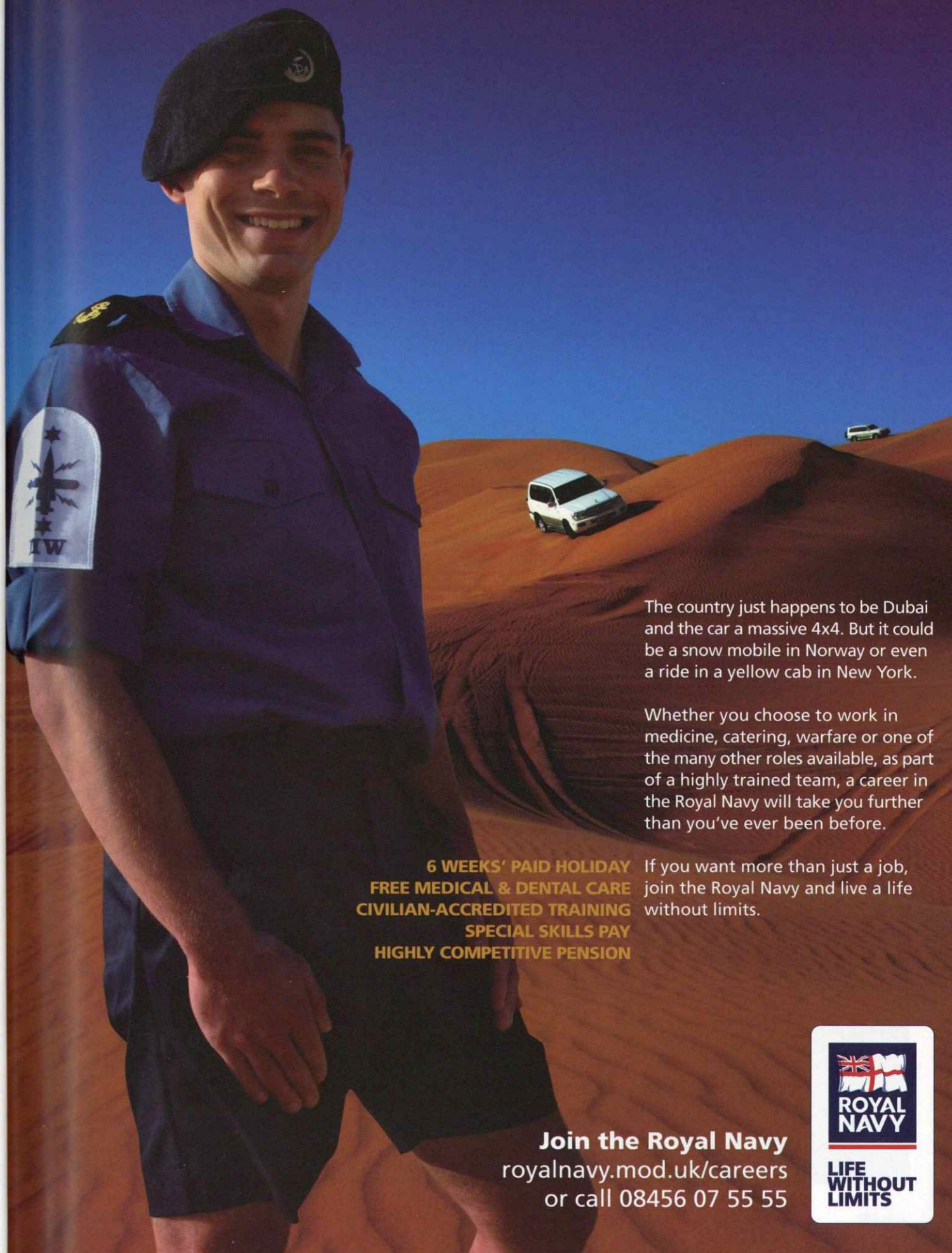
Wembley. Against Swansea City in that League 1 Play-Off Final we probably weren't the better side but we kept going. We were all very tired but we stuck in there and scored our penalties. Towards the end, it was more mental tiredness and we just proved that we were mentally tougher.

The younger brother of former Arsenal winger Martin, he explained how he has helped him during his career. "The 17-year age gap between us is quite a lot and when Martin was in the Arsenal first team, I was only a toddler. I obviously enjoyed knowing that my big brother was a professional footballer and it was a massive influence because I knew that he played for one of the best teams in the country. I saw what football had done for him and I wanted to experience that myself.

"We're always on the phone but we don't see each other as much as we'd like to because we live different lives. He was manager of Bishop's Stortford for nine years until last November and has just been appointed manager of Wingate and Finchley of the Ryman League." ★



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Former England manager Graham Taylor on a recent return to Scunthorpe



Pics: Scunthorpe Telegraph

Down memory lane

DAVID PLEAT AND GRAHAM TAYLOR, OUTSTANDING MANAGERS AND NOW HIGH-PROFILE MEDIA FIGURES, HAVE A STRONG AFFINITY WITH TODAY'S FINALISTS. THEY SHARED THEIR MEMORIES WITH US

INTERVIEWS BY TREVOR HAYLETT AND STEVE TONGUE

DAVID, YOU WERE A PLAYER AT LUTON FIRST OF ALL AND THEN RETURNED AS A COACH UNDER HARRY HASLAM. TAKE US BACK THERE.

DP: I had three years as a player there but suffered a badly broken leg which hampered me and I later moved on. Harry invited me back as a youth-team coach but initially there wasn't a role for me and I spent three months in the commercial office! I became reserve-team coach and then first-team coach and within a few weeks I took over when Harry left for Sheffield United. I was on my own, starting from scratch. Even though I had spent three years as a player-manager at Nuneaton Borough to find yourself in charge of a league team with all that responsibility for buying and selling players is daunting and I don't think I ate or slept in those first couple of days. But once I got into it I

thrived and the team got better and better, winning the Second Division title in 1981/82 by eight points, losing only four games.

THERE WERE SOME INTERESTING CHARACTERS AT LUTON AT THAT TIME, LIKE ERIC MORECAMBE, A CLUB DIRECTOR.

DP: When I was in charge of the reserves we played on a Saturday afternoon and Eric would come along to our home games. Afterwards we would have a cup of tea in the boardroom reflecting on the match and the first-team result from wherever they were playing. Eric used to come out with these witty asides, he'd say 'why don't you hold up a board to show the players what move to make next'. He wasn't particularly knowledgeable on the game but he enjoyed it and got into the swing of it. Outside



David Pleat leads Luton striker Brian Stein off the field on the final day of the 1991/92 season

the show business world he was the same person – he liked a laugh and a joke.

GRAHAM, I THINK YOUR ASSOCIATION WITH SCUNTHORPE UNITED BEGAN WHEN YOU WERE A SMALL BOY?

GT: I was two years old when we moved there from Worksop and my father Tom became the sports reporter and sports editor of the Scunthorpe Evening Telegraph, where part of his job was covering Scunthorpe United who were then in the Midland League. His byline was The Poacher, after the Lincolnshire poacher.

I first watched them when I was six, in 1950, when they had just been elected to the Third Division North. At the Old Show Ground there was a long press box split in two. I would sit

David Pleat watches on as his Luton Town side face Everton at Villa Park in the 1984/85 FA Cup semi-final





David Pleat managed Luton on their last trip to Wembley to face Chelsea in the 1993/94 FA Cup semi-final and (below) Graham Taylor presents ex-Scunthorpe defender Steve Foster with his 2006/07 Player of the Year award

right in the middle and my father gave me a stopwatch to press every time a goal was scored so he knew the exact time.

WHAT ARE YOUR MEMORIES AS A FAN?

GT: I remember going to watch the Iron draw 3-3 at Liverpool, when my dad took me round to the queue of Scunthorpe supporters and asked someone to keep an eye on me until after he'd finished his work. Then in my teens I met Rita – who's now my wife – at school and we'd stand either behind the goal or in the enclosure by the players' tunnel.

One Thursday afternoon there was a game against Blackpool, with Matthews, Mortensen and all the lot. Score: Scunthorpe 6 Blackpool 2. All my early football memories are centred around the Iron and I have great feelings for the club. Until my dying day that'll never leave me. They're the only club I ever supported.

WHICH PLAYERS DO YOU REMEMBER MOST?

GT: A forward called Jack Haigh and Jackie Brownsword, who never gave Stanley Matthews a kick in that Blackpool game and became the second full-back after Stan Lynn of Aston Villa to score 50 goals. The first 49 were all penalties and the 50th came from inside his own half, against Southampton. Later there would be Barrie Thomas, the centre-forward sold to Newcastle United from probably the best Scunthorpe team ever, the one that finished fourth in the old Second Division.

HOW CLOSE DID YOU COME TO PLAYING FOR SCUNTHORPE?

GT: I played for the juniors and would have turned professional but the manager, Dick Duckworth, for

some reason made five of us sign what turned out to amateur forms, so I was picked up in 1962 by Tim Ward, the manager of the old enemy, Grimsby Town. I made my debut in 1963-64 and went back to the Old Show Ground with Grimsby. Both of us were relegated that season.

YOU BOTH MADE RAPID STRIDES AS YOUNG MANAGERS AND IN THAT 1981/82 SEASON WENT HEAD TO HEAD AS WATFORD CHASED LUTON FOR THE SECOND DIVISION TITLE, EVENTUALLY FINISHING SECOND.

DP: We had just missed out on promotion the previous season but it was champagne all the way the next year. I remember we hammered Watford, the team we liked to beat the most, and their direct style which we didn't like and had to prove we could beat it with our superior passing football. I was thrilled to bits.

GT: Whenever the teams played we consciously made an effort to downplay the rivalry by having a joint press conference before the match and never bad-mouthing the other team. There was never any bitterness. I don't hate Luton, but David knows who I want to win today.

THE FOLLOWING SEASON WAS DRAMATIC WITH WATFORD FINISHING SECOND IN THEIR DEBUT SEASON IN THE TOP FLIGHT AND LUTON SURVIVING ON THE LAST DAY BY WINNING AT MANCHESTER CITY. THAT FAMOUS OCCASION, DAVID, WHEN YOU SET OFF ON A MAD DANCE ACROSS THE PITCH ON THE FINAL WHISTLE. »

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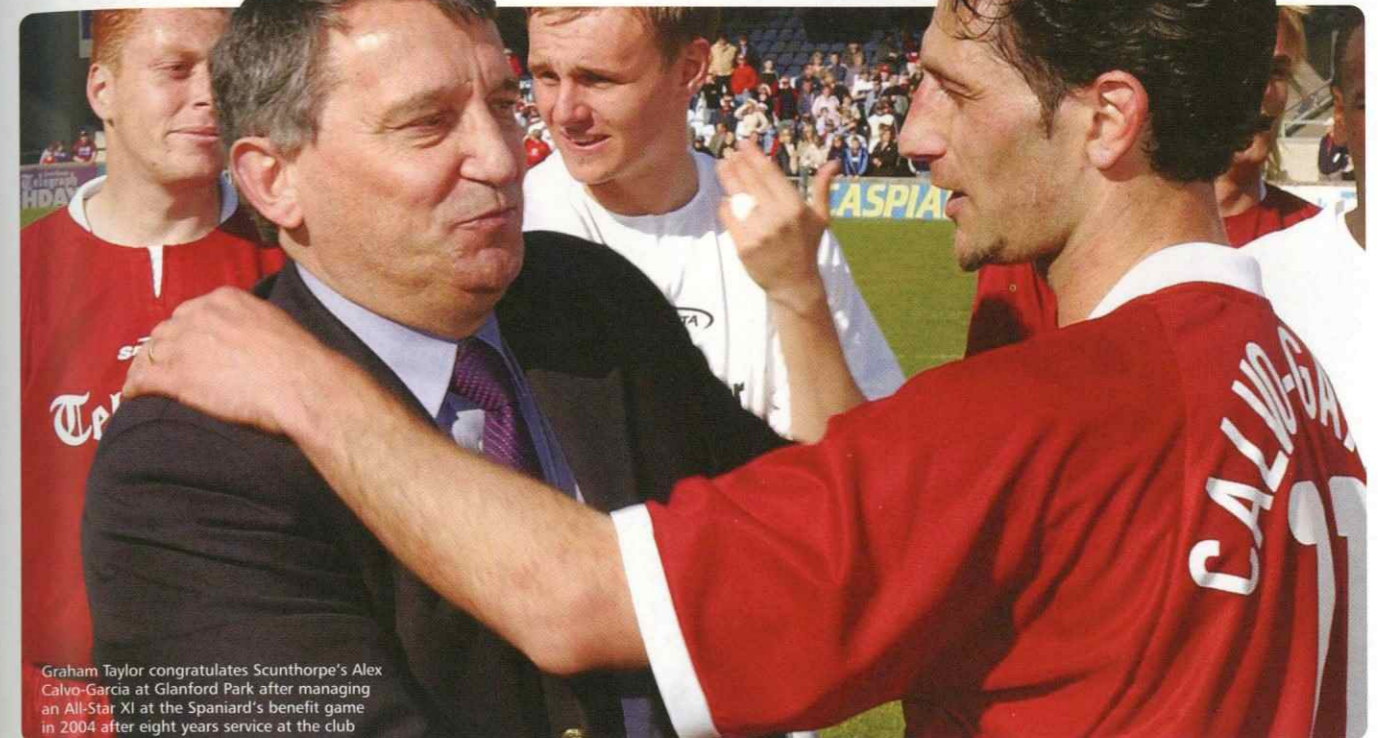
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Graham Taylor congratulates Scunthorpe's Alex Calvo-Garcia at Glanford Park after managing an All-Star XI at the Spaniard's benefit game in 2004 after eight years service at the club

GT: I tell David that when he went running round the pitch in that terrible cream suit he got more publicity and recognition out of it than we did at Watford even though we finished that season as runners-up to Liverpool!

DP: It was an emotional time, my wife's father had died the night before, and at the end it was a mixture of relief and joy. There was the fear of losing all that we had achieved through four years hard work in getting a small club into the top flight. As a consequence of winning that day, Luton stayed another nine years among the elite which was a fantastic achievement because we were paupers compared to other teams. It couldn't be done now. I admire what Watford did at the same time but they had Elton John's money behind them and I admire Wimbledon but they had a style of play that sustained them and infuriated opponents.

AT KENILWORTH ROAD YOU WORKED WITH A LOT OF TALENTED PLAYERS, MANY OF WHOM THE CLUB DEVELOPED THEMSELVES OR BROUGHT IN QUITE CHEAPLY LIKE BRIAN STEIN.

DP: Stein cost £5,000 from Edgware Town, a wonderful forward. When I think back I realise how lucky I was but also how lucky the players were, growing together as a team. I had leaders like Brian Horton, strong characters like Les Sealey and Steve Foster. David Moss was a superb winger, David Preece and Ricky Hill were fine, clever players. We were very creative and played with imagination. I hate what I call straight-line football. We played diagonals and short balls, we changed the direction of the ball quickly, we had ideas.

I had about seven boys who we developed or who came in cheaply who then went on to become internationals, like Mick Harford who I took from Birmingham reserves and who went on to play for England. So did Paul Walsh. Mal



David Pleat also featured for Luton as a player between 1964 and '67

Donaghy was incredible, I signed him from an amateur club in Ireland and he never missed a game for us. He didn't like to go out for the warm-up before the start and afterwards he'd be changed and on his way home before the results came in at five o'clock. After I left in 1986 to take over at Tottenham, nine of that team won The League Cup for Luton under Ray Harford. I returned for a second spell in 1991 and had outstanding young boys like John Hartson, Paul Telfer and Mark Pembridge but we kept selling them and I got frustrated.

GRAHAM, WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE CURRENT SCUNTHORPE TEAM?

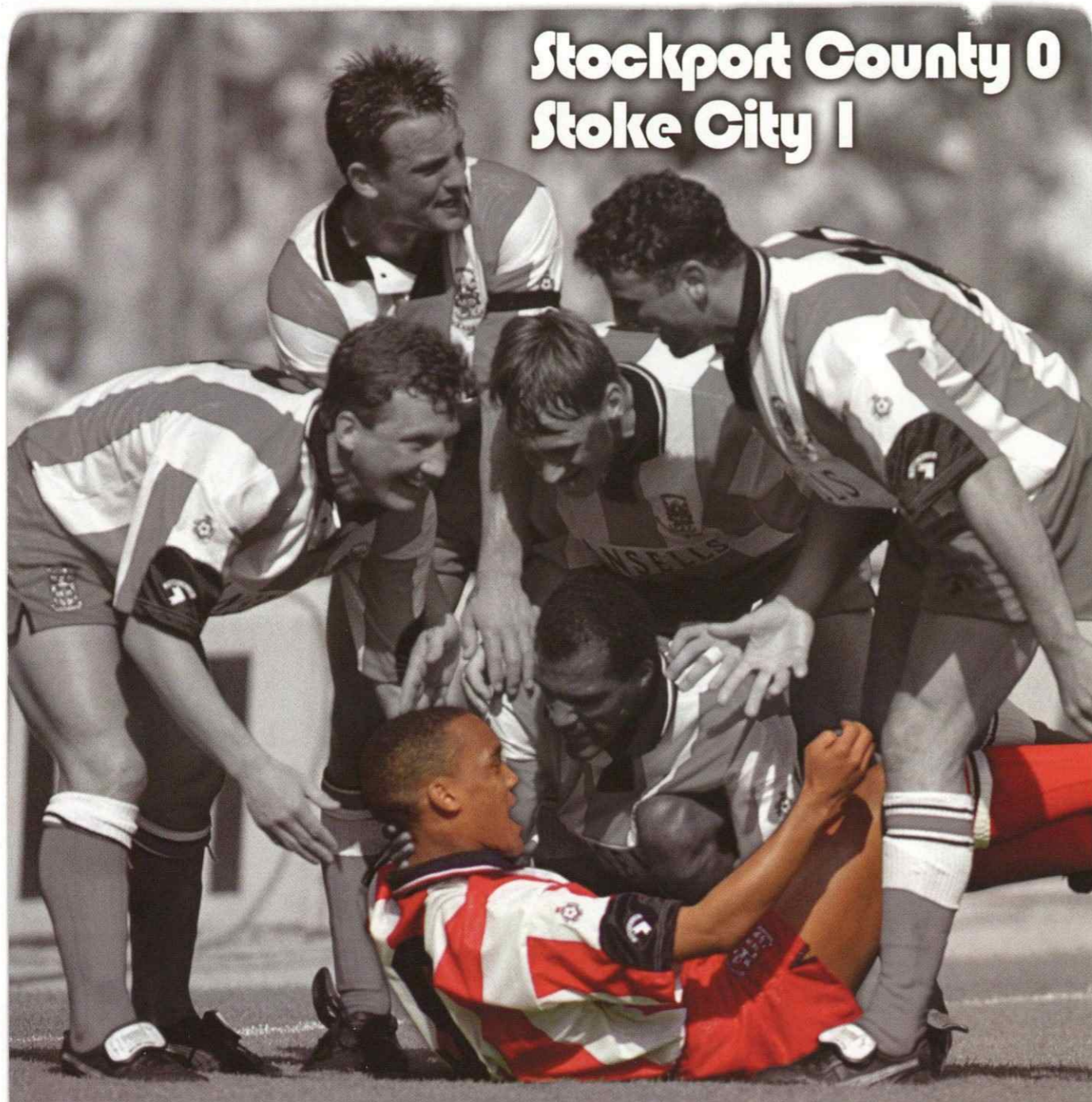
GT: Having been relegated with 46 points last

season, which was a lot, I think they've done ever so well. What I like about them is that the club is run superbly well. Chairman Steve Wharton, whose father Jack was chairman when Thomas was sold, knows the club and he'll never put its future at risk. Don't forget the population of the town is only 60,000. They've a lovely little ground and I was so pleased that The Football League asked me if I'd manage an all-star side to open it when they moved there in 1988.

DAVID, YOU MENTIONED THAT YOU FIRST SIGNED MICK HARFORD FOR LUTON. WAS THERE ANYTHING TO SUGGEST THEN HE WOULD GO ON TO BECOME A MANAGER?

DP: Not particularly but that goes for other managers as well. Something happens in their playing careers that changes their mentality or approach. I was very impressed with Mick's work at Nottingham Forest and he was unlucky not to be given longer there. He worked conscientiously at Rotherham and now at Luton in trying circumstances. I know he's very focussed on becoming a successful manager and this season he's had to wheel and deal and Luton's record has been okay.

I think it's so sad what's happened to them but I have to say I could understand the 20-point penalty. The League had to make a punishment because to go into administration three times, to deprive creditors of their money, is bad and you can't condone it. However the 10-point reduction for making irregular payments to agents by the FA is a different matter and I did find that surprising. The prospects for Luton are not great but if they can get their strategy right they can get back to where they belong. It's absolutely important that Bedfordshire has a senior club in The Football League but it will need very careful planning and pruning. ★



**Stockport County 0
Stoke City 1**

Mark Stein, 16 May 1992

// I've been very fortunate with regards to playing at Wembley. The stadium has given me some of my fondest memories in football and winning this competition is right up there as one of my greatest.

As a Luton player I won the 1988 League Cup against Arsenal, which was a special feeling as we were certainly underdogs going into the game and everybody expected us to be swept aside. To score the winning goal in a Wembley final, however, is something I am very proud of.

Only three days before, Stockport had got the better of us in the play-off semi-finals for promotion to the old First Division, so we knew we would have a battle on our hands.

It was a tough encounter and the fact we only won it late on shows that. I would like to say there was an element of subtlety about my goal, but it was anything but. As the ball fell to me my instinct was just to smash it, which I did, and the power proved too much for their goalkeeper.

The celebrations afterwards were overwhelming and the town gave us an amazing welcome home as we celebrated with the fans when we got back to Stoke.

There must have been about 45,000 people that came out to line the streets when we returned. It was an amazing experience, one of the best in my career, and one I remember vividly today. **//**

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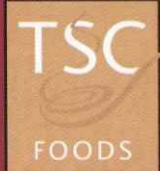
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FORMER SCUNTHORPE UNITED PLAYER AND BBC HUMBERSIDE COMMENTATOR GEORGE KERR ASSESSES NIGEL ADKINS' SQUAD



CLUB INFORMATION

FOUNDED: 1889
NICKNAME: THE IRON
CHAIRMAN: STEVEN WHARTON
GROUND: GLANFORD PARK
WEBSITE:
WWW.SCUNTHORPE-UNITED.CO.UK

HONOURS

LEAGUE ONE CHAMPIONS: 2006/07
DIVISION THREE PLAY-OFFS: 1998/99

LAST SEASON

CHAMPIONSHIP: 23RD
FA CUP: 3RD ROUND
CARLING CUP: 1ST ROUND

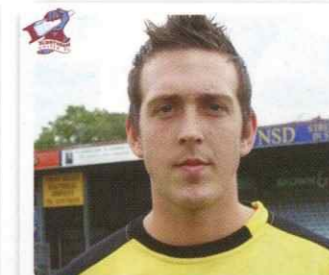
GOALKEEPERS



JOE MURPHY

NO. 1 AGE 27
APPS 141 CLEAN SHEETS 50
PREV CLUB SUNDERLAND

An Irish international, Murphy has been very consistent for the Iron this season. He's one of the finest goalkeepers outside the top flight and is more than capable of making the step up to the Premier League. Has rescued his team on a number of occasions this term.



JOSH LILLIS

NO. 22 AGE 21
APPS 10 CLEAN SHEETS 2
PREV CLUB NONE

It's a shame Lillis has the best goalkeeper in the league ahead of him in Joe Murphy because he is another smashing keeper. He's only made a handful of appearances this season, but has shown his ability and has never let the team down when called upon.

DEFENDERS



MARCUS WILLIAMS

NO. 3 AGE 22
APPS 143 GOALS 0
PREV CLUB NONE

Williams is a player very much in the mould of Chelsea and England left-back Ashley Cole. He is capable defensively, but going forward is where he really shows his talent. He has tremendous skill, offering something different in attack and is extremely quick.





CLIFF BYRNE

NO.6 AGE 26
APPS 227 GOALS 3
PREV CLUB SUNDERLAND

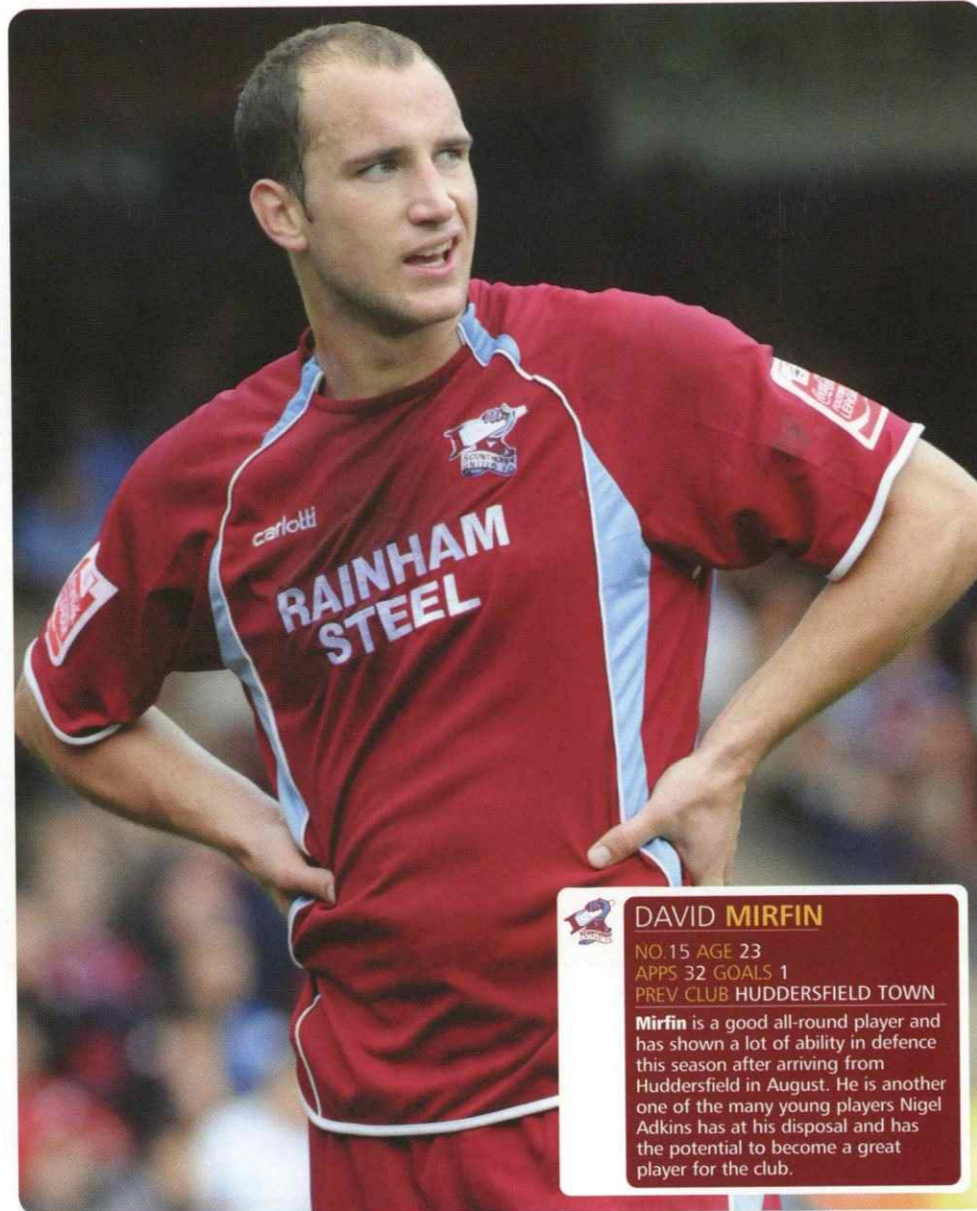
The club captain, Byrne is a very important player for Scunthorpe and holds the defence together. He can play in the middle or on the right and his attitude is excellent. Byrne leads by example and has grown in stature throughout his time at Glanford Park.



ANDY CROSBY

NO.4 AGE 36
APPS 187 GOALS 17
PREV CLUB OXFORD UNITED

A fine defender, Crosby is now assistant manager at Glanford Park after five years with the club. His first-team appearances have been limited this term, but he's a natural leader and has been a fine servant since joining from Oxford United in 2004.

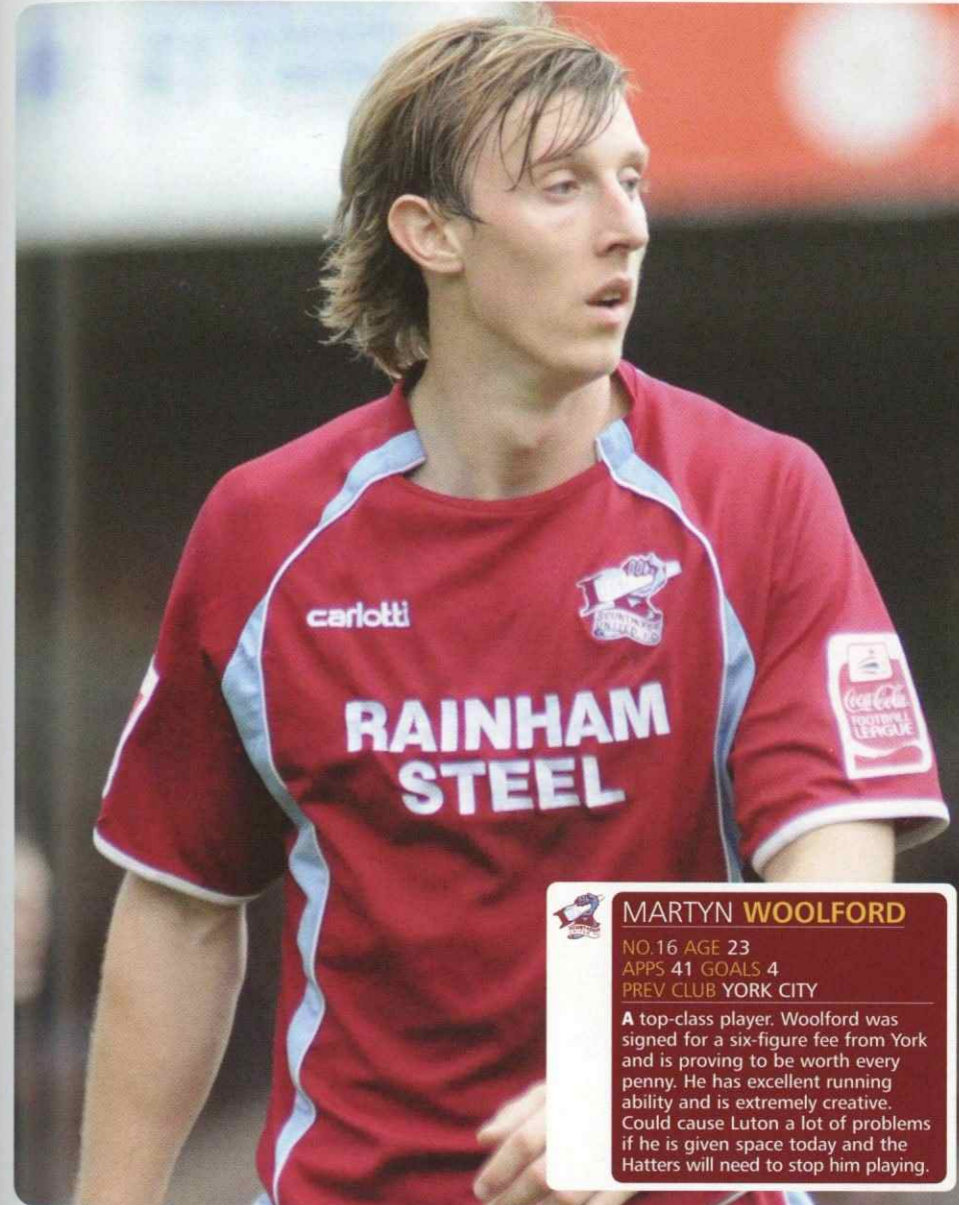


DAVID MIRFIN

NO.15 AGE 23
APPS 32 GOALS 1
PREV CLUB HUDDERSFIELD TOWN

Mirfin is a good all-round player and has shown a lot of ability in defence this season after arriving from Huddersfield in August. He is another one of the many young players Nigel Adkins has at his disposal and has the potential to become a great player for the club.

MIDFIELDERS



MARTYN WOOLFORD

NO.16 AGE 23
APPS 41 GOALS 4
PREV CLUB YORK CITY

A top-class player, Woolford was signed for a six-figure fee from York and is proving to be worth every penny. He has excellent running ability and is extremely creative. Could cause Luton a lot of problems if he is given space today and the Hatters will need to stop him playing.



GARRY THOMPSON

NO.8 AGE 28
APPS 28 GOALS 3
PREV CLUB MORECAMBE

Having arrived from Morecambe in the summer, it took Thompson a while to settle in. He's started to come into his own of late, however, and has put in some eye-catching performances. Has found his niche at Scunthorpe and is shaping up to be a good buy.



GRANT McCANN

NO.17 AGE 28
APPS 57 GOALS 7
PREV CLUB BARNSELY

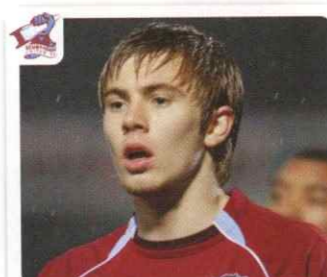
McCann is bursting at the seams with natural talent and really is a player that has it all. A lot of teams have tried and failed to nullify his threat. If he plays well, Scunthorpe play well. Also a dead-ball specialist and has scored some fantastic goals from set-plays.



MICHAEL LEA

NO.14 AGE 21
APPS 3 GOALS 0
PREV CLUB MANCHESTER UNITED

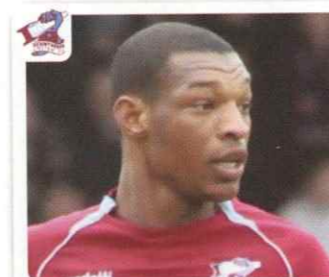
Lea is beginning find his feet at the Iron and has more than enough potential to become a very good player for the club. He has youth on his side, so is still developing and his experience as a trainee at Manchester United will no doubt stand him in good stead.



JOSEPH MILLS

NO.5 AGE 19
APPS 8 GOALS 0
PREV CLUB ON LOAN FROM SOUTHAMPTON

One of several players Nigel Adkins has been able to bring in on loan this season, Mills has slotted in well and hasn't disappointed since joining from Southampton. He's only been at the club a short while but has certainly made an impression.



KRYSTIAN PEARCE

NO.26 AGE 19
APPS 39 GOALS 2
PREV CLUB ON LOAN FROM BIRMINGHAM

Pearce is proving another good loan signing from Nigel Adkins. He's extremely quick and has demonstrated his ability with the ball. Has a tendency to over play in the wrong areas, but again, he is a young player who will learn and improve.



SAM TOGWELL

NO.18 AGE 24
APPS 41 GOALS 4
PREV CLUB BARNSELY

Playing as a midfielder is all about getting involved and making your presence felt. Togwell is certainly a player that doesn't shy away from this and is always involved in the action. Has done well in his debut season at Glanford Park and has made a real impact.



MATT SPARROW

NO.7 AGE 25
APPS 352 GOALS 36
PREV CLUB NONE

Sparrow has been rewarded with a testimonial this year after his excellent service for Scunthorpe so it's fitting he will get to visit Wembley with the club. A one-club man, which is rare these days, he's been very good for the Iron and remains a vital player.

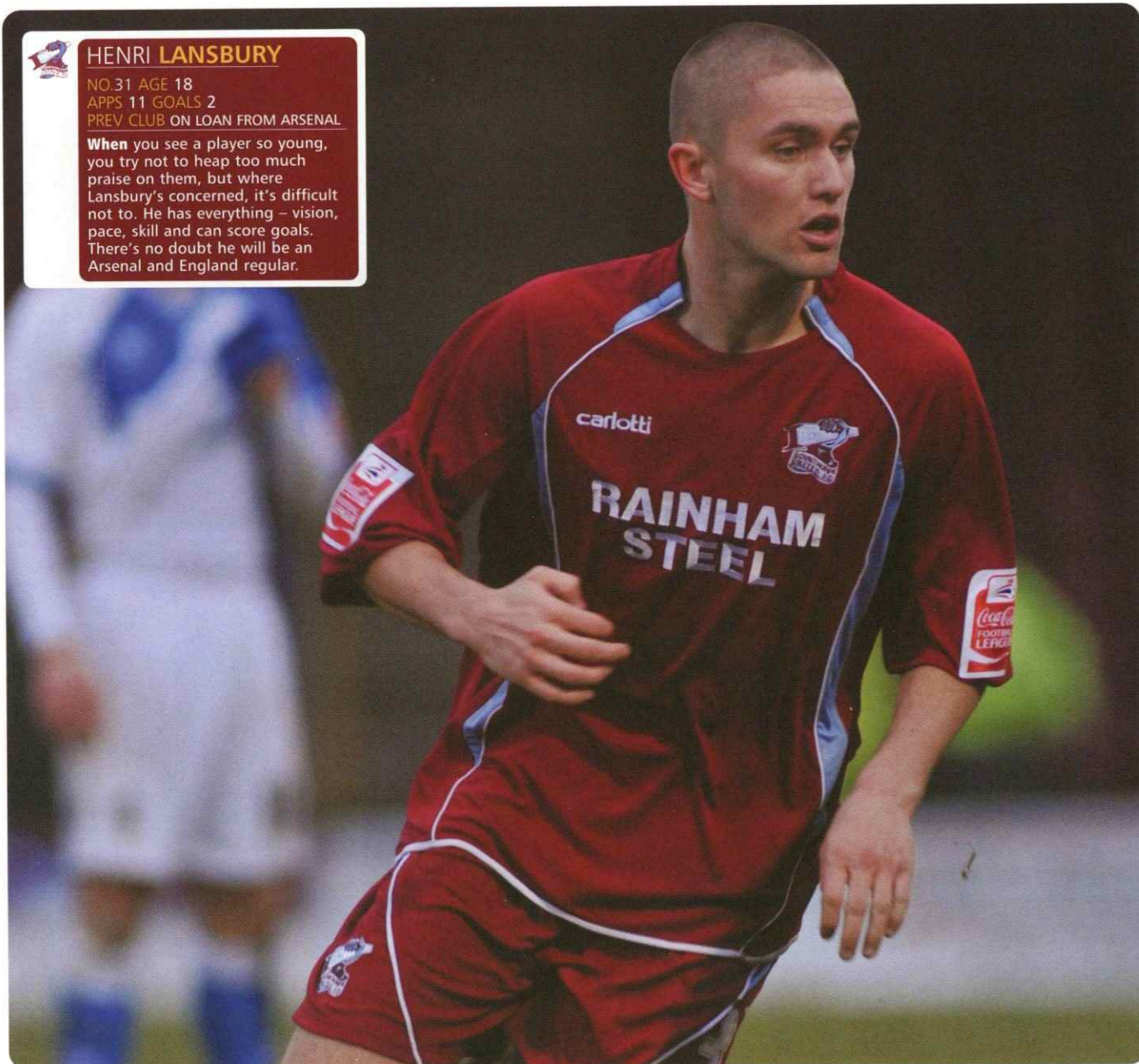


ANDREW WRIGHT

NO.24 AGE 24
APPS 28 GOALS 0
PREV CLUB LIVERPOOL

After a period in the USA playing for West Virginia University, Wright recently earned an 18-month contract at Scunthorpe in January. The former Liverpool trainee has played in a host of different positions and is getting better with every game he plays.

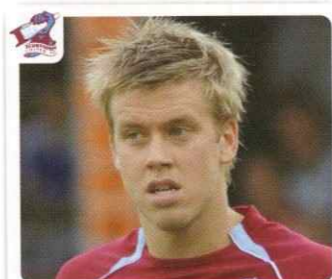




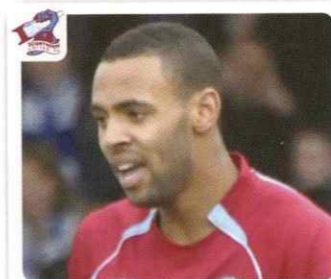
HENRI LANSBURY
 NO.31 AGE 18
 APPS 11 GOALS 2
 PREV CLUB ON LOAN FROM ARSENAL
When you see a player so young, you try not to heap too much praise on them, but where Lansbury's concerned, it's difficult not to. He has everything – vision, pace, skill and can score goals. There's no doubt he will be an Arsenal and England regular.



IAN MORRIS
 NO.27 AGE 22
 APPS 86 GOALS 8
 PREV CLUB LEEDS UNITED
One of the impressive things about Nigel Adkins' side is the high number of young players at his disposal and their quality. Morris is another of those and he is still improving. Is a threat in the box and with a bit more hard work he will achieve his potential.



KEVAN HURST
 NO.23 AGE 23
 APPS 57 GOALS 4
 PREV CLUB SHEFFIELD UNITED
Injury has blighted Hurst's season, but he has forced his way back into first-team contention after a spell on the treatment table. He wasn't given the opportunity to make an impact at Sheffield United as a youngster, but is now growing into a fine player.



LIAM TROTTER
 NO.32 AGE 20
 APPS 5 GOALS 0
 PREV CLUB ON LOAN FROM IPSWICH
A very competitive player, Trotter has seen his first-team opportunities limited at Ipswich, but has impressed in a number of loan spells. Is looking to make an impression at Glanford Park and while he's only featured twice, he looks a decent player.



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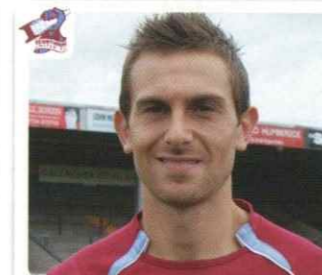
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STRIKERS



PAUL HAYES

NO.9 AGE 25
APPS 203 GOALS 57
PREV CLUB BARNSELY

Now in his second spell at Glanford Park, Hayes is a very clever footballer. He's been in good form this season and has a very good scoring record for the Iron. He can link up play very well and is one of the club's outstanding players. A fine asset.



GARY HOOPER

NO.10 AGE 21
APPS 45 GOALS 27
PREV CLUB SOUTHEND

Southend must be kicking themselves after allowing Hooper to leave Roots Hall. He's still very young and this season he has been a revelation at Scunthorpe, bagging a high number of goals. He has excellent pace but is also very powerful and a real danger.



JONATHAN FORTE

NO.19 AGE 22
APPS 49 GOALS 4
PREV CLUB SHEFFIELD UNITED

Forte is currently on loan at Notts County, where he has scored a few goals and performed well. He has also enjoyed loan spells with Doncaster and Rotherham, picking up a lot of experience. He can be called back from County at any time, so could feature today.



BEN MAY

NO.30 AGE 25
APPS 49 GOALS 5
PREV CLUB MILLWALL

Injury has prevented May from showing his true potential this season and he has been restricted to mainly appearing from the substitutes' bench. He is a big lad and very powerful. Has a few goals to his name this term and knows he can achieve a lot more.

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COME ON YOU HATTERS!!!!



Sweet dreams

YOUNG LUTON TOWN STRIKER TOM CRADDOCK EXPLAINS WHY THIS IS THE BIGGEST DAY OF HIS CAREER

WORDS SIMON HART, NEWS OF THE WORLD

Tom Craddock will hope his second trip to Wembley ends on a happier note than the first. The young Luton Town forward was nine years old when his uncle took him down from Darlington to the old twin towers to see boyhood favourites Newcastle United dismantled 4-0 by Manchester United in the Charity Shield in August 1996.

This time, the 22-year-old no longer has the role of passive onlooker but will arrive at the famous stadium for today's Johnstone's Paint Trophy Final as a potentially key player in Mick Harford's team.

"I've never been to the new Wembley and I am really looking forward to it," he said. "It is what everybody dreams of, walking out at Wembley, and I am no different. It is absolutely fantastic. Hopefully we can get the victory in the Final."

From the outside, a Wembley appearance represents an unexpectedly swift return on his decision to leave Premier League Middlesbrough, whose academy he graduated from, for life at the foot of League 2.

Yet Craddock, who joined the Hatters on loan in October before penning a permanent deal in January, does not see it that way. "I wanted to play first-team football and I was told I wouldn't get that at Middlesbrough," explained the striker, whose four league appearances for Boro included only one start. He had previously gained little from loan spells at Wrexham and Hartlepool United but Luton felt different.

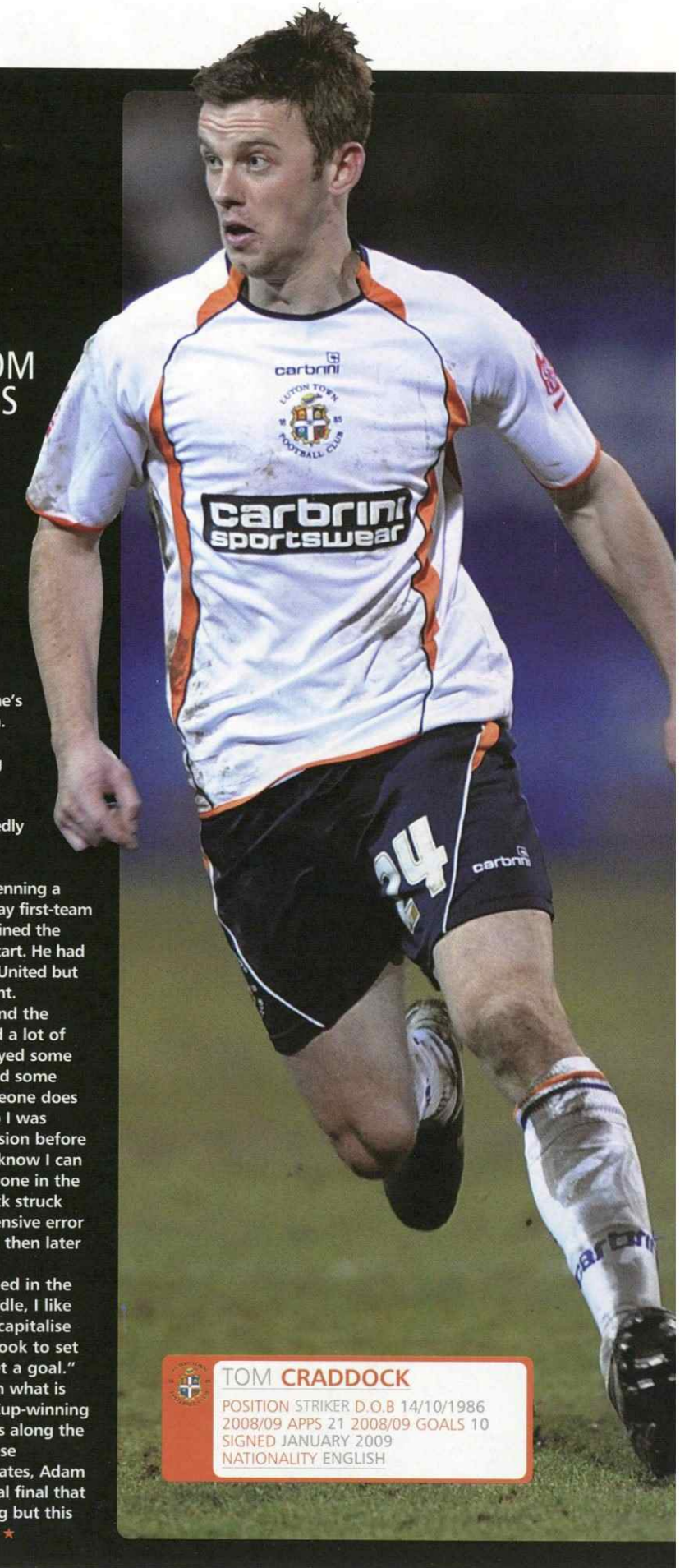
"IF SOMEONE SHOWS FAITH IN YOU I THINK THAT IS HALF THE BATTLE IN FOOTBALL"

"I came here and the manager showed a lot of faith in me. I played some games and scored some goals and if someone does

show faith in you then I think that is half the battle in football. So I was more than pleased to come here. If you haven't played in this division before you do wonder but I have 100 per cent belief in my own ability. I know I can do well at this level and play higher up," added Craddock, who shone in the semi-final success over Brighton. After a goalless first leg, Craddock struck Luton's goal in the 1-1 draw at Kenilworth Road, seizing on a defensive error to steer the Hatters ahead with only one minute on the clock, and then later converted a penalty in the climactic shootout.

With his quick feet and confidence on the ball, Craddock revelled in the role of centre-forward that night. "I enjoy playing down the middle, I like to play on the shoulder and try to get on the end of things and capitalise on mistakes. When I get the ball into my feet around the box, I look to set people up or maybe try and get a turn and win a free-kick, or get a goal."

He will hope to do the same against Scunthorpe this afternoon in what is the first senior final for a player who was part of Boro's FA Youth Cup-winning side of 2004. "I started every game that year and scored four goals along the way - including in both legs of the semi-final," said Craddock, whose contemporaries included current Riverside first-teamers Matthew Bates, Adam Johnson, Tony McMahon and David Wheeler. "That was the first real final that mattered. When you are a young player the Youth Cup is everything but this Final will be the biggest game of my life because it is at Wembley." ★



TOM CRADDOCK
POSITION STRIKER D.O.B 14/10/1986
2008/09 APPS 21 2008/09 GOALS 10
SIGNED JANUARY 2009
NATIONALITY ENGLISH

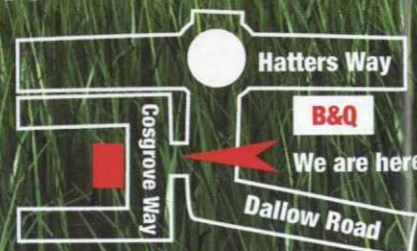
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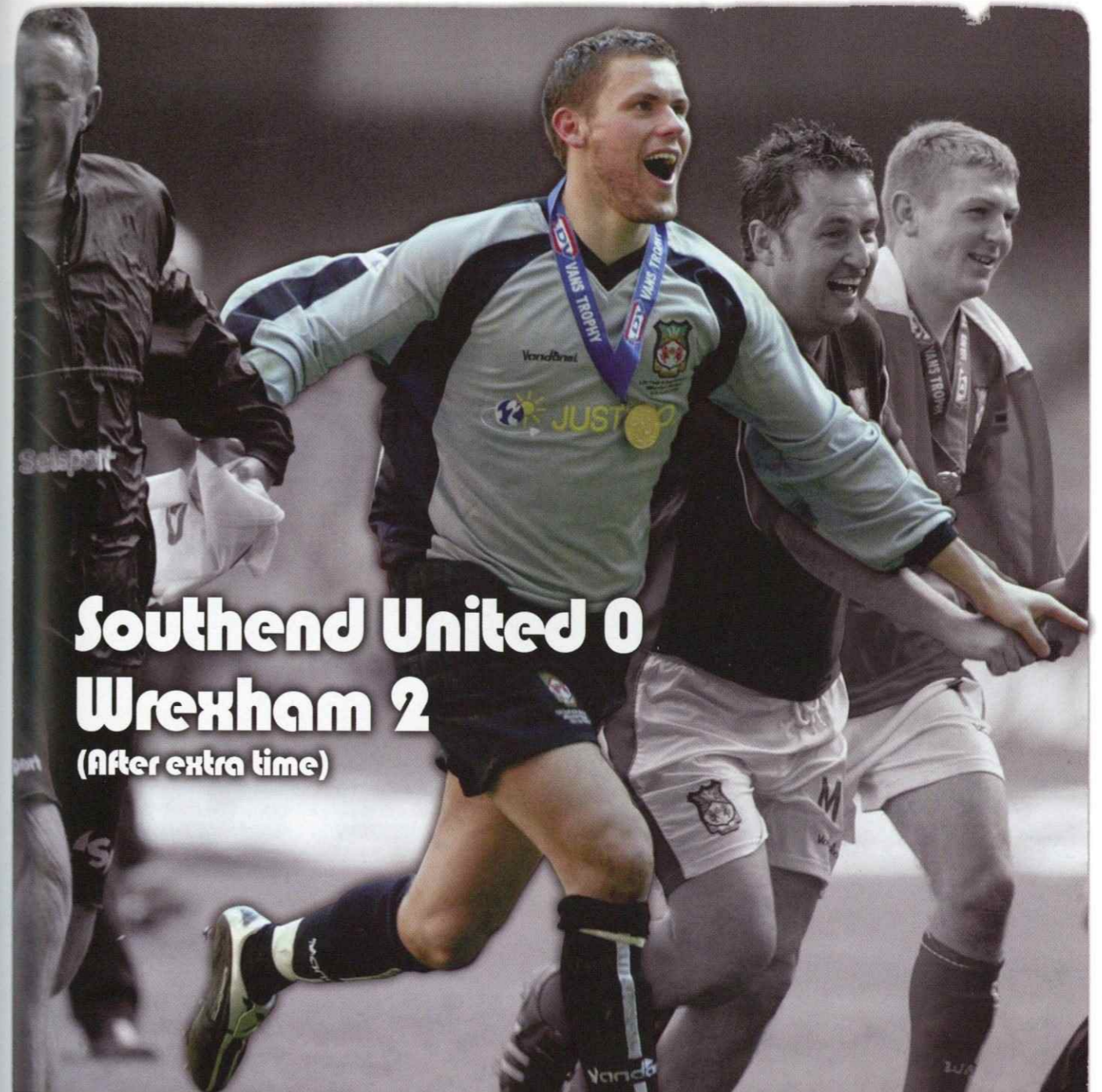
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**Southend United 0
Wrexham 2**
(After extra time)

Ben Foster, 10 April 2005

The 2005 Final gave Ben Foster a major push towards the big time as he helped Wrexham to a 2-0 victory over Southend United in Cardiff. Watching that day as the on-loan Stoke City goalkeeper pulled off a string of fine saves was Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson, who was there to see son Darren, the Wrexham captain who scored the second goal.

"I remember it was massively important because up to three or four months before I don't think I'd played in a competitive league match. It was a good time to perform because halfway through the game, the cameraman, who was filming for the big screen at the Millennium Stadium,

zoomed in on Sir Alex Ferguson's face and I thought to myself: 'Oh, he's watching is he?' He was obviously there to see Darren, who was named Man of the Match and I was devastated because it had gone to extra-time, we had won 2-0 and I thought I had done enough."

Ferguson clearly thought he had too, offering Stoke City £1 million for Foster's services and immediately loaning him out to Watford where he spent two seasons before returning to Old Trafford in 2007.

He was recently Man of the Match in the Carling Cup Final here at Wembley Stadium as Manchester United triumphed over Tottenham Hotspur in a penalty shoot-out.

Pic: Rick Matthews - Wrexham Evening Leader

The ace of clubs

SCUNTHORPE UNITED AND LUTON TOWN LEGENDS BARRIE THOMAS AND BILLY BINGHAM WILL BE REFLECTING ON THEIR OWN MEMORIES WHEN THE TEAMS TAKE TO THE FIELD TODAY

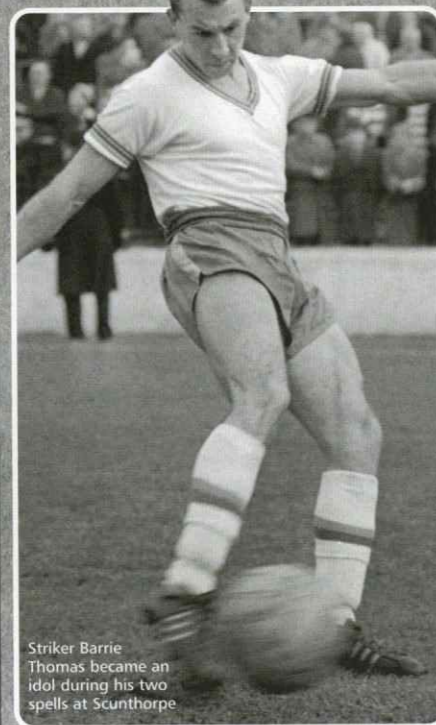
WORDS PHIL SHAW, DAILY TELEGRAPH

Barrie Thomas plundered a hat-trick for Leicester City in what is now the Premier League when he was just 17, secured a big-money move to Newcastle United and became a contender for the England World Cup squad. But he was "never happier" than when scoring for Scunthorpe United.

Thomas hit the net with astonishing regularity, his feats rivalling those of his contemporaries Jimmy Greaves and Brian Clough. By the time injury ended his career he had amassed 210 goals in 335 games – 93 of them in two sojourns with his beloved Scunthorpe.

For those Iron fans looking for omens today, he reserved his biggest haul, five goals, for Luton Town in an 8-1 romp at the Old Show Ground in 1965. "And they all came in the second half," grins Thomas, who will be 72 next month and lives near Derby.

Thomas had burst on to the scene with Leicester, the nearest club to his home pit village of Measham, playing for the England Youth team under the captaincy of Duncan Edwards of Busby Babes fame. "I've got a picture of me and Duncan on the wall at home," he says proudly.



Striker Barrie Thomas became an idol during his two spells at Scunthorpe

In 1955, he bagged three goals against Bolton Wanderers. "Nat Lofthouse played centre-forward for them," Thomas remembers. "Afterwards he came over, shook my hand and said: 'Keep going'." National Service got in the way of that aim, and when he finished, Leicester let him go to Mansfield Town where he smashed the post-war scoring record.

Standing 5ft 10in and brave, powerful and predatory, Thomas ran amok for Scunthorpe in 1961/62, scoring 31 goals by January. "People ask if I could've got 60, which Dixie Dean once did for Everton. I say 'yes' because the team we had were the best in the old Second Division. Liverpool were promoted that season, and we'd have gone up with them if they hadn't broken up the team."

For "broken up the team" read "sold me". Thomas explains: "On Boxing Day I scored four at Leeds United and Don Revie tried to buy me. He was waiting for me in one hotel as I signed for Newcastle United in another. He gave me a rollicking later! I believe Leeds matched Newcastle's offer of £45,000 – a lot of money then – but in those days players were told where and when they were going."

Did he want to leave Scunthorpe? "No, no, no, no. I was very happy and settled. I loved the club and felt we could have gone on to the First Division. We missed out by five points."

Continuing to score freely on Tyneside, Thomas was called into England's pre-World Cup training squad ahead of the 1962 World Cup in Chile. Newcastle returned to the First Division in 1964/65, yet Thomas had returned to Scunthorpe earlier that season. "Jack Wharton was the chairman – like his son Steve, who I remember as a little lad, is now – and he wanted me back.

"But I had to pack it in at 29. I had problems with cruciates, cartilages. I went everywhere, even Harley Street, but nobody could put it right. Now I have to use a wheelchair some of the time. I don't watch football except on TV – I'm a Ryan Giggs fan – but I follow Scunthorpe's fortunes closely. It will be fantastic if they can win at Wembley."

BILLY BINGHAM scorned the idea of the one-man team when he led Northern Ireland to the finals of two World Cups as manager, stressing the value of the

'PEOPLE ASK IF I COULD HAVE SCORED 60 GOALS IN 1961/62. I SAY 'YES' BECAUSE THE TEAM WE HAD WAS THE BEST IN THE OLD SECOND DIVISION' - BARRIE THOMAS

collective to a country that once looked to George Best for miracles. Yet when Luton Town reached Wembley for the first time, in the FA Cup Final 50 years ago next month, no one did more to get them there than Wee Billy from Belfast.

A bubbly, elusive and pacey right-winger who collected an impressive 103 league goals, Bingham spent just two years with Luton either side of spells with Sunderland and Everton. He regarded the time, however, as his peak as a player. And when the Hatters got the Twin Towers in their sights, he was like a man possessed.

Bingham, now 77 and retired to Southport, had come to Bedfordshire for a fee of £8,000 in 1958. He had just played in the World Cup in Sweden that

launched a young Pele's career and two months into the new season he helped Luton top the First Division. The Hatters could not sustain their lofty position, but a 5-1 thumping of Leeds United in the FA Cup, with Bingham among the scorers, gave them another target.

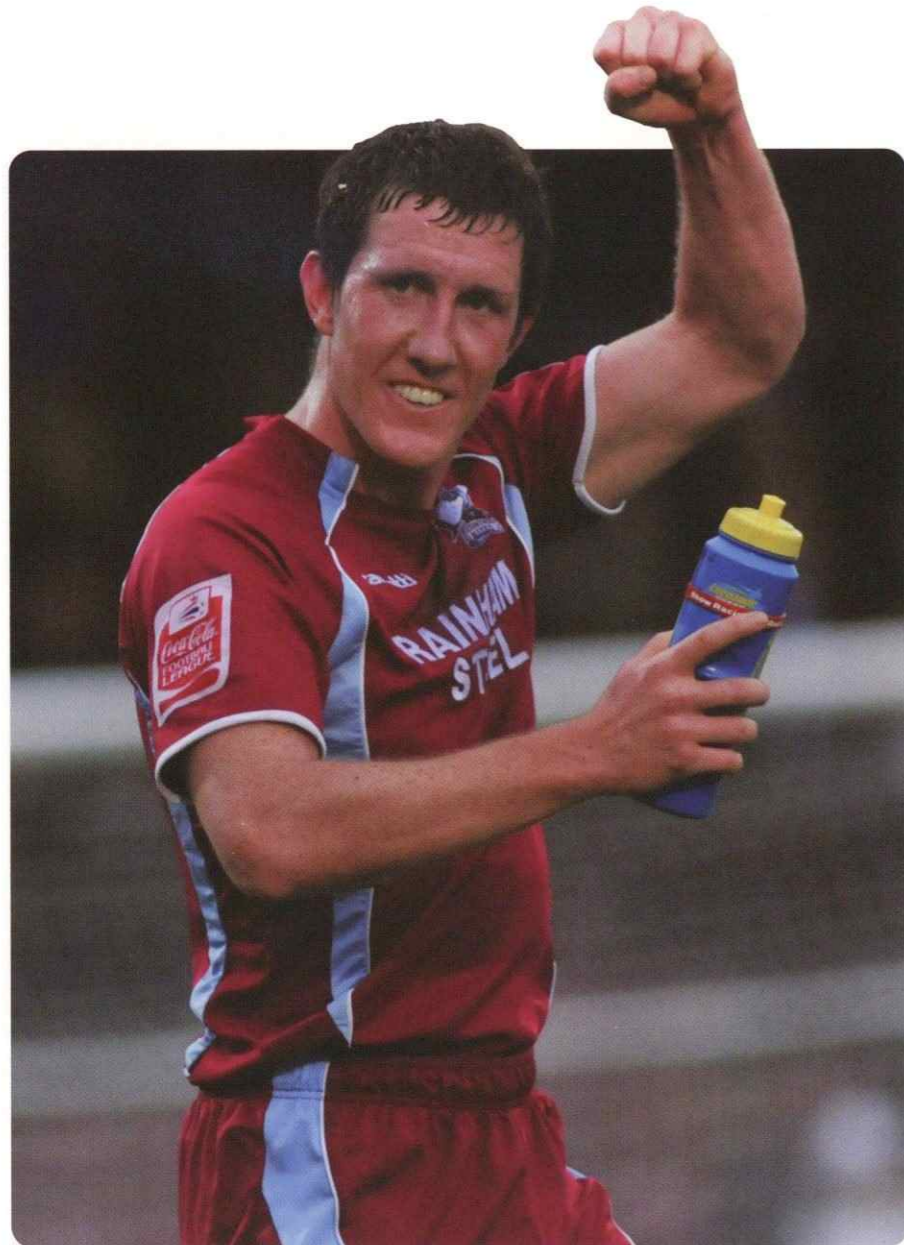
Over the next three rounds, he chipped in with goals against Leicester City, Ipswich Town and Blackpool. When the semi-finals pitted Luton against Norwich City, then of the Third Division, Bingham tormented left-back Ron Ashman (later Scunthorpe's manager in the Kevin Keegan-Ray Clemence era) and wrote a grim ending to the Canaries' fairytale with a stunning winner.

Having scored in every round, he hoped to complete a remarkable set in the Final against Nottingham Forest. Instead, a Forest side reduced to ten men for an hour by a broken leg to Roy Dwight – Elton John's cousin, no less – won 2-1. Bingham did not score and later remarked that he "felt more like a spectator than a player".

Half a century on, Luton will draw on the spirit of Wee Billy – and do everything in their power to leave the new, state-of-the-art Wembley with no such regrets. ★

Luton legend Billy Bingham (right) goes head-to-head with Wolves' Gerry Harris in 1958





WORDS NICK JOHNSON

Byrne's night?

IRON ACE CLIFF BYRNE HOPES TO JOIN KEEGAN, CLEMENCE AND BOTHAM IN THE BOX SEAT

Scunthorpe United skipper Cliff Byrne is hoping to secure a place in the club's history books this afternoon – and gain an additional reward of having an executive box named after him at the ground.

Byrne, who was handed the captaincy at the start of the season, knows he will go down in the club's folklore if steps up to receive the Johnstone's Paint Trophy at the end of the match.

"Captaining your team to victory at Wembley is something that dreams are made of and I'd be a liar if I said I hadn't thought about it," says Byrne. "Hopefully it'll be a dream come true for me."

Famous names from Scunthorpe's past including Kevin Keegan, Ray Clemence and cricketing legend Sir Ian Botham all have executive boxes named

after them at Glanford Park. Byrne jokes that he will expect a similar accolade if United see off the challenge of Luton today.

He says: "Hopefully I'll get one named after me if I lift the trophy. If I don't get a box, I'll be very unhappy!"

The 26-year-old is Scunthorpe's second longest serving player after Matt Sparrow and he has seen the club make significant progress since joining from Sunderland in 2003. In his first season they narrowly avoided dropping out of The Football League, finishing immediately above the relegation places.

Recalling a tense finale five years ago, Byrne says: "There were two games to go and we played away at Cambridge needing a win to

"AT THE LAST COUNT THERE WERE 12 FAMILY AND FRIENDS FLYING OVER FROM DUBLIN AND I'M SURE THEY'LL BE PLEASED AS PUNCH"

ensure we stayed up. We lost 3-2 but fortunately Carlisle only drew at home and that meant they couldn't catch us on the final day. We were sailing close to the wind and got away with it."

There were no such fears the following season when promotion was secured and they took another step up the ladder two years later, resulting in them playing in the Championship last term.

Reflecting on the start of his career, Byrne admits he was "bitterly disappointed" when he was released by Sunderland. "I thoroughly enjoyed my time there but unfortunately I didn't manage to break into the first-team," he says.

"We went through three managers (Peter Reid, Howard Wilkinson and Mick McCarthy) in my last year there and I just never got the opportunity to play. Current boss Ricky Sbragia was my youth-team manager and I learned a lot from him."

It was during his time as a young hopeful at Sunderland that Byrne made his only previous visit to today's famous venue. "I was at the old Wembley when Sunderland drew 4-4 with Charlton in that memorable play-off final," he comments.

As the Dublin-born defender prepares to play on the hallowed turf, he is more than happy to be counting the cost of paying for a group of friends and family who are coming over from Ireland to watch him. "At the last count there were 12 flying over and I'm sure they will all be pleased as punch."

"We get three complementary tickets so it's probably going to cost me more money than anyone else to play in the final! I don't mind stumping up to pay for the tickets, though, because they're paying for the flights."

Byrne insists he and his team-mates won't underestimate the threat posed by Luton.

"We're the favourites but we'll give them every bit of respect and hopefully we'll come out on top." ★

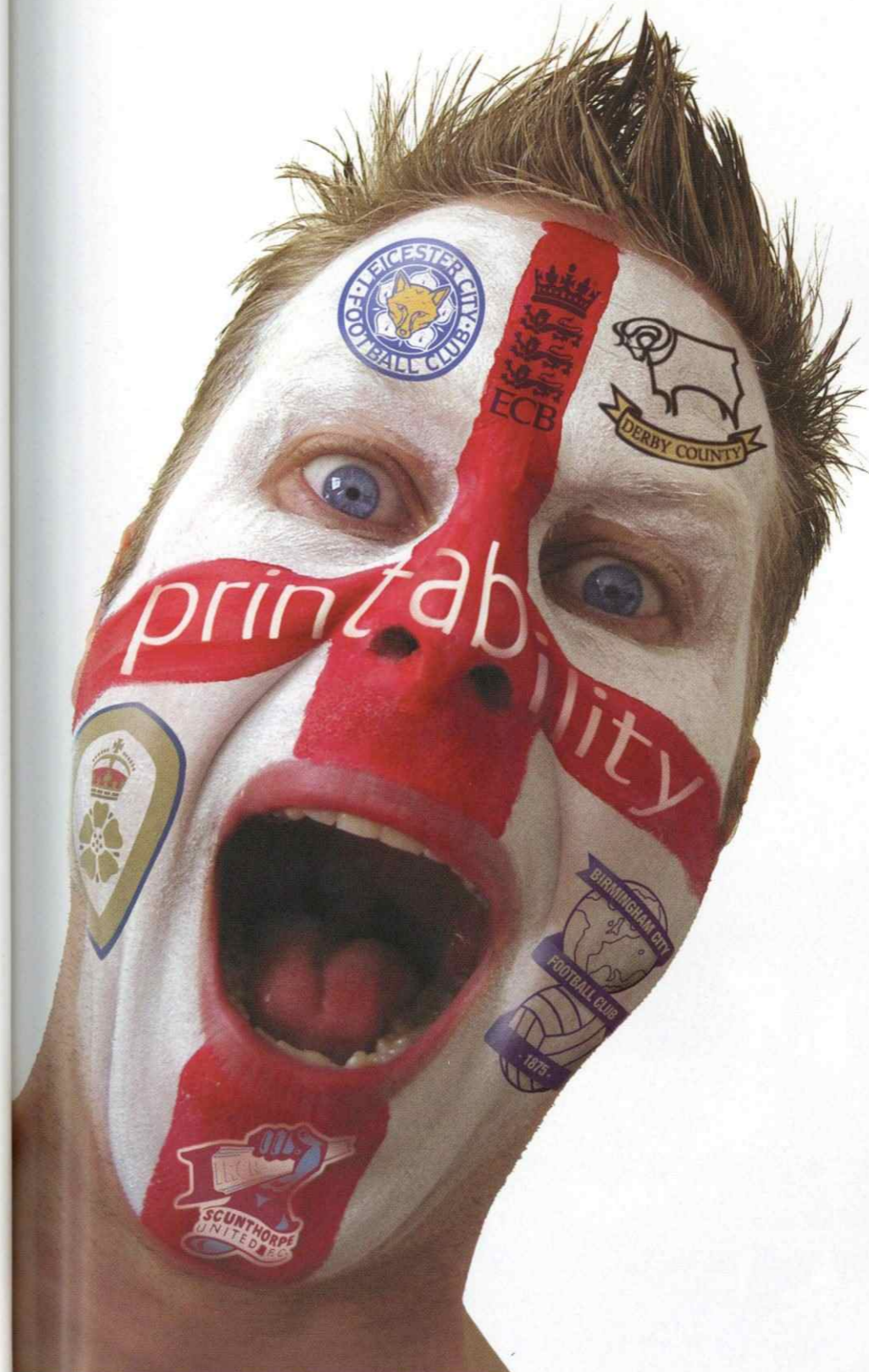
CLIFF BYRNE
 POSITION DEFENDER D.O.B 27/04/1982
 2008/09 APPS 46 2008/09 GOALS 0
 SIGNED JULY 2003
 NATIONALITY IRISH



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INTERVIEW MEL HENDERSON

Robins in Iron awe

ROTHERHAM MANAGER MARK ROBINS SAW HIS WEMBLEY HOPES DASHED BY SCUNTHORPE IN THE AREA FINAL. HERE HE ASSESSES THE THREAT OF THE IRON



Scunthorpe are a very good side and I would go so far as to say their two strikers, Gary Hooper and Paul Hayes, are very, very good. As a pair, they can be a real handful, as we can testify after the two legs of the Northern Area Final. It will be a big test for Luton and whether or not they can cope with them will go a long way towards determining today's outcome.

Hooper has already hit the 20-goal mark this term and although he's not a giant, he is stronger than he looks. He's also quick, makes intelligent runs when the ball is wide, his movement is generally good and his link-up play has also impressed me. He's the complete package and I have no doubt that he could play in the Championship; in fact I know of several clubs at that level who have been watching him and will probably try to buy him in the summer.

If I say Scunthorpe are direct it is definitely not a criticism. I am not labelling them a team who knock it from back to front in the quickest possible time. They go through the midfield, play it wide and get players in the box, but they do it quicker than most teams I have come across.

Marcus Williams, if fit, will be a key player for them at left-back. He is lightning-quick and has terrific ability, whereas on the other side, right-back Cliff Byrne doesn't tend to venture too far up the pitch, maybe just as well with Luton favouring a 4-3-3 system.

Luton are not a bad side and certainly nowhere near

as bad as their league position might suggest. Despite their points deduction, they've made a real battle of it this year, but having said that I still think they will have their work cut out and I expect Scunthorpe to emerge as victors this afternoon.

Nigel Adkins has plenty of options in midfield. They threatened to run riot against us in the first game. We had a late chance and had we scored it would have made the second game a more even contest, but to be fair we did well to contain them to 2-0. Nigel used Matt Sparrow and Andrew

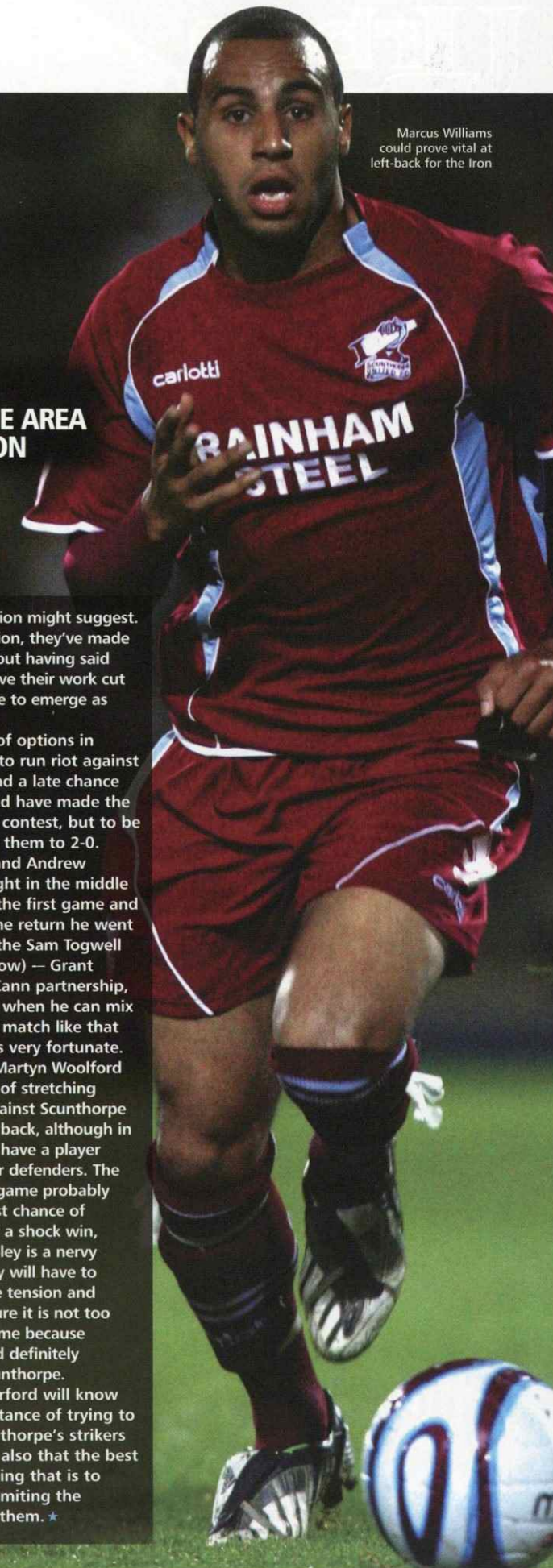
Wright in the middle for the first game and in the return he went for the Sam Toggwell (below) — Grant McCann partnership, and when he can mix and match like that he is very fortunate.

In Garry Thompson and Martyn Woolford they have wingers capable of stretching Luton and in our games against Scunthorpe they were very solid at the back, although in big Sam Parkin the Hatters have a player capable of unsettling their defenders. The fact that it's a one-off game probably represents Luton's best chance of

pulling off a shock win, but Wembley is a nervy place. They will have to master the tension and try to ensure it is not too open a game because that would definitely favour Scunthorpe.

Mick Harford will know the importance of trying to keep Scunthorpe's strikers quiet and also that the best way of doing that is to work on limiting the supply to them. *

Marcus Williams could prove vital at left-back for the Iron



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Keane as mustard

MICK HARFORD WILL HAVE TO MAKE DO WITH JUST ONE KEITH KEANE THIS AFTERNOON, BUT THE LUTON YOUNGSTER WILL ENSURE HIS PRESENCE IS FELT

WORDS IAN CRUISE

Luton manager Mick Harford once remarked that he'd love a team containing 11 Keith Keanes. He will have to make do with just one this afternoon, one who will have as much enthusiasm and determination coursing through his veins as any player on the pitch. Keane, still only 22, is one of the Hatters' longest-serving players having made his debut as a 16-year-old in November 2003 and he has enjoyed – and endured – a chequered time at his home-town club.

In the past four years he has collected a League 1 winners' medal, helped Luton finish in the top ten of the Championship, and then been part of a dramatic downturn in fortunes which has seen them suffer desperately on and off the

field, resulting in successive relegations and the sale of their best players.

"You could say I've seen a lot," he reflects sadly. "The fall has happened so fast it's hard to take in. We were flying in that first season in the Championship (2005/06) and were one of the better teams, finishing tenth, but the following season we sold six or seven players from the first 11 and it's been downhill ever since."

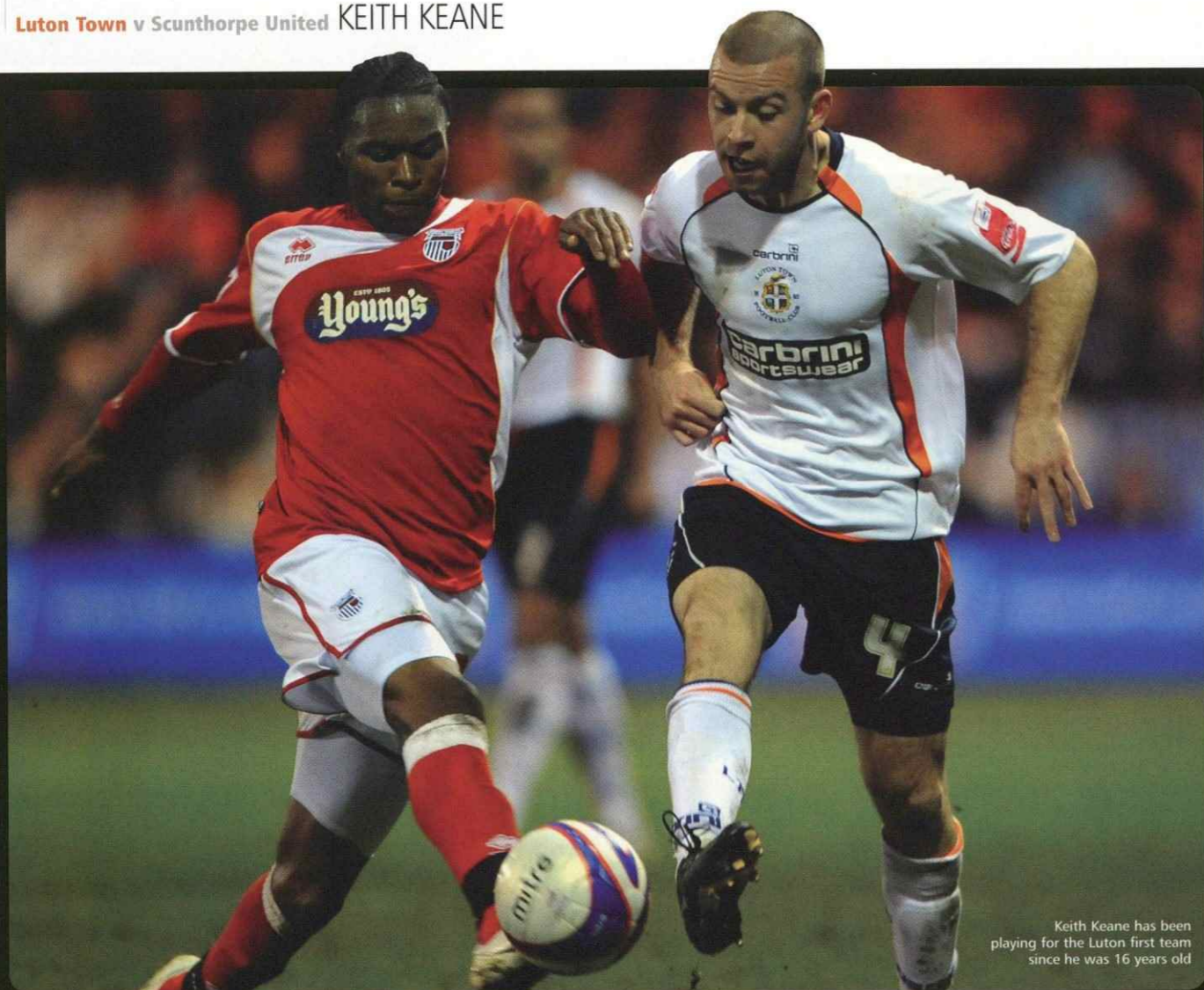
The spectacular collapse could see the club starting next season in the Conference, a long way from the heady days of two decades ago when they claimed their first major trophy by beating Arsenal 3-2 in one of the most dramatic League Cup Finals of all-time in 1988.

"THE WORST THING IS, I DON'T REALLY KNOW MY BEST POSITION. THE MANAGER PROBABLY DOESN'T KNOW WHERE HE'D LIKE TO PLAY ME"

Harford was in the Luton team that day, and Keane can think of no-one better to be steering the club through the choppy waters they are currently attempting to navigate, both on and off the pitch.

He says: "It helps that he's a Luton legend and he knows how much the club means to the fans. That eases the





Keith Keane has been playing for the Luton first team since he was 16 years old

pressure from the crowd because they are all aware that he knows what it means. If it was another manager the fans might think differently, but they all know he is doing his very best to keep us in the league. And that helps take the pressure off us."

Keane has worked with Harford, on and off, for a number of years and he can see a change in the man who was once one of the most feared centre-forwards in the English game.

"I came into the club when Mick was assistant manager, and I'd have to say he's different now," adds the Republic of Ireland Under-21 international. "He's a lot calmer and doesn't really lose his rag with us, although you'd never overstep the mark with him. But he'll always chat to you and tell you what he thinks and what you should be doing if you're doing something wrong."

"He can see we're trying our best. It might not be good enough sometimes, but we always give 100% in every game, even if we're not playing well, and he can see that. And that's all he ever asks from us."

Keane was barely 18 months old on that memorable occasion 21 years ago when Harford and his team-mates stunned the Gunners by scoring twice in the last few minutes to steal the League Cup from their grasp and his only previous experience of Wembley was attending a kit sponsors' event at the

"THE MANAGER IS A LUTON LEGEND AND HE KNOWS HOW MUCH THE CLUB MEANS TO THE FANS. THAT HELPS TAKE THE PRESSURE OFF US"

stadium. He will, however, be right at the centre of the action this afternoon, although your guess is as good as his as to where he will be playing.

Such is his versatility that Harford has no qualms picking him in central midfield, at centre-half or at right-back. It epitomises his commitment to the cause, although he confesses it's not always an ideal situation.

"The worst thing is, I don't really even know my best position. The fact I can play in different positions when there are other players who can't means the manager will move me to accommodate them and I'll just hold my hands up and say I'll play there. And that can be a problem because if you ask the manager he probably doesn't know where he'd play me."

Given that we already know Harford would happily play Keane anywhere from 1-11, that willingness to adapt is unlikely to hold him back. And it means he will be a key figure today as Luton aim to end a difficult season on a high.

"In a way, the cup run has kept the season alive. If we weren't in the Final, and if we were just fighting a relegation battle that we might lose, then I think we could have been just dragging out the games. But because we've been looking forward to Wembley we've been trying to keep our performance level up to make sure we go into the Final with a good run of results behind us."

"You could say reaching the Final is a reward for what's gone on this season, but, if you asked the players, the priority would be staying in the league."

"At the same time, a trip to Wembley is one of the best things that can happen in a player's career, so we're going to enjoy the occasion and it would be a great feeling to say we've won there."

And afterwards?
"The reality of our league position will hit us and that will be hard," he admits. "But I love playing for Luton Town and just want to help them out of the mess they're in."

No wonder his manager wants ten more like him.★

KEITH KEANE
 POSITION MIDFIELDER D.O.B 20/11/1986
 2008/09 APPS 40 2008/09 GOALS 0
 SIGNED JULY 2003
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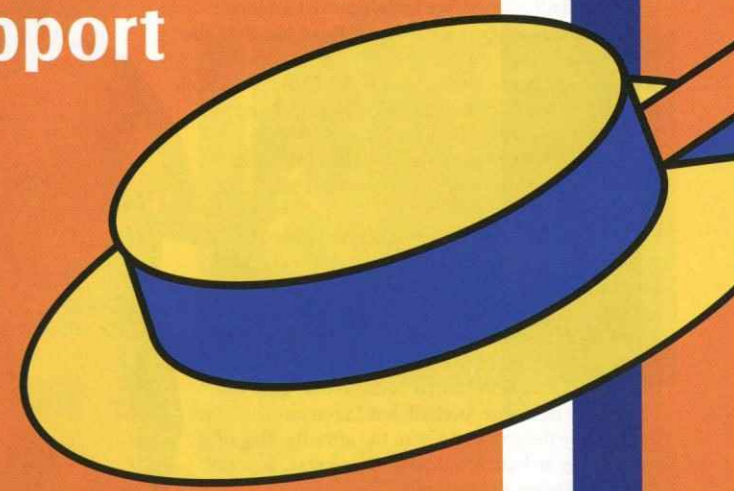
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BURNLEY AND SCOTLAND DEFENDER GRAHAM ALEXANDER LOOKS BACK AT SOME FOND MEMORIES FROM HIS TIME AT LUTON AND SCUNTHORPE

WORDS JOHN AIZLEWOOD, SUNDAY TIMES

Graham Alexander has more than a passing interest in today's game. At the ripe old age of 37, the Burnley full-back is enjoying a spectacular Indian Summer: not only is he a regular member of the Scotland squad, but before yesterday's trip to Derby he had played every minute of the Claret's 56 league and cup games this season.

Wind the clock back almost a quarter of a century and, following an unsuccessful trial, Alexander's local club Coventry City suggested he tried Scunthorpe United. "I must admit, I didn't know where it was," he chuckled. "Luckily my Dad was a lorry driver..."

No matter. As part of a vintage Iron crop that included future Premier League players Richard Hall and Neil Cox, Alexander graduated from trainee to first-team regular and in 1992 he was part of the side that reached the Fourth Division Play-Off Final at Wembley. After 120 minutes they were level 1-1 with Blackpool and it went to penalties.

"Earlier in the season I'd scored in an FA Cup penalty shoot-out with Rotherham," he remembers. "Being young and naive I thought I'd score at Wembley so I put my hand up. Steve McIlhargey saved it, we lost and I was in tears. Our manager Bill Green said it would make me stronger and he was right."

Three years later, after Alexander had sweated his way through the first day of pre-season training, manager Dave Moore explained that Luton Town, who were then in the First Division, had made an offer Scunthorpe couldn't refuse.

"It was completely out of the blue, but I was quite excited. They'd just been to an FA Cup semi-final and there was talk of moving to a new ground, the Kohler Dome." However, Luton were relegated in Alexander's first season and two years later he was ready to leave.

"I was disillusioned, we hadn't moved an inch. Today we can see how Kenilworth Road has held the club back. I'd made great friends such as Marvin Johnson and Steve Davis, who is the first-team coach at Burnley, but I wanted to leave. Manager Lennie Lawrence was great about it. He knew it was nothing to do with money and helped me move to Preston. Just as at Scunthorpe, I left with such fond memories."

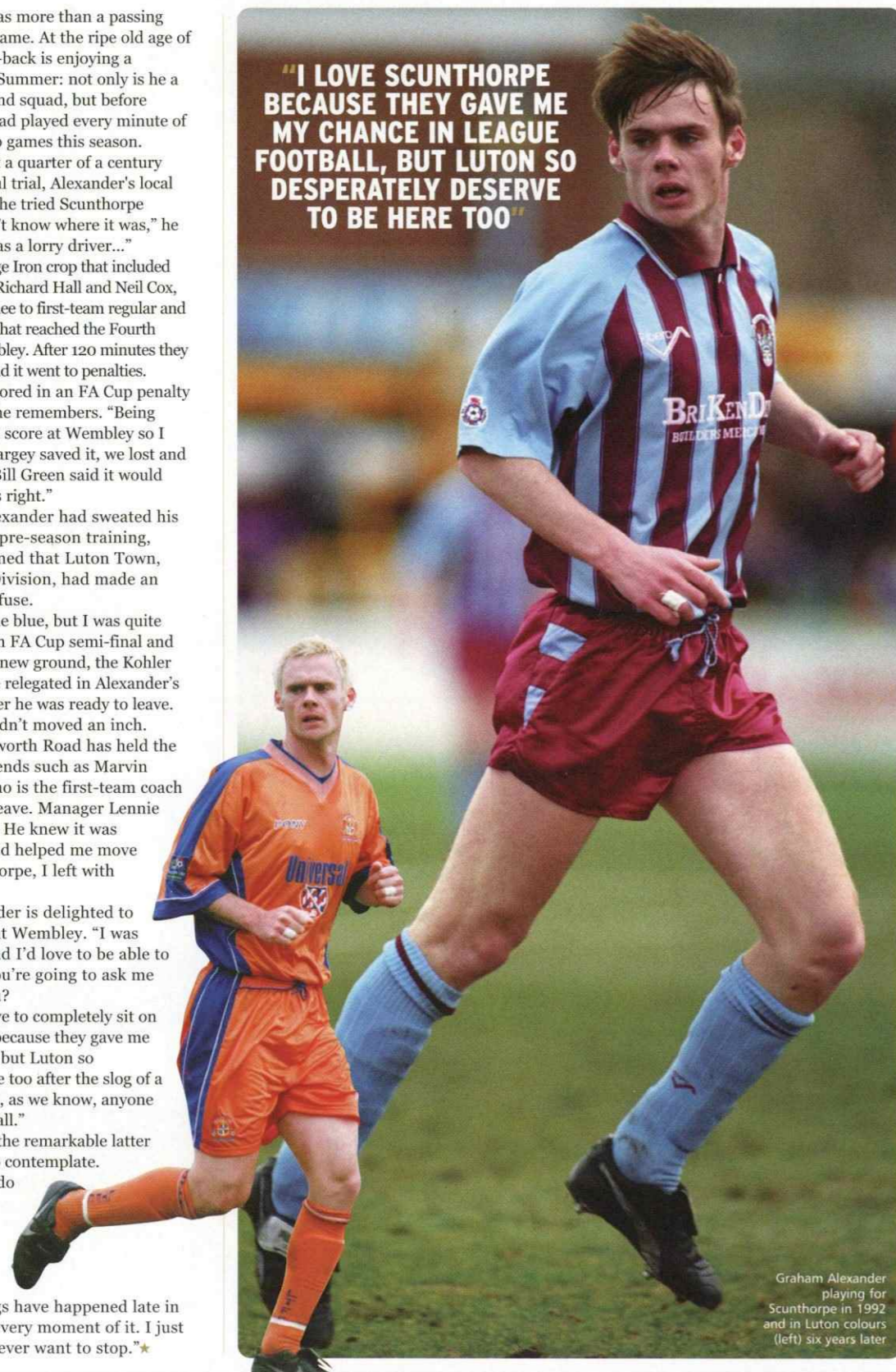
Eleven years later, Alexander is delighted to see two of his former clubs at Wembley. "I was buzzing when I found out and I'd love to be able to get down to the game. Er, you're going to ask me who I want to win aren't you?"

"I'm afraid I'm going to have to completely sit on the fence. I love Scunthorpe because they gave me my chance in league football, but Luton so desperately deserve to be here too after the slog of a season they've had. Mind you, as we know, anyone can beat anyone else in football."

And with that, he has only the remarkable latter stages of his lengthy career to contemplate.

"My longevity is partly to do with my grounding at Scunthorpe," he explains. "We used to run miles and miles in training and I didn't know what had hit me. All the really great things have happened late in my career and I appreciate every moment of it. I just love playing football and I never want to stop."★

"I LOVE SCUNTHORPE BECAUSE THEY GAVE ME MY CHANCE IN LEAGUE FOOTBALL, BUT LUTON SO DESPERATELY DESERVE TO BE HERE TOO"



Graham Alexander playing for Scunthorpe in 1992 and in Luton colours (left) six years later

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First there was Andy Keogh, then Billy Sharp, followed quickly by Martin Paterson. Now Gary Hooper is the latest sharpshooter to roll off the goal-scoring production line in North Lincolnshire and bring the scouts flocking to Glanford Park.

His three star predecessors all used Scunthorpe as a springboard to make their mark in the Championship – and earn the club some serious money in the process. Keogh was sold to Wolves for £600,000 in 2007 after two impressive years leading Scunthorpe's attack, Sharp returned to his first club Sheffield United for £2 million later that year after an incredible 53 goals in 80 league starts at Glanford Park while Paterson, his replacement, earned a £1 million move to Burnley 12 months later.

Now, as the Iron prepare for their visit to Wembley, manager Nigel Adkins believes that the latest diamond to be unearthed and polished by the League 1 outfit could well turn out to be the best of the lot.

Although the 21-year-old's prolific finishing has kept Scunthorpe there or thereabouts in the division's promotion race, Hooper has only



Hooper wants to transfer his league goal-scoring form to Wembley today

“Even though we brought in Martin when Billy went back to Bramall Lane, we still kept an eye on Gary and signed him when Martin joined Burnley a year later.”

By that time, Hooper had moved from Southend to Hereford where his 11 goals in just 19 appearances helped The Bulls to win automatic promotion from League 2 last season behind MK Dons and Peterborough. His impressive strike rate persuaded Scunthorpe

Hooper man!

ESSEX-BORN SCUNTHORPE STRIKER GARY HOOPER HOPES TO MAKE DREAMS COME TRUE TODAY IN FRONT OF FAMILY AND FRIENDS

WORDS GRAHAME LLOYD

appeared in three of the club's six matches in the Johnstone's Paint Trophy, scoring once. A late strike at the Don Valley Stadium saw off a spirited Rotherham side to complete a 3-0 aggregate win in the Northern Area Final.

“With about 15 minutes to go, Andrew Wright put me through,” he recalls. “I was one-on-one with the defender who was running backwards and I managed to toe-poke it past the keeper.”

Born in Chigwell, Essex, Hooper signed for Grays Athletic before joining Southend in the 2006/07 season. He made 19 league appearances without scoring but bagged a couple of goals as the club reached the quarter-finals of the Carling Cup and played in the 1-0 win over Manchester United at Roots Hall when Freddy Eastwood caused a huge upset with a wonder strike.

“Freddy is a great finisher and good to watch in training and I learned a lot about scoring goals from him while I was at Southend before he left for Wolves,” says Hooper.

A brief loan spell followed at Leyton Orient where he scored twice in four games – including a late equaliser in a 2-2 draw with Scunthorpe at Brisbane Road.

“He was a right thorn in our side that day,” recalls Adkins of that game two years ago, “and we tracked him after that.”



to spend £125,000 to bring him to Glanford Park where he has continued the goal-scoring trend which won Sharp and Paterson much affection among the club's support.

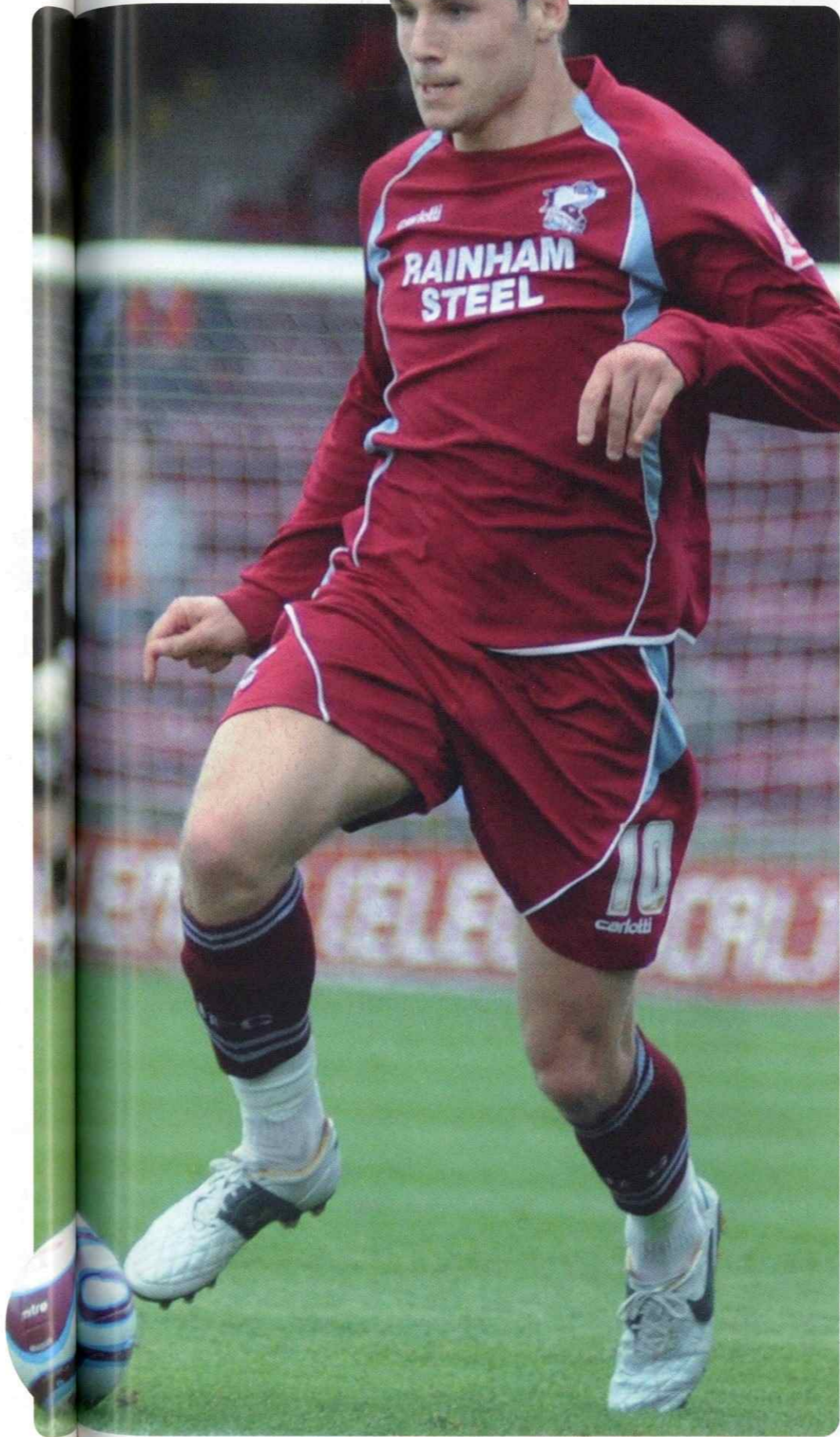
“The Gaffer's been playing me in virtually every game,” he says, “all the lads are helping me and I've settled in well. We hold the ball up in midfield and that enables me to spin into space and get a run on goal. We've been creating a lot of chances that way.”

The manager is only too delighted with last summer's purchase. “It's a joy to have Gary at the club,” Adkins added. “He's a quiet young lad, a very strong player and he wants to learn all the time. He's got more of an all-round game than the others – he's a natural goalscorer anyway but his hold-up play and ball retention is probably better than theirs and time will tell if he turns out to be the best of the bunch.”

Hooper has formed a successful partnership with fellow striker Paul Hayes, the club's second top scorer who's enjoying his second spell at Glanford Park.

“Paterson was quite young and raw and he'd been playing in Stoke's reserves,” says Hayes. “He was a ‘fox in the box’ and didn't do much outside the area but he worked as hard as he could for us and scored 14 goals for a struggling team in the Championship before getting a good move to Burnley.”

“Since he joined us from Hereford,



“THE GAFFER'S BEEN PLAYING ME IN VIRTUALLY EVERY GAME. ALL THE LADS ARE HELPING ME AND I'VE SETTLED IN WELL”

Gary's not looked back. He's not just a goalscorer, he likes to link with me and the wingers and he's good outside the box as well as in it. From day one, we've had a good partnership: we always look for each other, I put him in and he puts me in.

“He's not greedy and he's got the potential to go all the way to the Championship and do what Martin has – minimum.”

“He's banging goals in left, right and centre in our division so he can obviously play above this level. If he gets half a chance, he'll put the ball in the back of the net and if we go up, I'm sure he'll perform to the same level next season.”

“He has a great first touch and his vision is very good – as is his work-rate and his all-round game. I think he's got everything to go into the Championship and then the Premier League.”

Hooper is flattered by the comparisons with the club's previous marksmen, saying: “Martin has been playing well for Burnley and helped them get to the semi-finals of the Carling Cup where he scored against Spurs. It's nice to be compared to him and Billy.”

Since qualifying for the Johnstone's Paint Trophy Final, Scunthorpe's league form has faltered and they lost their next three matches.

But Hooper showed no dip in his own form and netted three goals in those defeats.

Like everyone at Glanford Park, the club's star striker has his eye on helping Scunthorpe return to the Championship at the first attempt. But first things first, he's determined to enjoy the chance to turn out at the home of English football this afternoon.

“Being an Essex boy, it's great for me to be going to Wembley and I'd give a lot to score the winning goal in front of all my family and friends but the most important thing is winning – it doesn't really matter who scores.” ★

GARY HOOPER

POSITION STRIKER D.O.B 26/01/1988
2008/09 APPS 45 2008/09 GOALS 27
SIGNED JULY 2008
NATIONALITY ENGLISH

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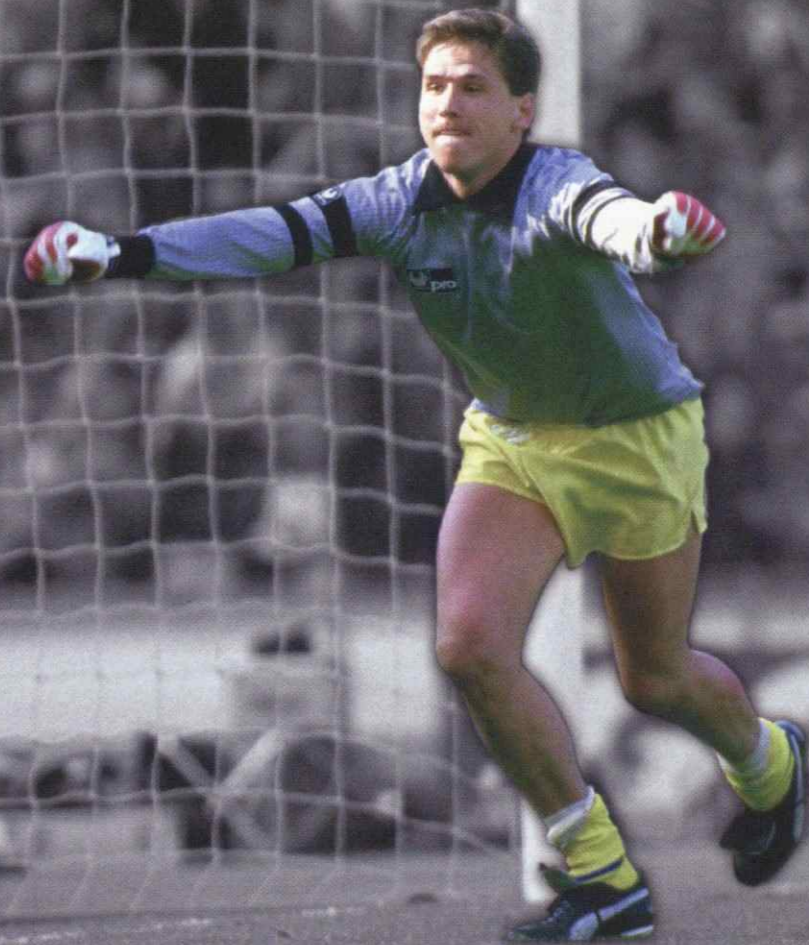
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Kevin Hitchcock, 24 May 1987

“ This competition may not have been the FA Cup, but playing in the Final at Wembley was the best experience of my life. It was an amazing day.

Growing up, I'd heard so many players talk about their experiences in a Wembley final and I was eager to make the most of it and remember everything about the day.

The build-up was very exciting, driving through the streets leading to the stadium in the team coach, surrounded by thousands of Mansfield fans. Before the warm-up, we were able to walk around the pitch and the band was playing. The music just added to the occasion.

I was full of confidence ahead of the penalty shoot-out.

It's discussed a lot, but the pressure really is off when you're a goalkeeper. You can't make a mistake and it's all down to the penalty taker. I actually enjoyed it.

When I made the connection to save each penalty, a feeling of elation swept through my body. I never experienced the feeling of scoring a goal, but I imagine it must be the same as how I felt in that moment. We had missed our first spot-kick, but the boys held their nerve and with my two saves, we turned it around.

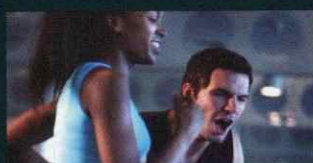
Ironically, a year earlier we were beaten by Wigan on penalties in the Area Final, so to lift the trophy through a shoot-out put some demons to bed.



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Boys to men

AS A TEENAGER, ROSSI JARVIS WAS A RECORD-BREAKER WITH BROTHER RYAN AT NORWICH. HE'S NOW MAKING A NAME FOR HIMSELF AT LUTON

WORDS IAN CRUISE

Rossi Jarvis is unlikely to suffer from stage fright at Wembley this afternoon. After all, this is a young man who has been in the spotlight since he was just 14 years of age.

That's how old he was when he became the youngest ever player to turn out for Norwich City reserves, putting his homework on hold for the evening to take on Brentford's second string in February 2003.

It was an early introduction to life in professional football and a night he remembers with unsurprising fondness, although he admits: "It was very strange being at school at the same time, but it was a great experience to be playing at that level with some good players at such a young age. I got a bit of stick the next day at school, but all my mates were really pleased for me."

Rossi, now 21, was one of a pair of promising brothers on the Canaries' books at the time, with older brother Ryan also breaking records, becoming Norwich's youngest first-team player, aged 16 years, 282 days in April 2003 and, six months later against Watford, their youngest ever goalscorer.

Neither truly fulfilled their

"THERE IS A COLLECTIVE DESIRE TO GET THE CLUB MOVING BACK IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. I CAN SEE LUTON GOING PLACES IN THE FUTURE"

early promise at Carrow Road though, with Ryan now turning out in League 1 for Leyton Orient. But they keep a keen eye on each other's careers.

"It helped me massively at Norwich to have my big brother there," says Rossi. "There was a bit of friendly rivalry between us, but we always liked to see the other one do well. He's a very talented player – although I will always say I was better as a youngster!"

"I think if we'd had different breaks then we could both be at different places in our careers right now. But you can never look back and regret anything, and I certainly don't. Some managers like you and some don't. My last manager at Norwich didn't like me and that's why I was released."

That rejection by the club he had been with since he was eight years old meant a drop down the divisions, although

Jarvis confesses it was not that hard a move to make. "I knew I would have to take a step down," added the midfielder. "I didn't think I had enough experience to get a move to another Championship club and play regularly."

"At my age, I think I made the right decision. I've played 40-odd games this season and that's exactly what I needed at this stage of my career. I've moved on with my life now and I don't feel I have a point to prove to Norwich. I'm happy to be where I am and I'm really enjoying my football at Luton."

It's helped him this season at Kenilworth Road that there are no fewer than five former Norwich players in the squad – ex-Carrow Road forwards Paul McVeigh and Ian Henderson as well as on-loan duo Chris Martin and Michael Spillane. Not that they sing only from a Canary hymn sheet.

"We do pal around a fair bit," says Jarvis. "But there's no East Anglian mafia in the dressing room. We've got a great spirit here and all the boys have a really close bond. There is a real will and a collective desire to get the club moving back in the right direction. I can definitely see Luton going places in the future."★



ROSSI JARVIS
POSITION MIDFIELDER D.O.B 11/03/1988
2008/09 APPS 42 2008/09 GOALS 2
SIGNED JULY 2008
NATIONALITY ENGLISH

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GIRLS JUST WANT TO HAVE FUN

DERBY COUNTY AND CRYSTAL PALACE WILL ALSO BE GOING FOR GLORY AT WEMBLEY TODAY IN THE UNDER-13 GIRLS CUP FINAL

It is every player's dream to play at Wembley Stadium, the home of football, and today provides 15 girls with the chance to live out that fantasy.

This season's Football League Under-13 Girls Cup Final sees the Priory School take on Lees Brook Community Sports College. The six-a-side competition attracted entries from more than 1,000 schools this year, with around 8,000 players taking part across the country.

The girls from the Priory School, which is located in Orpington, South London, are representing Crystal Palace this afternoon and Lees Brook, which is in Chaddesden, Derbyshire, will represent Derby County.

On their way to this final, the Priory team beat sides representing AFC Bournemouth and local rivals Charlton Athletic.

Their coach Aaron Shaw said: "The school has been absolutely buzzing over the past few weeks. The standard of football is incredible this year. Everyone is so proud of the girls. They've shown a real fighting spirit, with late goals in a number of our games."

In their Area Final the Lees Brook Community Sports College beat the representatives of Derby's great rivals Nottingham Forest on penalties.

Before travelling to London, the players and staff received some extra-special advice. They visited Pride Park and met Derby boss Nigel Clough and experienced Welsh international midfielder Robbie Savage for some words of encouragement ahead of their big match.

Teacher Andrea Bryan said: "It was so kind of Derby to invite us along. It really added to the excitement of being in the final.

"I know the Community staff at the club will be cheering us on. Everyone at the school is behind us, too. The parents and head teacher will all be coming down to support the girls."

The Under-13 Girls Cup is just one of the many community activities organised by The Football League and club community departments. These also include workshops and coaching courses run by clubs throughout the summer and school holidays, which give youngsters the chance to hone their skills further.

Football League Trust General Manager Dave Edmundson said: "We are extremely committed to extending the participation of women and girls in football around the country. The Under-13 Girls Cup embraces our goals of community cohesion and social inclusion. We're looking forward to another cracking final."

LEES BROOK COMMUNITY SPORTS COLLEGE

REPRESENTING DERBY COUNTY



- Alice Faulding
- Kirsten Bickley
- Alice Walker
- Sarah Williamson
- Lauren Hitchcock
- Daisy Pridden-Bennett
- Laura Hall
- Teacher: **Andrea Flinders**
- Community Officer: **Rob Lund**

PRIORY SCHOOL

REPRESENTING CRYSTAL PALACE



- Belinda White
- Megan Mulholland
- Emily Brice
- Toni Weal
- Katie Joynes
- Hannah Geogiou
- Becky Lyons
- Chloe Parker
- Teacher: **Aaron Shaw**
- Community Officer: **Rob Perrett**





KEVAN HURST
 POSITION MIDFIELDER D.O.B 20/08/1985
 2008/09 APPS 22 2008/09 GOALS 3
 SIGNED JANUARY 2007
 NATIONALITY ENGLISH

Back in business

IT'S BETTER LATE THAN NEVER FOR KEVAN HURST, HITTING FORM AFTER AN INJURY LAY-OFF

WORDS LAWRIE MADDEN

The joke among the Scunthorpe squad is that Kevan Hurst only turns up for finals. If selected this afternoon it will not only be the midfielder's first Wembley appearance, but also the first time he has started a game in this season's Johnstone's Paint Trophy.

"I came on for the last 18 minutes against Rochdale and I was a substitute at home to Rotherham in the Area Final," he said. "I am getting a bit of stick from the lads. They reckon that I am picking my games and just turning up for the Final while they have been working hard battling away from the first round."

The showpiece occasion gives the 23-year-old the opportunity to put a fair amount of disappointment behind him. "It has been a frustrating season, but now it can turn into a great year," Hurst added. "I played at the beginning of the campaign but then got injured and had a double hernia. When I got my fitness back I couldn't get into the side."

But patience paid off for the Chesterfield-born player and he quickly made up for lost time by hitting the back of the net twice from his wide left position in his first five games since winning back his place. Scoring again today would be a marvellous moment.

"It's every player's dream to play at Wembley. This is a massive game and if I scored it would be the best feeling. I am in good goal-scoring form so it's not out of the question."

He has been to Wembley as a supporter, cheering on his hometown team Chesterfield in 1995 when they won the Division Three Play-Off Final against Bury 2-0. He still lives there and follows the club's fortunes but his allegiance is firmly with the Iron, who he joined on loan from Sheffield United before sealing a £200,000 move in May 2007.

He says the Johnstone's Paint Trophy has brought the best out of Nigel Adkins' team - "We have looked solid all the way through, whoever we have come up against" - but is wary of saying that Scunthorpe are favourites to lift the silverware.

"Luton have beaten teams from our division so they will be

"THIS IS A MASSIVE GAME. WE ARE DESPERATE TO WIN THIS TROPHY"

respected and in a one-off cup game, it can go either way. The strikers hold the key to this game. It will be all about chances in front of goal and making them pay. Hopefully our front

two of Gary Hooper and Paul Hayes will make it count. We are desperate to win this trophy. What's the point of going if you're not bothered about winning? The Gaffer wants us to win for ourselves, our families and for the fans."

He will have his mum, dad, girlfriend, aunt and uncle cheering him on today but can't compete with the ticket demands of two other members of the team, Sam Toggwell and Gary Hooper. "They've needed the most tickets - around 80 at the last count," he smiles. It will be one big happy family from north Lincolnshire if the Iron pull through today.★

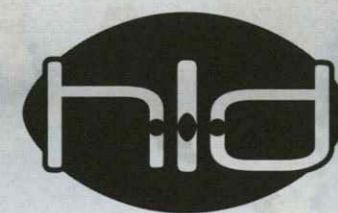


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A Hatter at heart

AS A FAN, KEVIN NICHOLLS IS RELISHING LUTON'S BIG DAY OUT, WHETHER HE PLAYS OR NOT

WORDS MARTIN SMITH

If through injury or cataclysmic loss of form Kevin Nicholls doesn't lead out Luton Town this afternoon, then he will probably be in with the supporters, singing his heart out for his team-mates. Above all, Kevin Nicholls is a Luton Town fan.

The notion of him joining the supporters in the Wembley stands is not a fanciful one, either: he's done it before. "I've been on the terraces a couple of times when I've been suspended," recalls the hard man of Luton's midfield.

"It was a long time ago, in my first spell at the club. One of them was at Shrewsbury's old ground, Gay Meadow, when we were winning promotion from Division Three. I was there singing, getting behind the lads. It was great.

"The fans thought it was brilliant that we could mingle like normal punters. I think they realised how much the club meant to me."

Nothing has happened in the subsequent seven years to change Nicholls' passion, even though it took two years' separation to bring it all home to him.

"The five years I had here were the best time of my career," he says. "I was adored by the fans, I adored them back. Nothing against Leeds, nothing against Preston, it just didn't work out for me there. I jumped at the chance to come back and work here again with Mick Harford."

The manager can understand his captain's affection for the club. "It gets in your blood," said Harford. "Kevin has a fantastic rapport with the supporters. He has a fantastic rapport with the new people, the new board.

"When I was here with Joe Kinnear, my first words to Joe were, 'If we sign Kevin Nicholls, we'll get promotion'. And when we signed Kevin first time round we did get promoted. Last year we spent weeks and months talking to Preston about

bringing Kevin back. His influence has been massive this season."

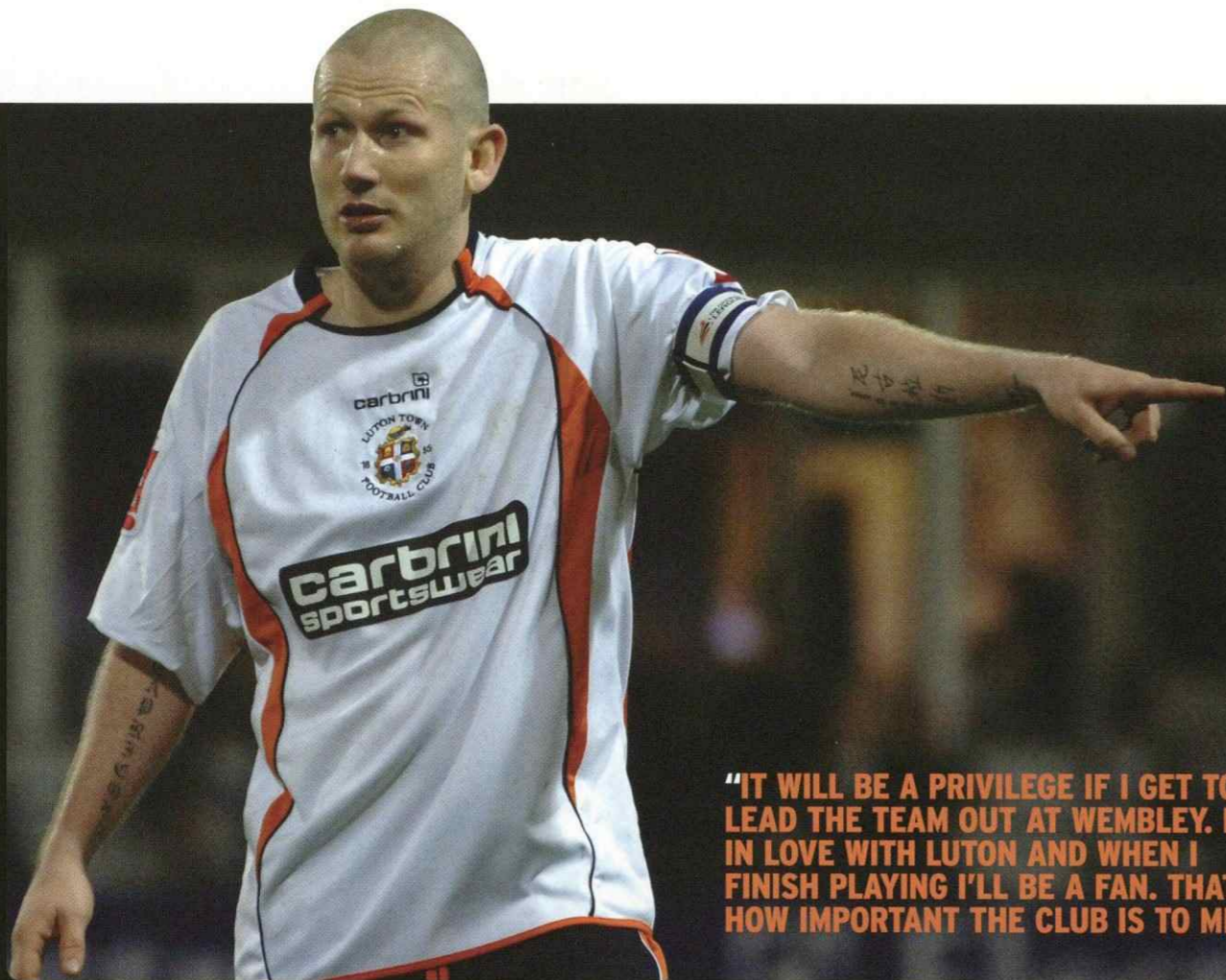
By turning his back on Preston, Nicholls also turned his back on Championship football, and Championship wages. "Yes, I took a pay cut, and I waived certain things," he adds. "But money doesn't make you happy, does it? Well, it wasn't making me happy. Playing football was going to make me happy, and playing football where I could enjoy myself.

"The lowest point of my career was leaving Luton. I left because the people who were in charge of the club were messing about with contracts. I wanted to stay and finish my career here. It wasn't about money – the money could have stayed the same. I had a year left on my contract, I'd just captained the side to two promotions and 10th place in the Championship, and they couldn't sort out a contract. But I never wanted to leave this football club."

Nicholls' problems in the wilderness years were exacerbated by the sudden departure of the two managers who signed him – first Kevin Blackwell at »

"THE FIVE YEARS I HAD HERE WERE THE BEST OF MY CAREER. I WAS ADORED BY THE FANS AND I ADORED THEM BACK"





"IT WILL BE A PRIVILEGE IF I GET TO LEAD THE TEAM OUT AT WEMBLEY. I'M IN LOVE WITH LUTON AND WHEN I FINISH PLAYING I'LL BE A FAN. THAT'S HOW IMPORTANT THE CLUB IS TO ME"

Leeds, then Paul Simpson at Preston – who were both sacked nine games into successive seasons.

Dennis Wise quickly recognised Nicholls' leadership, his drive and enthusiasm, qualities he shares with his role model, Roy Keane. Wise made him Leeds captain, but the two soon fell out amid stories of training-ground bust-ups. Nicholls continues to keep his own counsel on those dark days at Elland Road.

"I didn't really like who I was working with, if you know what I mean," Nicholls says cryptically. "I'm outspoken, but that doesn't mean I'm always right. But it just didn't work out and I wanted to leave in the summer. Someone got hold of that and twisted it: 'He wants to go back to Luton,' they said. Which wasn't true; not straight away. But I would have gone back, I won't lie. But those chapters have hopefully closed. I've moved on, Leeds have moved on."

It was altogether more amicable at Preston. "Alan Irvine was brilliant. He explained that I was going to be a bit-part player, which I could handle, I was 29; I wasn't really going to be in his plans if he played 4-4-2. He knew how important it was for me to play football, and he helped me.

"He said, 'I know where you want to go, and you don't want to go anywhere else,

do you?' And I said, 'No. Even if someone else in the Championship or League 1 comes in for me, I wouldn't want to go to them'. I'd made up my mind."

Harford invited Nicholls to play in a Legends match against the 1988 League Cup-winning team at the end of last season. Nicholls felt privileged and wanted. "I've still got the shirt from that game."

To further underline his commitment, he arranged for his children, Kaylea, aged eight, and three-year-old Kevin jnr, to be mascots for his first game back, against Port Vale. "It was a hard thing to do," he says. "I'm getting a bit emotional now just talking about it, but I wanted to show I was doing the right thing. Even though we lost I will always remember that occasion, and I'll cherish that my kids were there."

However, it has not been the homecoming Nicholls had hoped for. It has been a season dominated by injuries and periods of rehabilitation and he only recently regained a starting place following a hamstring problem. He is talking in the treatment room, where he has spent more time than he would like, and occasionally bends down to touch wood.

"Kevin just wants to play football," Harford adds. "He's been so frustrated. He's been uptight, he's been on edge; now he's back

and he's the life and soul of the party."

Nicholls says: "I've been to quite a lot of the games this season, but I didn't go to some, that's how frustrating it has been. You end up not being so nice to people close to you, as my wife Kay will tell you. It's been tough because all I wanted to do when I came back to this club was play football and help them."

It will be unfortunate if Nicholls is not leading out the team today. Nine years ago, despite playing in the last half-dozen league games of the season, he was left out of the Wigan team who reached the Division Two Play-Off Final at Wembley, where they lost to Gillingham after extra-time. "That was a hard pill to swallow." The following year he put Wigan ahead in another play-off semi-final, only for Reading to score twice in the last four minutes and end a second dream of a final appearance.

At 30, this is his big chance on the big stage. "It'll be a privilege if I get to lead the team out at Wembley. I'm in love with Luton, and when I finish playing I'll be a fan. That's how important the club are to me." ★

KEVIN NICHOLLS
 POSITION MIDFIELDER D.O.B 2/1/1979
 2008/09 APPS 18 2008/09 GOALS 0
 SIGNED JULY 2008
 NATIONALITY ENGLISH



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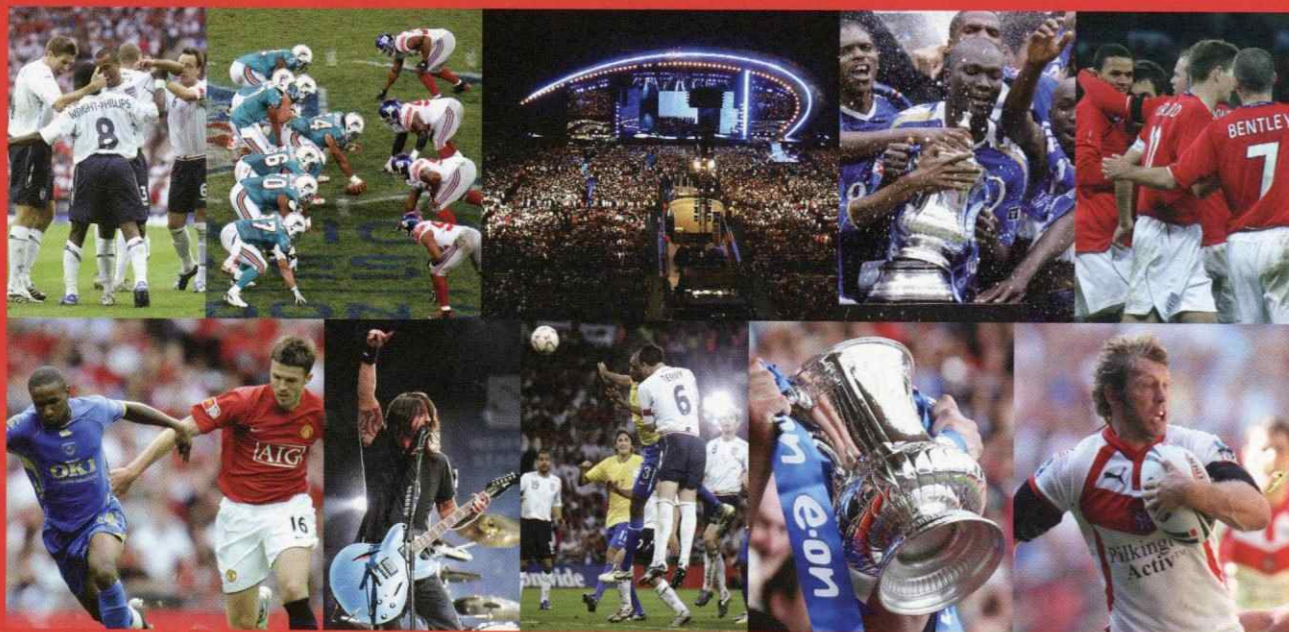


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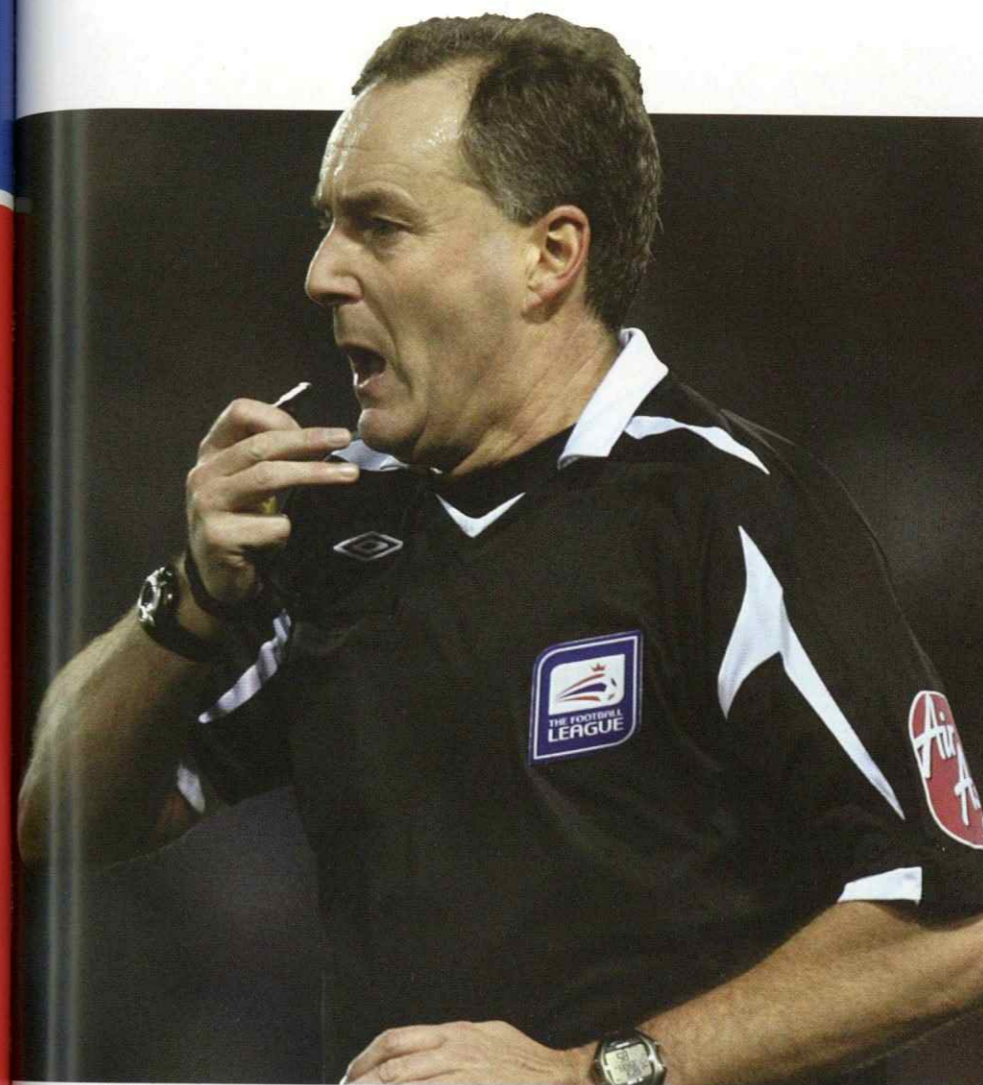
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The road to recovery



A FREAK ACCIDENT ALMOST ENDED PHIL CROSSLEY'S CAREER. FIT AGAIN, HE'S RELISHING TODAY'S GAME

WORDS RUSSELL KEMPSON, THE TIMES

As Phil Crossley lay in his hospital bed, still groggy and in excruciating pain from nine broken ribs and nerve damage, it occurred to him that his career might be over. And as the weeks of rehabilitation turned into months and almost a year, it became a recurring theme, a dreaded thought. He might never blow the whistle again.

"Those were dark days," Crossley recalled. "I had a few bad moments when I thought I'd never come back. My progress was so slow. But I'm a stubborn so-and-so and I was determined to give myself every possible chance to get back. When I passed my fitness test at the start of this season, it gave me a great sense of personal achievement."

To return to action in The Football League was good enough; to be appointed to today's final left him overjoyed. "Wembley is the icing on the cake," he said. He has since learned that although he has reached the

"I WAS IN INTENSIVE CARE FOR FIVE DAYS AND IN HOSPITAL FOR A FORTNIGHT. FOR SIX MONTHS I SLEPT SITTING UP WITH CUSHIONS"

statutory retirement age, he will be retained next season. All of which is a far cry from May 6, 2007, when he suffered his horrific injuries in as bizarre an incident on the pitch as could be imagined.

In the opening minutes of Derby County's 2-0 victory over Leeds United at Pride Park on the final day of the 2006-07 season, he collided with Seth Johnson, the Derby midfielder. Like many an opponent who has felt the full force of a Johnson challenge, Crossley crumpled.

"When you see it, it looks so innocuous. At first, I thought I was just winded, but I quickly realised it was quite bad. I got taken off on a stretcher and got a round of applause. Some of the fans were chanting: 'You're not fit to referee!' and I certainly wasn't. I suppose I can see the funny side of that now."

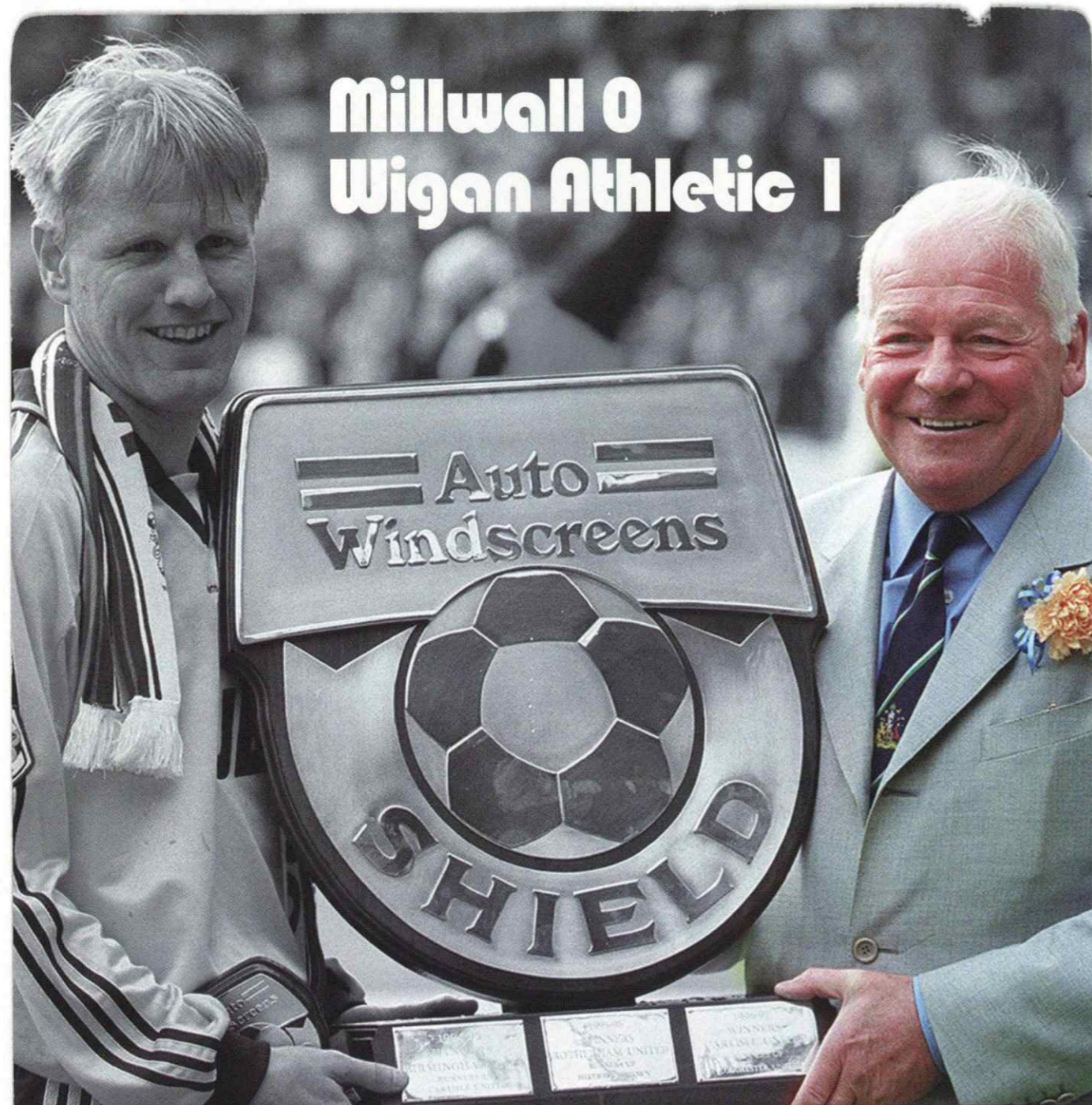
"I was in intensive care for five days and in hospital for a fortnight. For six months, I had to sleep sitting up with cushions. I hardly slept. Ten months after, I was still seeing a Harley Street specialist and getting painkilling injections in my spine."

Crossley, 48 and from Kent, had endured major physical setbacks before. A ruptured Achilles tendon ended his playing career as a parks footballer, as a "robust" sweeper, and instead of haranguing referees – "I would occasionally tell them what I felt" – he joined them. "I wanted to try to keep fit."

At 30, he was a late-starter and it took ten years to work his way to the League list, as an assistant referee. Two years later, he was promoted to the middle and, four years ago, he narrowly missed elevation to the elite group. "I was bitterly disappointed," he said. "No one likes to feel a failure but I've just carried on doing the best I can."

He doubles up as manager of the market abuse team at the London Stock Exchange, carrying out surveillance of the trading practices. A month ago, in his alternative job, he revisited Pride Park – for the first time since that fateful day – to take charge of Derby County's 2-2 draw with Swansea City.

"I got there early, went and stood on the spot where it happened and scuffed the grass a bit. I got it out of my mind, concentrated and got on with the game. I don't get any discomfort now, the pain is a distant memory. I suppose I've laid the ghost. It's closure." *



**Millwall 0
Wigan Athletic 1**

Dave Whelan, 18 April 1999

“ It was the first time I’d been back to Wembley since breaking my leg as a player with Blackburn Rovers in the 1960 FA Cup Final and Wigan’s first time there since I became chairman. It brought back a lot of cruel memories but it also went a long way towards making up for what happened to me there in 1960 because it was an absolutely fantastic day with our midfield player, Paul Rogers (pictured above left), scoring the winner from just outside the box in stoppage time. It looked like being a 0-0 stalemate and I thought extra-time was looming. But then he took the chance so well and we all went barny. ”

“ I was so proud to step out on the Wembley turf again, to pick up the trophy and bring it back to Wigan. Ray Mathias was in his first season as manager and did a good job on no resources. It was a dream to go from a complete wreck like Springfield Park to Wembley and we were nearly there again a month later but lost to Manchester City in the play-off semi-finals. That win was a lovely step on our way to the Premier League and the competition is an opportunity for lower-league clubs to get to Wembley and give the supporters and the town something to remember. ”



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Penalty points

SCUNTHORPE GOALKEEPER JOE MURPHY AND HIS SPOT-KICK HEROICS

WORDS GRAHAME LLOYD

Not many goalkeepers mark their Premiership debut by saving a penalty from one of England's leading strikers with their very first touch. But that was Joe Murphy's achievement when he made his bow in the top flight for West Brom against Liverpool at Anfield in September 2002.

The Republic of Ireland international had only joined the Hawthorns club from Tranmere the previous summer and was on the bench when Russell Hoult brought down Michael Owen ten minutes before half-time.

Hoult saw red, Murphy replaced striker Scott Dobbie and immediately grabbed his chance – literally with both hands – by saving Owen's attempt from the spot. West Brom's ten men eventually lost 2-0 but Murphy will always remember coming through a baptism of fire with flying colours against the team he supported as a boy.

"I knew straightaway I was going on," he recalls, "and, in a way, it was a good thing because I had no time to think about it.

Luckily, I gambled correctly and managed to keep out the ball. Michael put it to my right and, to be fair, it was a poor penalty – it wasn't anywhere near the corner. If I'd have dived the other way, it would have been a good penalty.

"In any game, you want your first couple of touches to be good so it was a great start for me. Milan Baros and John Arne Riise scored their goals after the break – the second in the last minute – but it was a nice experience."

Dublin-born Murphy had begun his career with Tranmere as a 15-year-old and three years later became one of the youngest keepers to play at Wembley when Rovers lost 2-1 to Leicester in the 2000 Worthington Cup Final in front of nearly 75,000 fans. This afternoon he joins the elite band of footballers to have appeared at both the old and new stadiums.

"That final was a massive experience for me. I think I did OK, we were the underdogs but it

was a great day – even though we lost to two Matt Elliott goals. Wembley is known as the home of football around the world so, for me, it'll be great to be able to say that I've played at both stadiums. My family came over from Ireland in 2000 and they'll be over again today."

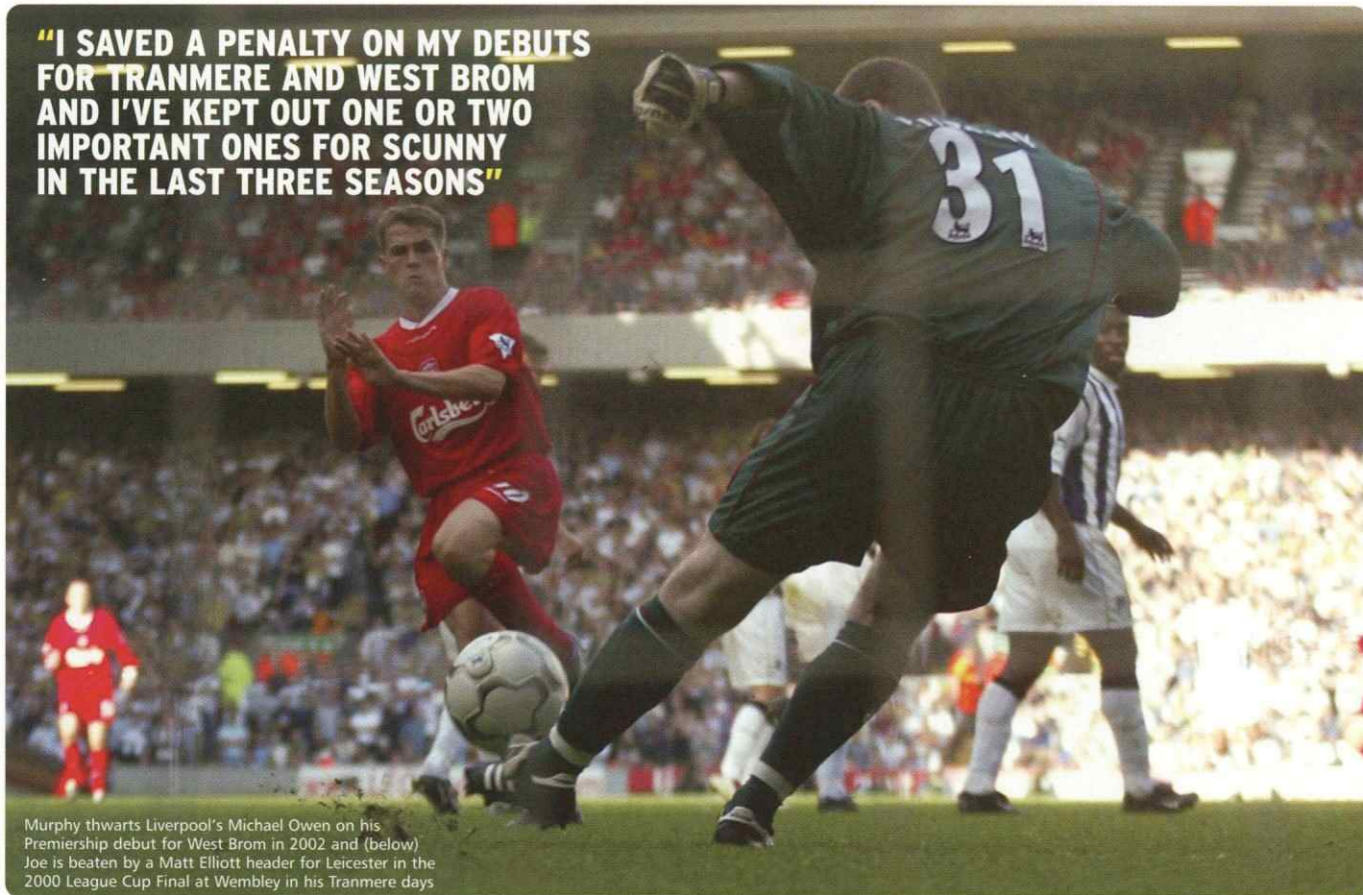
After making six league appearances for West Brom – four in the Championship as they achieved promotion at the first attempt following relegation from the top flight – Murphy left for a loan spell at Walsall before spending most of the 2005/06 season at Sunderland without playing a senior game.

"I was struggling for a club and Mick McCarthy, who I knew through my involvement with the Irish Under-21 side, asked me if I'd like to join them for a year as cover.

"I jumped at the chance but it didn't work out. Towards the end of his time there, Mick did pull me to one side and said I'd be playing

"WEMBLEY IS THE HOME OF FOOTBALL. IT WILL BE GREAT TO SAY I'VE PLAYED AT BOTH STADIUMS"

"I SAVED A PENALTY ON MY DEBUTS FOR TRANMERE AND WEST BROM AND I'VE KEPT OUT ONE OR TWO IMPORTANT ONES FOR SCUNNY IN THE LAST THREE SEASONS"



Murphy thwarts Liverpool's Michael Owen on his Premiership debut for West Brom in 2002 and (below) Joe is beaten by a Matt Elliott header for Leicester in the 2000 League Cup Final at Wembley in his Tranmere days

the next week but he got sacked in the meantime which was unfortunate."

Murphy rejoined Walsall on loan before signing for Scunthorpe in the summer of 2006 which proved the prelude to the most consistent form of his career as the Iron swept to the League 1 title under Brian Laws and then Nigel Adkins, himself a former Tranmere keeper.

Murphy was selected in the League 1 Team of the Season and also won the golden glove award for keeping 24 clean sheets – the most in the division. "We ran away with the title but I'm not suggesting all the clean sheets were down to me!" he smiled.

Scunthorpe failed to stay in the Championship and went down after one season but as they've made their way to today's final, another promotion push from League 1 has been mounted. Has success in the Johnstone's Paint Trophy been a help or a hindrance?

"If you look at our record since qualifying for Wembley by beating Rotherham in the Northern Area Final, it seems to have been a hindrance because we lost our next three games. Maybe our minds were elsewhere. We're a small club, a trip to Wembley is so big, it takes a lot of organisation and there's a lot of hype about it so I'm sure you can take your eye off the ball."

And that's something Murphy is prepared to own up to after the 1-0 second leg win at Rotherham. During that game, he made a crucial save by turning a Reuben Reid header onto the bar just after half-time when the tie was goalless but his form dipped during those three successive defeats.

"I feel it's the only kind of blip I've had but it



happens to every footballer and I'm always confident in my ability to regain form because I've had the experience of playing in the Championship with Tranmere at the age of 18.

"You can accept it more if you make a mistake and the team wins but it looks worse because we went on to lose those three games. We were beaten 4-2 by Swindon after going 2-0 up, then I didn't come for a ball against Southend, they scored and won 2-0, and then I was at fault for the first goal at Leeds which we lost 3-2.

"I felt I should have kept out Jermaine Beckford's effort but I pushed it onto the post and it went in. I'm my own worst critic, I know I should have done better and I apologised to the lads in the dressing room afterwards.

Fortunately, my form picked up after that.

"With the manager having been a goalkeeper, I've always been close to him but he didn't say anything to me because he knows I've got the confidence and it doesn't affect me too much. It obviously plays on your mind a little bit but you've got to be big and strong enough to just get on with it."

While Scunthorpe's priority this season is promotion back to the Championship, they're determined to celebrate their first visit to the new Wembley with a win. The four vital stoppage-time goals in the first three rounds of the competition are seen as lucky omens and should today's final end in a nerve-jangling shoot-out, Iron supporters know they'll have the perfect stopper between the posts.

"We've won a few games in the last minute with Paul Hayes having the knack of scoring in stoppage time," added the 27-year-old. "After his goal against Tranmere, we felt our name was on the trophy – we've had a feeling that we're going to go all the way."

"Although I saved a penalty on my debuts for Tranmere and West Brom and I've kept out one or two important ones for Scunny in the last three seasons, I feel more comfortable with a shoot-out rather than a one-off spot-kick in a game. But hopefully, it won't come to that today."★

JOE MURPHY
 POSITION: GOALKEEPER D.O.B: 21/08/1981
 2008/09 APPS 43 2008/09 CLEAN SHEETS 14
 SIGNED MAY 2006
 NATIONALITY IRISH



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GOOD LUCK to Mick and the Boys



Clubs across the country including Sheffield United and Northampton, plus celebrities such as Oldham fan Gemma Atkinson, have all shown their support for Enjoy the Match.

FAMILY FOOTBALL



HOW THE FOOTBALL LEAGUE IS ENHANCING THE FAMILY MATCHDAY EXPERIENCE AT ITS GAMES



This season has seen the launch of a new campaign by The Football League that aims to get even more families watching matches down at their local League club.

The 'Enjoy the Match' campaign is intended to ensure that parents are able to take their children to matches in a family-friendly environment by removing abusive language and aggressive behaviour from the family areas of stadia.

At each of the 68 participating clubs, family areas are proactively stewarded to discourage anti-social behaviour and further the enjoyment of our young supporters. There is also prominent signage to remind fans that they are in a family environment. Many clubs are also playing a specially recorded message, recorded using the voices of local children, to encourage positive support throughout the match. You'll hear this message being played prior to the kick-off at today's match.

The campaign has already had a positive effect with matchday attendances in family areas up by 12%. This has generated more than £1.5m for clubs and has given even more youngsters a taste of live football and the chance to begin a lifelong affiliation with their club.

This important aim is recognised by Football League Chairman Lord Mawhinney. "Young supporters will be the lifeblood of our clubs in years to come," he said. "It is therefore vitally important that we encourage more parents to bring their children into our grounds by creating a vibrant, family-friendly atmosphere at all matches."

Enjoy the Match forms part of a wider effort to encourage more fans to attend games. Through the 'Fans of the Future' initiative, League clubs are providing free or heavily discounted tickets to the supporters of tomorrow, with more than 750,000 taking advantage in the last three seasons.

The League has also engaged in a detailed 'mystery shopper' exercise at every one of its 72 member clubs.

This independent assessment of the family experience at each venue took place throughout the 2007/08 season with the results being shared with the clubs themselves.

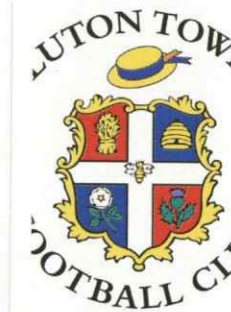
One of the key findings of this survey was that swearing and abusive language by other supporters formed a key negative impression on families at 46% of the 144 games assessed.

The upshot was the introduction of the Enjoy the Match campaign that fans now benefit from.

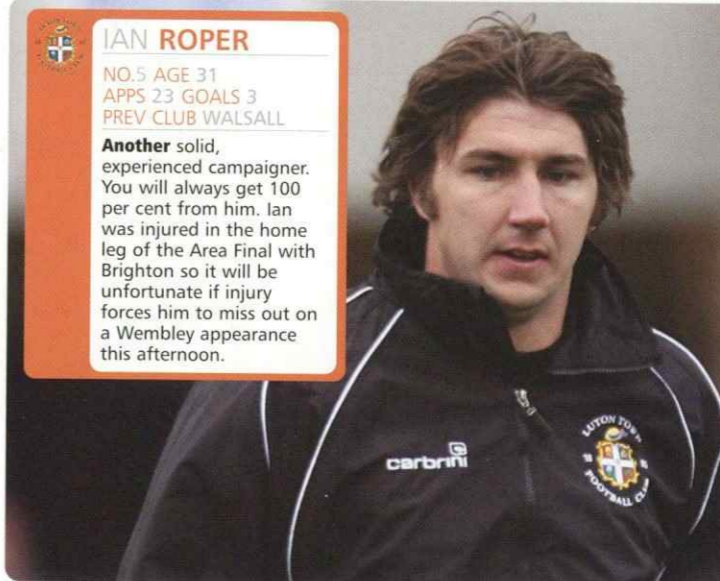
Whether or not you're attending the match with your family, The Football League hopes you have a great day out at the Johnstone's Paint Trophy Final and, if you are sat with or near young fans and families, please moderate your language appropriately.

To find out more about the Enjoy the Match campaign visit: www.enjoythetmatch.co.uk *





SOL DAVIS
 NO.3 AGE 29
 APPS 317 GOALS 3
 PREV CLUB SWINDON TOWN
Experienced, clever and a real steady Eddy. Sol's been a great servant for the club and a terrific asset at left-back. Strong in defence and dangerous when he goes forward, linking up well with whoever plays in front of him down the left flank.



IAN ROPER
 NO.5 AGE 31
 APPS 23 GOALS 3
 PREV CLUB WALSHAM
Another solid, experienced campaigner. You will always get 100 per cent from him. Ian was injured in the home leg of the Area Final with Brighton so it will be unfortunate if injury forces him to miss out on a Wembley appearance this afternoon.



HERE COME THE HATTERS

LEICESTER GOALKEEPER CONRAD LOGAN, WHO MADE 30 APPEARANCES ON LOAN FOR LUTON THIS TERM, INTRODUCES HIS FORMER TEAM-MATES



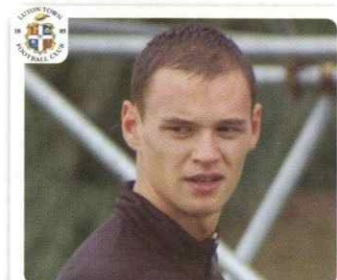
CLUB INFORMATION
 FOUNDED: 1885
 NICKNAME: HATTERS
 CHAIRMAN: NICK OWEN
 GROUND: KENILWORTH ROAD
 WEBSITE: WWW.LUTONTOWN.CO.UK

HONOURS
 LEAGUE CUPS: 1987/88
 SECOND DIVISION CHAMPIONS: 1981/82
 THIRD DIVISION CHAMPIONS: 1936/37
 FOURTH DIVISION CHAMPIONS: 1967/68
 LEAGUE 2 CHAMPIONS: 2004/05
LAST SEASON
 LEAGUE 1: 24th
 FA CUP: 3rd ROUND
 CARLING CUP: 4th ROUND
 JPT: 2nd ROUND

GOALKEEPERS



DEAN BRILL
 NO.1 AGE 23
 APPS 88 CLEAN SHEETS 21
 PREV CLUB NONE
Obviously I trained a lot with Dean when I was at Luton and he's a good lad and a hard worker. He hasn't played a lot this season but when he's been called upon he's done really well. He's a good shot-stopper and is always communicating with the defence.

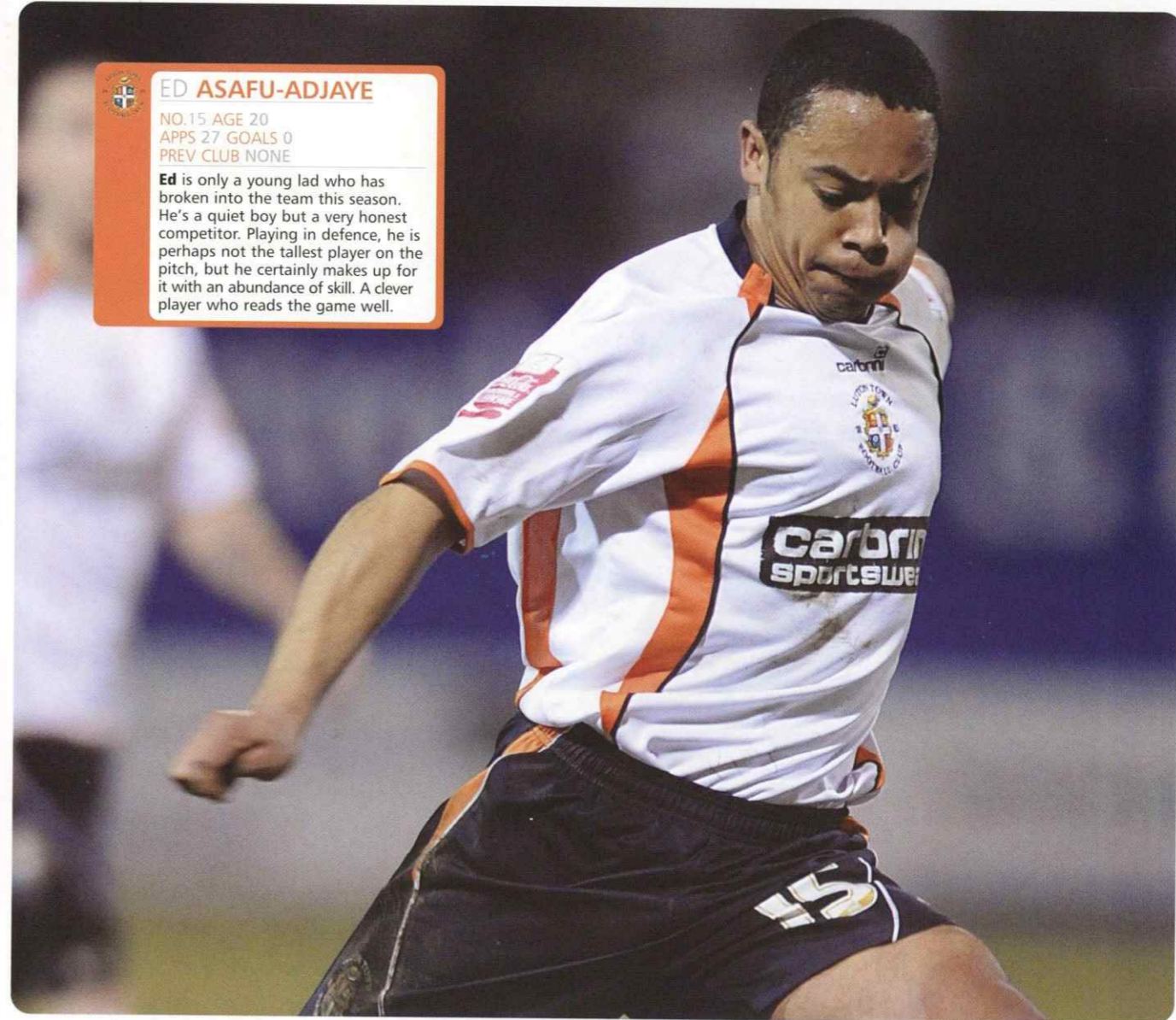


DAVID BUTTON
 NO.35 AGE 20
 APPS 0 CLEAN SHEETS 0
 PREV CLUB ON LOAN FROM TOTTENHAM
David has been on the bench for the last few weeks having been brought in on loan from Tottenham after Lewis Price went back to Derby. He has just turned 20 and is progressing well after leaving youth-team football. Has also played for England U19s.

DEFENDERS

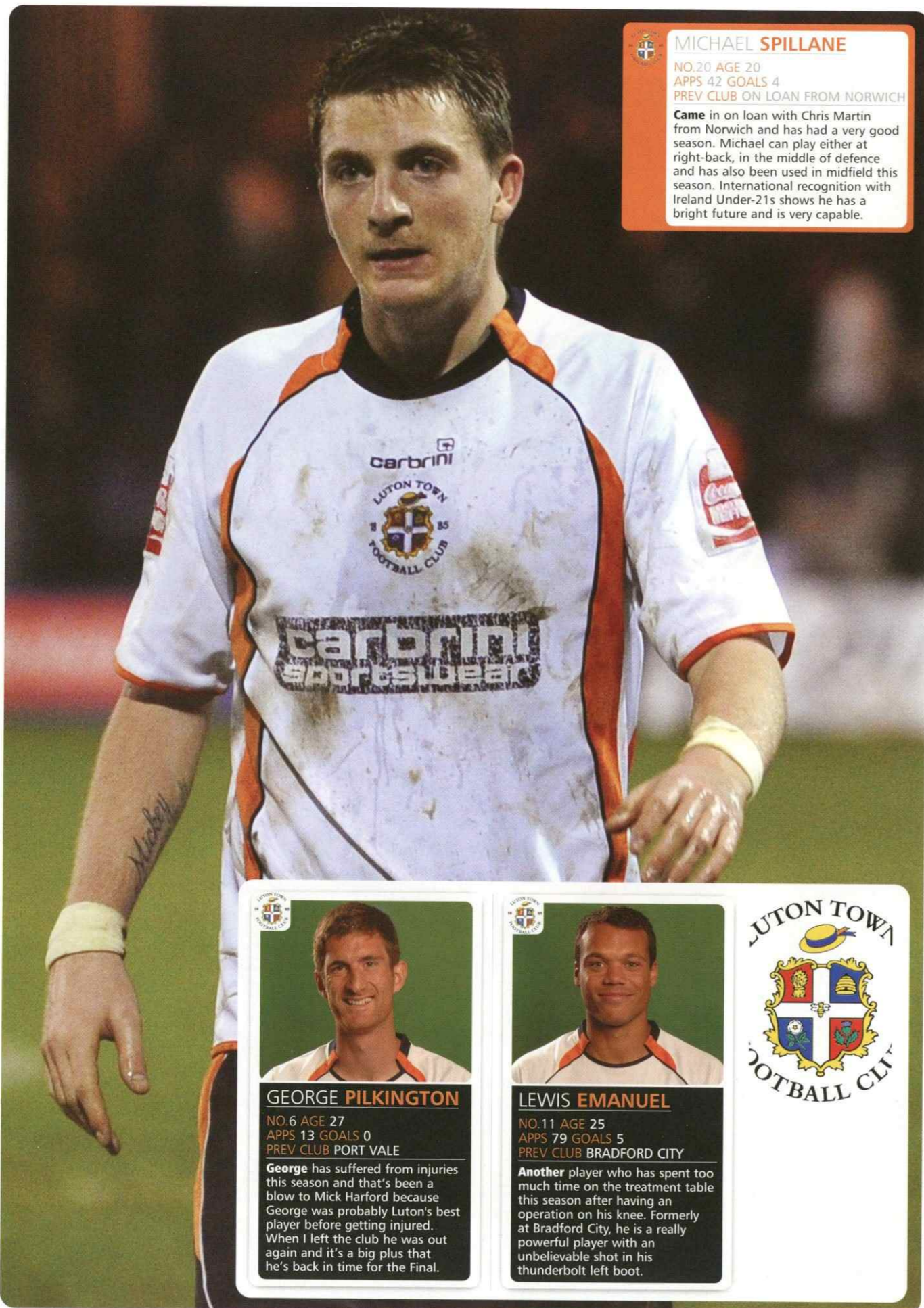


CLAUDE GNAKA
 NO.2 AGE 25
 APPS 35 GOALS 2
 PREV CLUB PETERBOROUGH
Claude is a very versatile player who can play at centre-half and right-back as well as in midfield. He's even played up front this season in the earlier rounds of the Johnstone's Paint Trophy! He's quick and strong and brings something different to the team.




ED ASAFU-ADJAYE
 NO.15 AGE 20
 APPS 27 GOALS 0
 PREV CLUB NONE
Ed is only a young lad who has broken into the team this season. He's a quiet boy but a very honest competitor. Playing in defence, he is perhaps not the tallest player on the pitch, but he certainly makes up for it with an abundance of skill. A clever player who reads the game well.






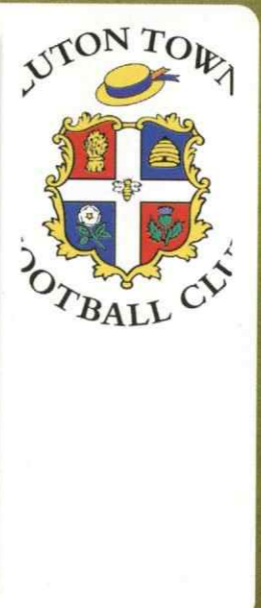
MICHAEL SPILLANE
 NO.20 AGE 20
 APPS 42 GOALS 4
 PREV CLUB ON LOAN FROM NORWICH
Came in on loan with Chris Martin from Norwich and has had a very good season. Michael can play either at right-back, in the middle of defence and has also been used in midfield this season. International recognition with Ireland Under-21s shows he has a bright future and is very capable.



GEORGE PILKINGTON
 NO.6 AGE 27
 APPS 13 GOALS 0
 PREV CLUB PORT VALE
George has suffered from injuries this season and that's been a blow to Mick Harford because George was probably Luton's best player before getting injured. When I left the club he was out again and it's a big plus that he's back in time for the Final.

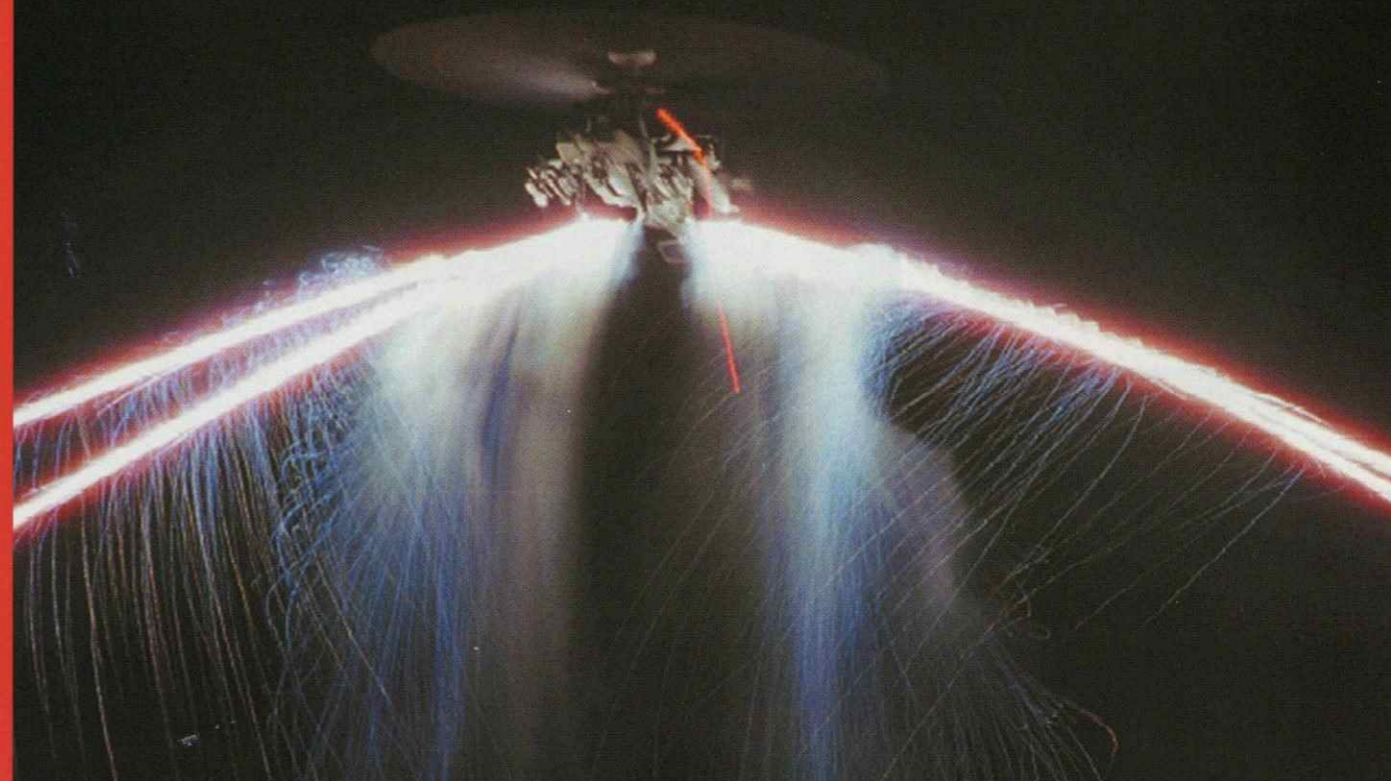


LEWIS EMANUEL
 NO.11 AGE 25
 APPS 79 GOALS 5
 PREV CLUB BRADFORD CITY
Another player who has spent too much time on the treatment table this season after having an operation on his knee. Formerly at Bradford City, he is a really powerful player with an unbelievable shot in his thunderbolt left boot.



Further on.

SELEX Galileo would like to wish Luton Town Football Club success in the Johnstone's Paint Trophy Final



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MIDFIELDERS



KEVIN NICHOLLS

NO. 8 AGE 30
APPS 205 GOALS 33
PREV CLUB PRESTON NORTH END

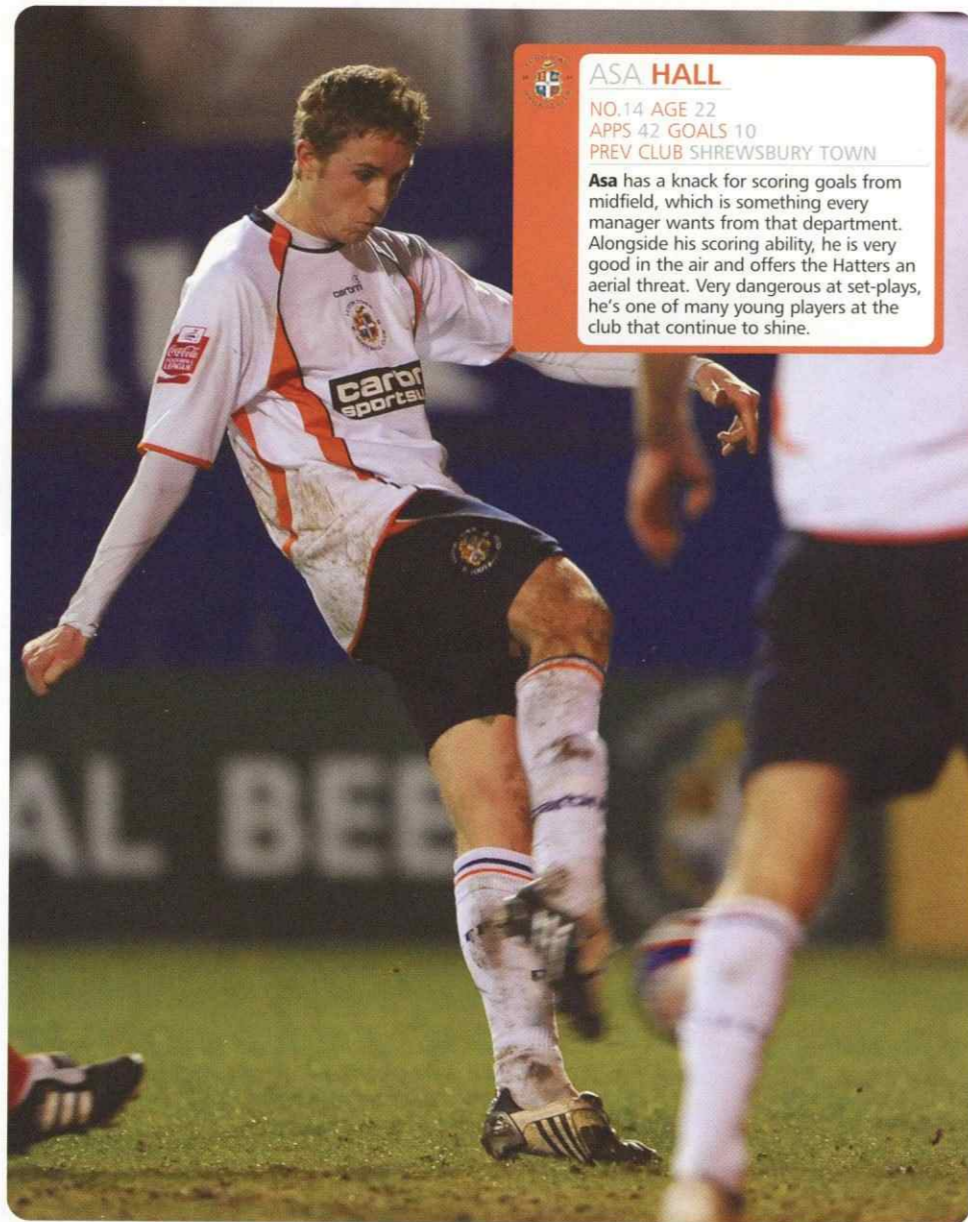
The club captain has had several untimely injuries this season and has only just regained his place. Went to Leeds and Preston but came back for a second spell with Luton and is a massive part of the team. The fans absolutely love him and are always chanting his name.



KEITH KEANE

NO. 4 AGE 22
APPS 145 GOALS 4
PREV CLUB NONE

It seems that Keith has been at the club for years even though he's still a relative youngster. A bit of a hard man which every team needs. His best position might be in defence but he's been playing in the holding role and will do a job wherever he's asked to play.



ASA HALL

NO. 14 AGE 22
APPS 42 GOALS 10
PREV CLUB SHREWSBURY TOWN

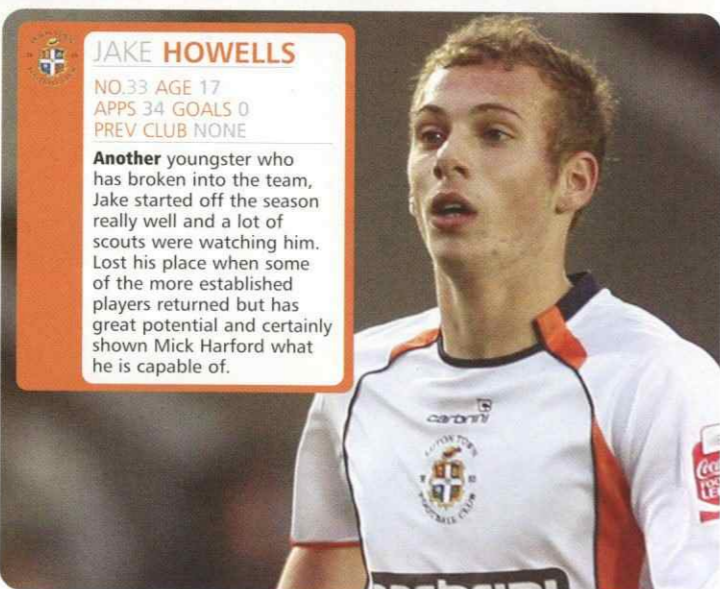
Asa has a knack for scoring goals from midfield, which is something every manager wants from that department. Alongside his scoring ability, he is very good in the air and offers the Hatters an aerial threat. Very dangerous at set-plays, he's one of many young players at the club that continue to shine.



ROSSI JARVIS

NO. 16 AGE 21
APPS 42 GOALS 2
PREV CLUB NORWICH

One of the flair players in the Luton team, Rossi takes most of the corners and free-kicks as well as having a wonderful ability to pick out a pass. He's only young and is an exciting looking player who certainly has a bright future ahead of him in the game.



JAKE HOWELLS

NO. 33 AGE 17
APPS 34 GOALS 0
PREV CLUB NONE

Another youngster who has broken into the team, Jake started off the season really well and a lot of scouts were watching him. Lost his place when some of the more established players returned but has great potential and certainly shown Mick Harford what he is capable of.

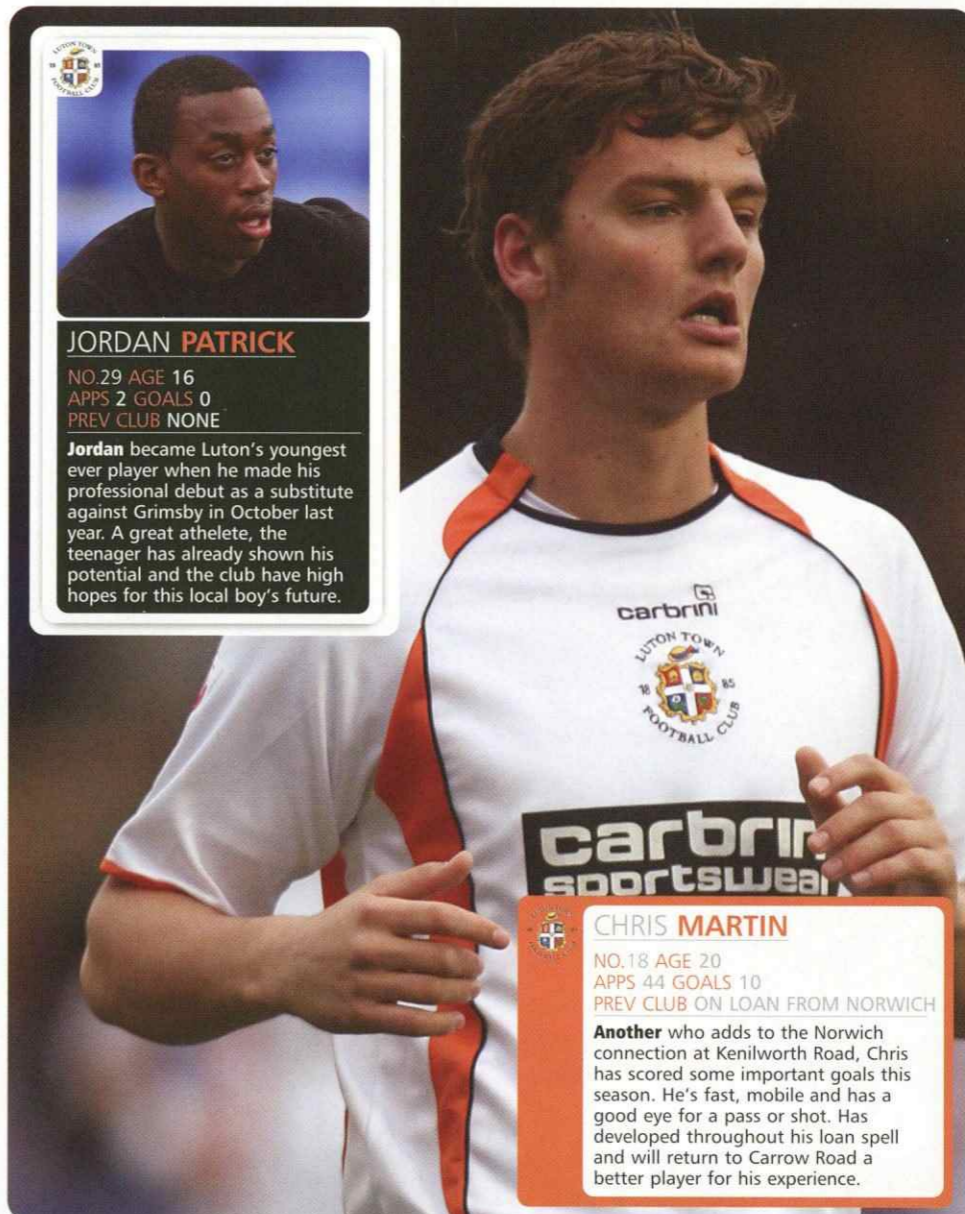
STRIKERS



JORDAN PATRICK

NO. 29 AGE 16
APPS 2 GOALS 0
PREV CLUB NONE

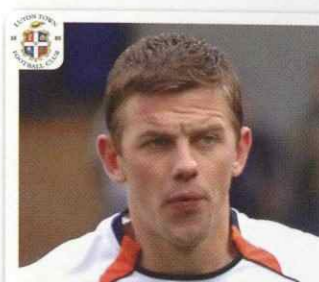
Jordan became Luton's youngest ever player when he made his professional debut as a substitute against Grimsby in October last year. A great athlete, the teenager has already shown his potential and the club have high hopes for this local boy's future.



CHRIS MARTIN

NO. 18 AGE 20
APPS 44 GOALS 10
PREV CLUB ON LOAN FROM NORWICH

Another who adds to the Norwich connection at Kenilworth Road, Chris has scored some important goals this season. He's fast, mobile and has a good eye for a pass or shot. Has developed throughout his loan spell and will return to Carrow Road a better player for his experience.



TOM CRADDOCK

NO. 24 AGE 22
APPS 21 GOALS 10
PREV CLUB MIDDLESBROUGH

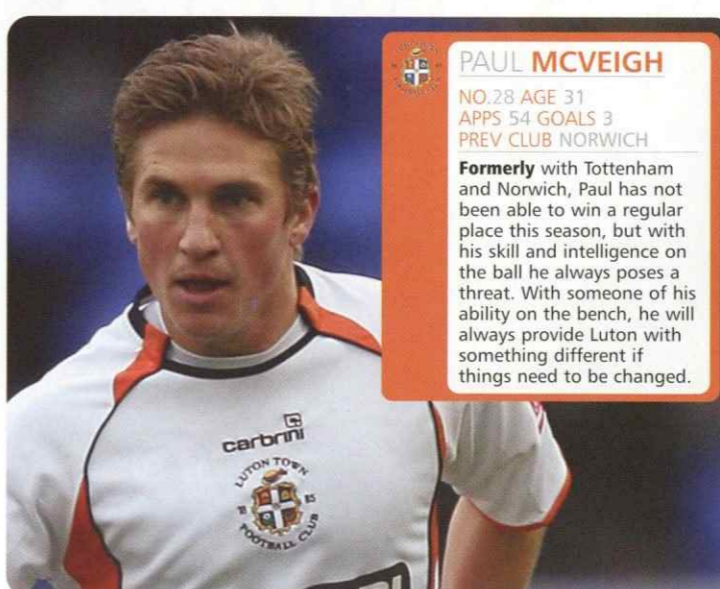
Signed permanently in January after a loan spell from Middlesbrough and has been banging in the goals ever since. Tom has really good control and the ability to take defenders on. He's a bit of a fox in the box and that's what you need at any level.



RYAN CHARLES

NO. 10 AGE 19
APPS 19 GOALS 3
PREV CLUB NONE

Ryan is one for the future as far as Luton are concerned. He has mostly been used as a substitute this season but has terrific potential and is a good finisher. He won't feature today though, after being sent to Kettering Town on a short-term loan last week.



PAUL MCVEIGH

NO. 28 AGE 31
APPS 54 GOALS 3
PREV CLUB NORWICH

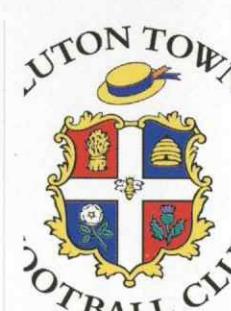
Formerly with Tottenham and Norwich, Paul has not been able to win a regular place this season, but with his skill and intelligence on the ball he always poses a threat. With someone of his ability on the bench, he will always provide Luton with something different if things need to be changed.

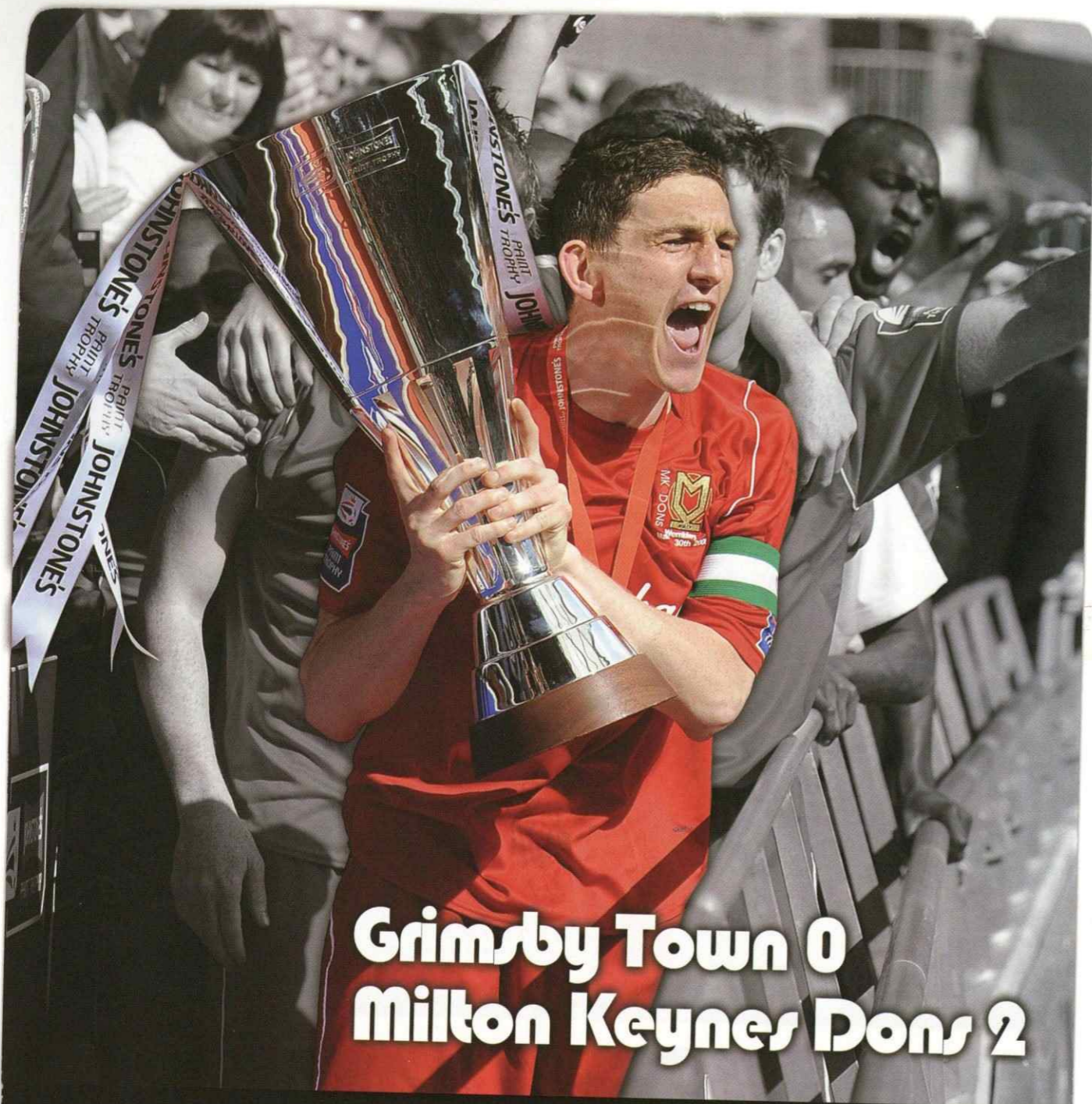


SAM PARKIN

NO. 9 AGE 28
APPS 51 GOALS 10
PREV CLUB IPSWICH TOWN

What can I say about Sam? The club loaned him out earlier in the season to Leyton Orient but he came back and is a superb target man, allowing team-mates to play off him. He's been at a lot of teams and uses that experience and knowledge to good effect.





**Grimsby Town 0
Milton Keynes Dons 2**

Keith Andrews, 30 March 2008

From the moment we arrived at the stadium there was a fantastic atmosphere and the supporters made it such a special day for us.

Leading the team out at Wembley Stadium was an absolute dream, not many people get to do that. Just playing there is special, but there's no point being at Wembley and not winning so we went all guns blazing to try and get the win and fortunately we did.

If I said I wasn't nervous about taking the penalty I'd be lying, especially as our goalkeeper Willy Gueret had saved

from the spot at the same end in the first half. But at the same time I had confidence in my own ability and the repetition of what you do in training pays dividends. To blast it is the easy way out, you have to trust your technique.

There was a thought in my mind to do that but I decided to pick my spot and fortunately the keeper went the other way. It put us in charge and seven minutes later Sean O'Hanlon made the game safe with a header.

When you win it's goosebumps all over - it's a moment I'll never forget for the rest of my life.



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INTERVIEW MEL HENDERSON

Hats off to Hatters

BURY BOSS ALAN KNILL KNOWS ALL ABOUT LUTON AFTER FACING THEM TWICE THIS SEASON. HERE, HE GIVES HIS VERDICT ON THE HATTERS' TACTICS



Luton play what I call a proper 4-3-3 system. It's not 4-5-1 in disguise because they have three out-and-out strikers in Chris Martin, Sam Parkin and Tom Craddock, and they are definitely far more offensive than defensive in their outlook.

They have impressed me this season and we have had two tough games with them. We lost 2-1 at our place in October and even though we reversed the scoreline at Kenilworth Road at the end of January, we were 1-0 down at half-time and mightily relieved to come away with all three points.

I know manager Mick Harford very well – I was his assistant at Rotherham four years ago – and even though Luton are the outsiders I think they have a decent chance today. Knowing Mick, he won't worry too much about the opposition but will want his team to go forward and enjoy the game, and Scunthorpe definitely won't have it all their own way. Mick is tactically aware and I can honestly see Luton giving a very good account of themselves.

Kevin Nicholls is a key player for them. He is the main leader, the one who drives the team forward and organises. He's a steady influence from his holding role in midfield, offering real protection to the back four, and when we played Luton he sat there and organised everything. It's an important area for any side and Nicholls does the job better than most at this level.

Once he is on the ball, he wastes no time in getting his team quickly into their stride going forward. Another important player in that regard is Kevin

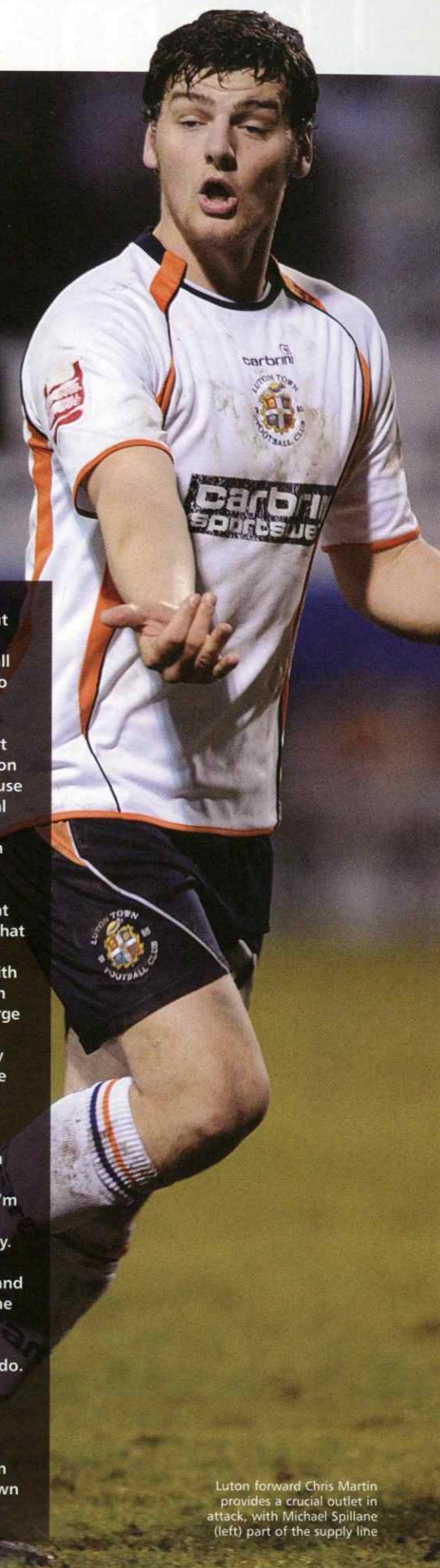
Gallen, who is clever and effective in his role behind the front men, but misses out today because he is cup-tied.

However, Luton have other assets to call upon and breaking swiftly allows them to make the best of Chris Martin and Tom Craddock. Both can be very dangerous coming in from wide positions to support the centre-forward and teams facing Luton need to know where those two are because they use them a lot. They see a great deal of the ball because they tend to be the usual outlets as they break up opposition attacks and launch forward at pace.

Scunthorpe's front men have shown what they can do – their records compare with the best – but Luton have resilience and ability in defence. George Pilkington, who played a lot of games for Port Vale and captained their side, is a very decent central defender at this level and he won't be fazed in any way. He's recently returned after a lengthy spell out through injury and if fit he could be a key man.

Like Martin, Michael Spillane is on loan from Norwich and has played in defence and midfield this season. I'm not surprised Mick has made use of his versatility. Spillane is quite comfortable on the ball and has a lot of energy that he puts to good use going forward, which Luton's formation allows him to do.

Both full-backs are encouraged to overlap. From what I have seen, Spillane links well with Craddock and Luton Town offer plenty of threat down the right flank. ★



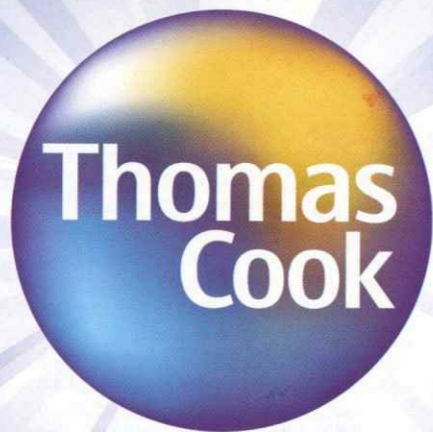
Luton forward Chris Martin provides a crucial outlet in attack, with Michael Spillane (left) part of the supply line

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Oasis Definitely Maybe at Wembley later this year, as will the Rugby League Challenge Cup Final (right) and an NFL regular season game (below)

Wembley leads the way

WORDS KIRSTY BALL

HOW THERE'S MUCH MORE TO WEMBLEY STADIUM THAN JUST FOOTBALL

Will it be the Hatters or the Iron who are cheering at the end of today's Johnstone's Paint Trophy Final? We'll have to wait and see. What's already certain though, is that there's a very exciting year ahead of events in 2009 at Wembley Stadium.

The world's oldest cup competition, The FA Cup reaches its final stages at Wembley with a weekend of semi-final action on 18 and 19 April.

First up it's an all London semi-final between Arsenal, in their first trip to the new Wembley, against Chelsea, winners of the first FA Cup Final at the new stadium. The next day sees an all North West semi-final as Manchester United, hoping to stay on track for an unprecedented quintuple of trophies take on Everton, who last won the FA Cup in 1995 – against Manchester United at Wembley.

The two finalists will then return to Wembley to battle it out for the Cup on Saturday 30 May.

The players and fans of the teams competing in the FA Vase and FA Trophy competitions will be hoping to emulate the success of Luton or Scunthorpe by making it to Wembley in a weekend of Finals in early May and hopefully getting their hands on their own piece of Wembley silverware.

The Coca-Cola Football League season will then come to an exhilarating finale as six teams battle it out on the pitch at Wembley for the glory of promotion in the Play-Off Finals. While there will be elation for some and heartbreak

for others, it's certain to be a fantastic bank holiday weekend of football for all.

This year of course is a very important year for international football as England hope to book their place in the 2010 World Cup in South Africa. England fans will be hoping to do the double over Croatia in this qualifying campaign and avenge painful memories of missing out on the 2008 European Championships. Fabio Capello's England play qualifiers at Wembley in 2009 against Ukraine, Andorra, Croatia and then Belarus with friendlies against Slovakia and Slovenia.

Then it's the turn of the oval ball in August when Rugby League takes centre stage with the Challenge Cup Final and American football crosses the pond, returning to Wembley for its third successive year with a regular season game between the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and the New England Patriots. When tickets went on sale

70,000 were sold out within 24 hours showing the appetite over here for American football remains as strong as ever.

Of course, at Wembley, the music events are just as big as the sports events and there's an impressive twelve nights of concerts from some of the biggest artists in the world already lined up this summer. Rock band AC/DC are up first and then, after an amazing comeback that has rocketed them to the heights of superstardom, Take That take to the Wembley stage for what has become the fastest selling UK tour of all time. Next up its Oasis followed



by U2 and then Coldplay who will be joined on stage by Jay-Z and Girls Aloud.

Wembley is a stadium for the big games and the icing on the cake was the recent announcement by UEFA that Wembley Stadium has been chosen to host the 2011 Champions League Final, beating off tough competition from Germany's Allianz Arena and Olympiastadion. The decision is fantastic news for London and the UK and confirms Wembley's place alongside the very best football stadiums in the world. 2011 will see the Champions League Final return to the UK for the first time since 2003 when AC Milan defeated Juventus at Old Trafford, and to Wembley Stadium for the first time since 1992, when Barcelona beat Sampdoria in the European Cup Final during the season before the competition became the Champions League.

So whether it's Luton or Scunthorpe who are glorious today, there is plenty more action ahead to come from Wembley this year and we hope to see you there.*



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THE FOOTBALL LEAGUE TRUST IS HELPING CLUBS NURTURE THE NEXT GENERATION OF PLAYERS AND DEVELOP THEIR ROLE IN THE COMMUNITY



From their position at the heart of the professional game, Football League clubs are making an essential contribution to communities throughout the country, both on and off the pitch.

The Football League Trust was formed in 2007 to oversee the work being done by clubs through their Community and Youth Developments departments. This involves managing funding strategies in both areas, including existing arrangements – such as the annual contributions of £4 million towards community programmes and £5.4 million for Youth Development from the Premier League – as well as searching for new sources of financial support from the public and private sector.

League clubs are already feeling the benefit with improved levels of central funding in both areas. On the youth development front, The Football League Trust has been able to raise levels of grant funding from £138,000 to £180,000 per club.

This extra funding will help League clubs with the important work they do to identify, train and educate the young players of the future. Already, around 50 per cent of players called up for England duty, across all age groups, are or were on the books of The League's 72 clubs, while numerous prodigious talents that began their careers with League clubs are making their mark at the very highest level, including the likes of Manchester City's

Joe Hart (Shrewsbury Town), Arsenal's Theo Walcott (Swindon Town and Southampton), Everton's Dan Gosling (Plymouth Argyle) and Aston Villa's Ashley Young (Watford).

Away from the pitch, The Football League Trust is also helping clubs to build on their commitment to their local communities. This includes new incentivised funding arrangements that will see clubs with more developed community programmes receiving a greater share of central funding.

Already, 66 of The League's 72 clubs have been awarded bronze status, entitling them to a grant of £24,000 as part of £1.72 million being pledged by



The Football League Trust towards community schemes across the country. Further announcements later in the year will confirm which clubs have achieved silver and gold status, with further funding being provided at each level.

The Football League Trust is also developing a number of national community projects to be delivered locally by community programmes at League clubs. These include, for example, the healthy eating initiative 'Fit for Football' and diversity project SCARF (Schools, Citizenship, Anti-racism & Football).

The most recently announced project is a new partnership with the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. So far, 17 clubs have been accredited to deliver the award, with the aim being to double this number next season.

Dave Edmundson, General Manager of The Football League Trust, said: "This is an innovative and ground-breaking partnership for both ourselves and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. As a result, more young people will be engaged in the Award thanks to the power of football and, in turn, communities will feel benefit through the contribution made by these young people."

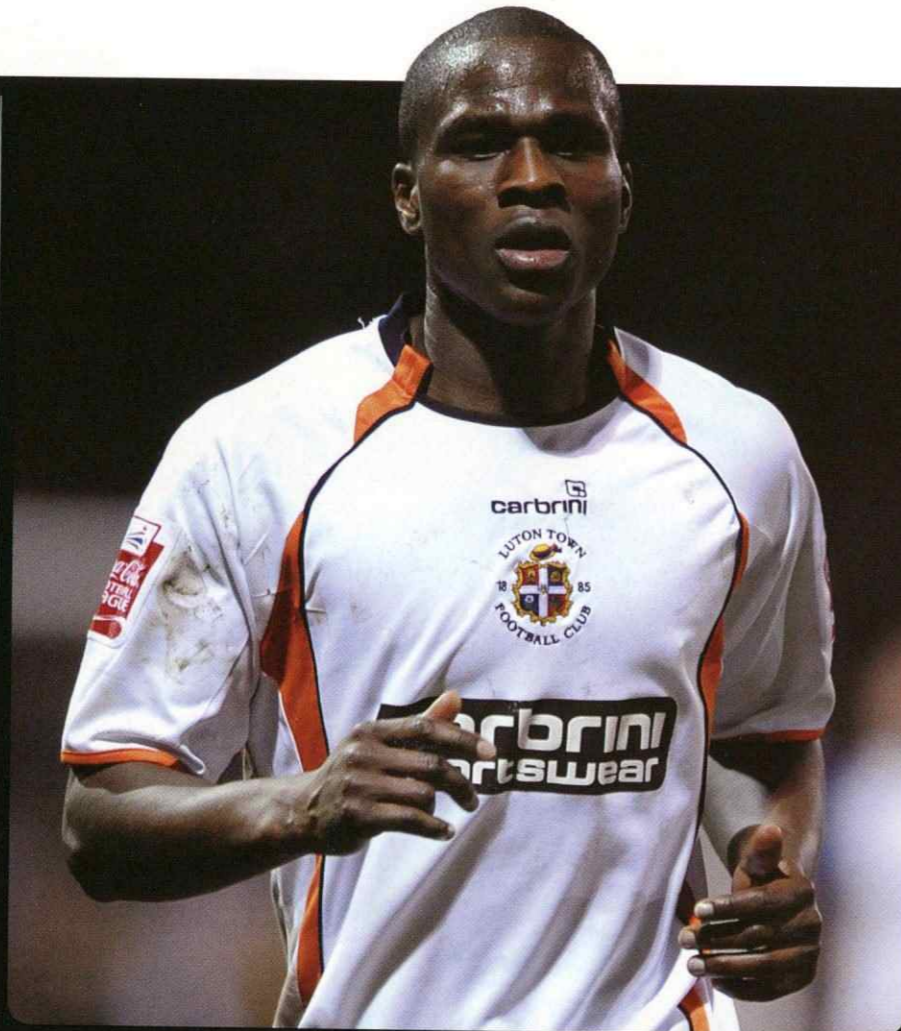
"We will also be getting professional players down to the estates to give away match tickets, which will be a great incentive for youngsters to get involved."*

Luton to Wembley may only be 31 miles on the map but Claude Gnakpa, the Hatters' attacking full-back, has taken the long road to today's showpiece occasion.

Since leaving his home town Marseille as a 14-year-old with dreams of becoming a footballer, Gnakpa's journey has included four different countries, taking him across the Pyrenees, the Alps and finally the Channel for his arrival in English football in 2007. Little wonder the 25-year-old Frenchman is moved to utter "Ooh, la, la" as he looks forward to his first trip to Wembley.

"A good day" is what he envisages but first the route there. It started at the "football school at Montpellier" where Gnakpa spent four formative years having said goodbye to his family home and bedroom with a picture of Chris Waddle – a boyhood hero of this Olympique Marseille fan – on the wall. "It was a very important experience, I was far from my family and I grew up a lot there," he recalls. Thus began a learning curve that continued with his transfer to Spanish club Racing Santander.

"The lesson was to keep the ball," he said of life in Santander. "Technically I learned a lot and tactically, too. It is very different from in England. Here when you have the ball in defence, the strikers press you. In Spain, when you receive the ball the striker puts no pressure on you but then you give the ball to the midfield and suddenly the game speeds up and it is quicker."



On Claude Nine

CLAUDE GNAKPA HAS CLOCKED UP THE MILES ON THE ROAD TO WEMBLEY

WORDS SIMON HART, NEWS OF THE WORLD

At Racing he counted Liverpool's Yossi Benayoun among his team-mates and tasted European football in the 2003 Intertoto Cup. "I spent two great seasons there but most of my time I was on the bench so I moved on to Deportivo Alaves. But I was young and inexperienced and there were a lot of players in front of me again so I played mainly with the reserves."

After Alaves' relegation, he accepted a move to the Swiss second division with Vaduz, a club from the tiny principality of Liechtenstein but "it was not what I was looking for". Hence his landing in England where after a short stop at Swindon Town he enjoyed a successful trial with Peterborough United – the cue for a productive 2007/08 campaign which brought 28 league appearances as Posh won promotion from League 2.

A failure to agree a new contract

"LEAVING MY HOME FOR RACING SANTANDER AS A YOUNG PLAYER WAS A VERY IMPORTANT EXPERIENCE. I WAS FAR FROM MY FAMILY AND I GREW UP A LOT THERE. TECHNICALLY I LEARNED A LOT AND TACTICALLY, TOO"

prompted last summer's switch to Kenilworth Road. "It was difficult because I was happy with the fans, the manager, the players but the offer they gave me was not what I thought I should get." From high-flying Posh to a guaranteed uphill battle with a Luton Town side who kicked off the campaign with a 30-point deficit. Yet Gnakpa believes things are finally

looking up for Mick Harford's men. "We had a lot of problems to build a team at the start of the season, now the team are ready," he said.

Playing wide, either at full-back or in midfield, he looks to use his pace to get forward and provide crosses just as Waddle – who ranks alongside Basile Boli and Jean-Pierre Papin as an all-time favourite for the former Stade Velodrome regular – used to. "Sometimes when I am on the team coach, I look for their result on my mobile and start to sing the Marseille songs."

Luton fans will be hoping to hear him in good voice at the final whistle today. ★

CLAUDE GNAKPA
 POSITION MIDFIELDER D.O.B 09/06/1983
 2008/09 APPS 35 2008/09 GOALS 2
 SIGNED JULY 2008
 NATIONALITY FRENCH

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McCann he kick it?

YES HE CAN! IRON FANS ARE SEEING THE BEST OF GRANT McCANN

WORDS LAWRIE MADDEN

Grant McCann is planning on a week to remember, culminating in his first appearance at Wembley today. It is a busy time for the ever-present Scunthorpe midfielder who hopes to have been on World Cup duty with Northern Ireland in their two home games with Poland and Slovenia before flying back to link-up with his teammates to prepare for this afternoon's showpiece.

Victory over Luton would be the latest upturn in a roller-coaster career that has seen McCann enjoy his fair share of highs and lows. The highs include signing for West Ham United and playing alongside the likes of Joe Cole and Michael Carrick.

The lows have been just as significant for the 28-year-old and include those times when he has been omitted from Ireland squads and when he found it difficult to settle at previous club Barnsley. "I didn't do as well at Barnsley as I should have done and I was disappointed with my form," he says.

Reflecting on the good and bad times as he looks ahead to displaying his ball-playing skills on the hallowed turf, McCann adds: "Wembley

is something you will remember for the rest of your life and you don't want to flop on the big stage. As a kid I played for Lisburn youth in Belfast alongside Aaron Hughes, David Healy and Gareth McAuley. Harry Redknapp was there watching one day and contacted Aaron and me to come over to West Ham.

"I went to Upton Park but Aaron chose to go to Newcastle instead. It was hard at West Ham, competing for a place in central midfield with Carrick and Cole. When Glenn Roeder came in as Redknapp's replacement in May 2001 I played the first five or six games of the next season but then I scored an own goal in a game at Blackburn which we lost 7-1. It was a freak, a cross came in and I swung my left foot at it and missed. It hit my right foot and flew into the top corner. You couldn't do it again if you tried."

But since then, the Belfast-born player, who after a couple of loan spells, signed a permanent

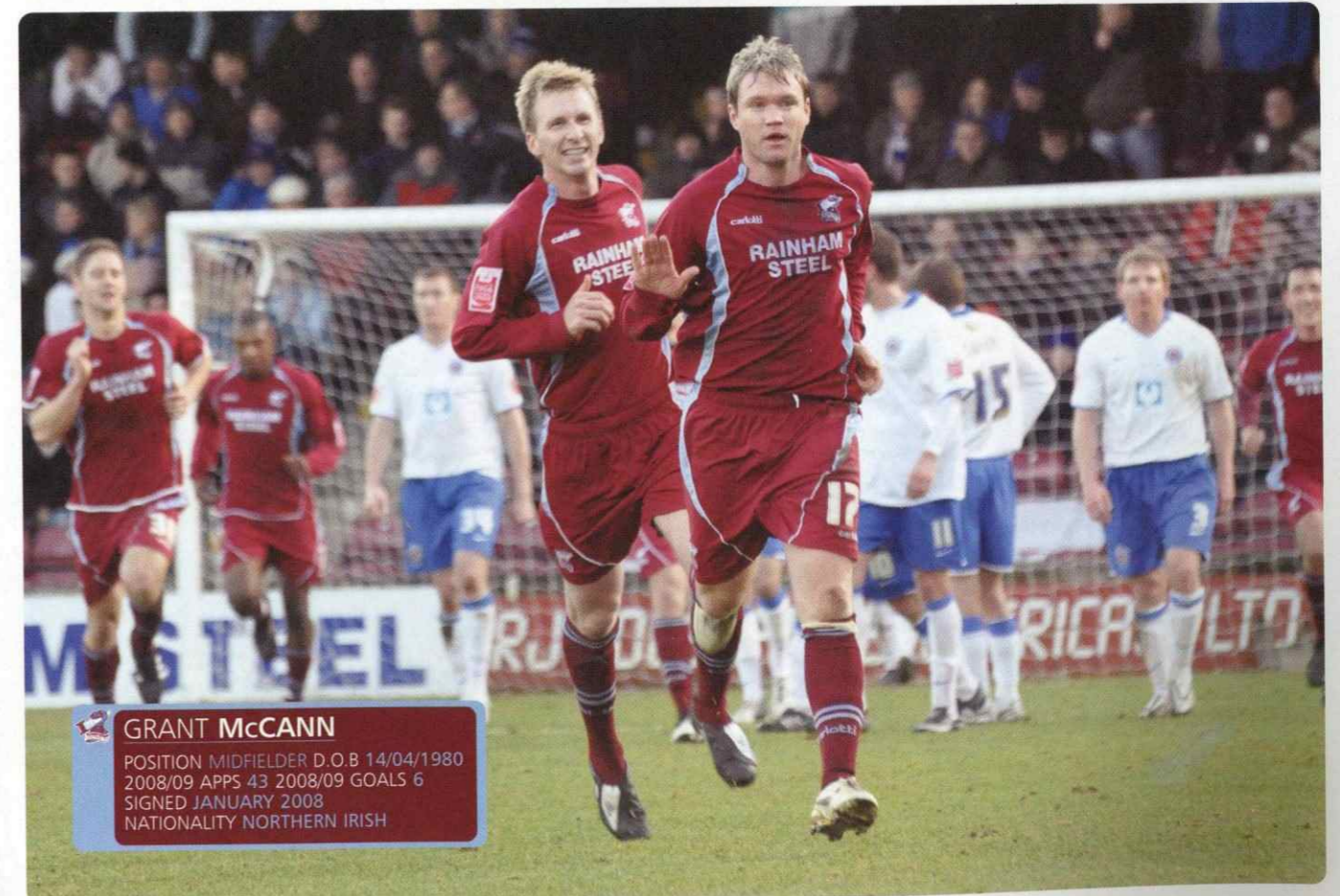
deal with Cheltenham in 2003, later helping them to success in the League 2 Play-Off Final at the Millennium Stadium in 2006, has proved adept at scoring at the right end of the pitch. This season he reached a total of seven by the middle of March - all of them free-kicks.

Splendid goals have become somewhat of a forte for McCann, as he explains: "For some reason tap-ins don't come my way. I always look at where the keeper is when I take a free-kick. It can be difficult if the wall creeps closer but as long as I can hit the target I fancy myself scoring."

He believes he can be influential again today. "The game will be won and lost in midfield. Both teams have good strikers

and it's up to the midfielders to supply them. It's a big pitch, which hopefully will suit us because we get the ball down and pass it around and we have pace in the side. We will probably go into the game as favourites but Luton have done well this year and it's a cup final, so anyone can win on the day."★

"WE WILL REMEMBER THIS DAY FOR THE REST OF OUR LIVES. YOU DON'T WANT TO FLOP ON THE BIG STAGE"



GRANT McCANN
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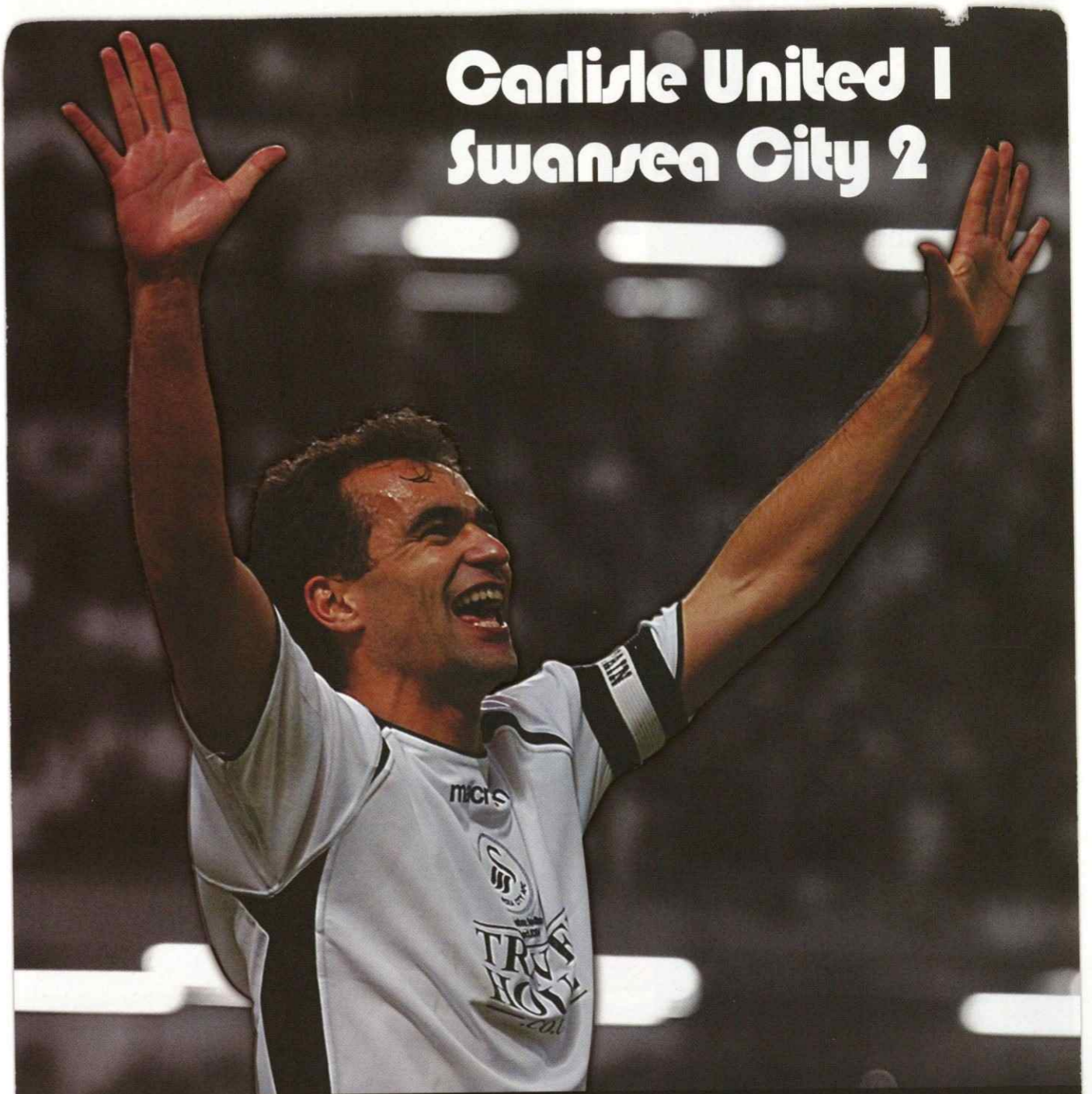
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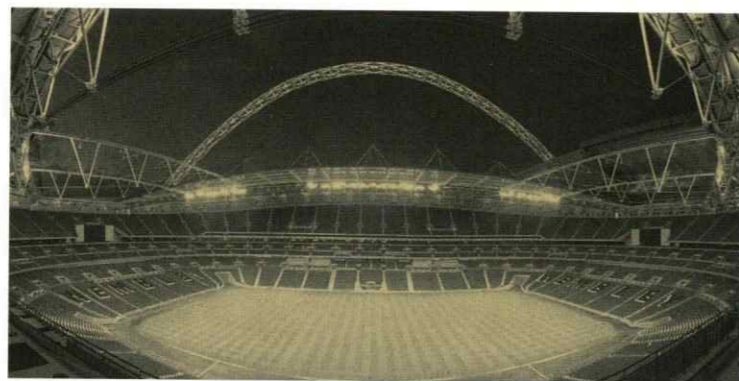
First and foremost, it's a big football occasion and it's a final you want to get into. You're still in the middle of the season and you have your aims in the league but it's a day you can really go out and enjoy. The fans feel the same way as well, it's a great day out for them. And it's a unique experience that can only help as you try and push on in the league.

I came on as a substitute that day, having played in every round, and enjoyed every minute on the pitch and to be part of a winning side is always a great feeling. The match was a tight affair and after we took an early lead, Carlisle equalised just before half-time. We managed to score a late winner

through Adebayo Akinfenwa though and I think it could be the same this time around today – a closely fought encounter. Scunthorpe and Luton are in different divisions as the teams were in 2006 and we had to work very hard for the trophy. The division status will count for nothing on the day.

The fact that it was in Cardiff was great for us as well. It's the Welsh capital and it was nice to go back to Swansea with the trophy. The fans enjoyed winning some silverware in Cardiff and it was a special day all round. It will always be remembered fondly here and will forever be a part of this football club. To make history is always magical and occasions like this enable you to do that.

Road to Wembley



ROUND ONE SOUTHERN SECTION

Aldershot Town 2-2 Swindon Town
(Swindon win 7-6 on penalties)
Bournemouth 3-0 Bristol Rovers
Brentford 2-2 Yeovil Town
(Brentford win 4-2 on penalties)
Dagenham & Redbridge 4-2 Barnet
Exeter City 1-2 Shrewsbury Town
Millwall 0-1 Colchester United
Northampton Town 0-1 Brighton & Hove Albion
Southend United 2-4 Leyton Orient

NORTHERN SECTION

Chesterfield Town 2-2 Grimsby Town
(Grimsby win 4-1 on penalties)
Crewe Alexandra 3-0 Macclesfield Town
Hartlepool United 0-3 Leicester City
Leeds United 2-1 Bradford City
Oldham Athletic 1-1 Morecambe
(Morecambe win 5-4 on penalties)

Scunthorpe United 2-1 Notts County
Team: Lillis; Byrne, Pearce, Mirfin (Hooper 81),
Williams (Lea 90); Sparrow, Morris,
McCann (Forte 67), Woolford; Hayes, May
Goals: Hayes 90, 90+2

Stockport County 1-0 Port Vale
Tranmere Rovers 1-0 Accrington Stanley

ROUND TWO SOUTHERN SECTION

Brighton & Hove Albion 2-2 Leyton Orient
(Brighton win 5-4 on penalties)
Cheltenham Town 1-2 Walsall
Gillingham 0-1 Colchester United
Hereford United 1-2 Swindon Town

Luton Town 2-2 Brentford
Team: Logan; Asafu-Adjaye (Plummer 46),
Spillane, Worley, Howells; Gnakpa, O'Connor
(McVeigh 88), Hall, Jarvis; Charles (Sinclair 72),
Martin.
Goals: Hall 39, Martin 55
(Luton win 4-3 on penalties)

Milton Keynes Dons 0-1 Bournemouth
Peterborough United 0-1 Dagenham & Redbridge
Wycombe Wanderers 0-7 Shrewsbury Town

NORTHERN SECTION

Bury 1-0 Stockport County
Chester City 1-1 Morecambe
(Morecambe win 3-1 on penalties)
Darlington 1-0 Huddersfield Town
Rochdale 2-2 Carlisle United
(Rochdale win 4-3 on penalties)
Rotherham United 4-2 Leeds United

Scunthorpe United 2-1 Grimsby Town
Team: Lillis; Byrne, Crosby, Mirfin,
Williams; Sparrow, Togwell, Morris, Woolford
(Forte 81); Hayes, Hooper (May 90)
Goals: Togwell 38, Morris 42

Tranmere Rovers 1-0 Crewe Alexandra

AREA QUARTER-FINALS

SOUTHERN SECTION

Bournemouth 0-1 Colchester United
Brighton & Hove Albion 2-0 Swindon Town
Shrewsbury Town 5-0 Dagenham & Redbridge
Walsall 0-1 Luton Town
Team: Logan; Gnakpa, Roper (Worley 53), Bevan,
Howells (O'Connor 46); Jarvis, Keane, Spillane,
McVeigh; Martin, Craddock (Watson 90).
Goal: Jarvis 90

NORTHERN SECTION

Darlington 1-0 Bury
Rotherham United 2-0 Leicester City
Scunthorpe United 1-0 Rochdale
Team: Murphy; Byrne, Mirfin, Iriekpen, Lea; Sparrow,
Togwell (Morris 67), McCann, Woolford; Hayes (May 67), Forte (Hurst 72)
Goal: Mirfin 90

Tranmere Rovers 1-0 Morecambe

AREA SEMI-FINALS

SOUTHERN SECTION

Luton Town 1-0 Colchester United
Team: Logan; Asafu-Adjaye, Roper, Spillane, Howells; Gnakpa,
Keane (Bevan 26), Hall, Jarvis; Talbot (Martin 75), Andrews (McVeigh 87)
Goal: Gnakpa 29

Shrewsbury Town 0-0 Brighton & Hove Albion
(Brighton win 5-4 on penalties)

NORTHERN SECTION

Rotherham United 1-1 Darlington
(Rotherham win 4-2 on penalties)
Scunthorpe United 2 Tranmere Rovers 1
Team: Murphy; Wright, Crosby (Pearce 62), Byrne, Williams; Thompson,
Sparrow, Morris, Togwell (Hayes 90); Woolford, May
Goals: May 26, Hayes 90

AREA FINALS

SOUTHERN SECTION

First leg
Brighton & Hove Albion 0-0 Luton Town
Team: Logan; Gnakpa, Davis, Asafu-Adjaye, Spillane; Keane, Hall, Jarvis,
Martin; Talbot (Parkin 86), McVeigh (Howells 76)

Second leg

Luton Town 1-1 Brighton & Hove Albion
Team: Price; Gnakpa, Roper (Hall 25), Spillane (Howells 64),
Davis (Charles 84); Jarvis, Keane, Asafu-Adjaye, Martin; Parkin, Craddock.
Goal: Craddock 2
(Aggregate 1-1, Luton win 4-3 on penalties)

NORTHERN SECTION

First leg
Scunthorpe United 2-0 Rotherham United
Team: Murphy; Byrne, Mirfin, Pearce, Williams; Thompson, Sparrow,
Wright, Woolford; Hayes (Morris 90), Hooper (Forte 81)
Goals: Woolford 60, Pearce 67

Second leg

Rotherham United 0-1 Scunthorpe United
Team: Murphy; Byrne, Pearce, Mirfin, Wright; Thompson (Sparrow 71), Togwell,
McCann, Woolford; Hayes (Morris 86), Hooper (Lansbury 84)
Goal: Hooper 74
(Scunthorpe win 3-0 on aggregate)

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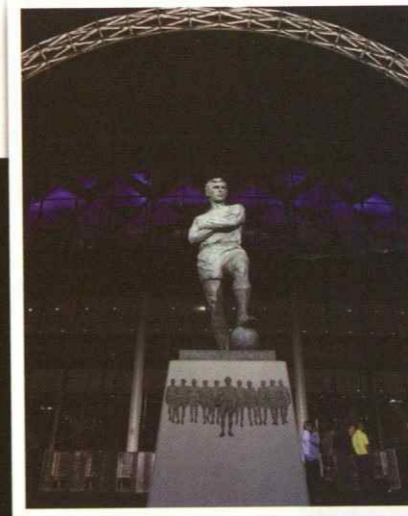
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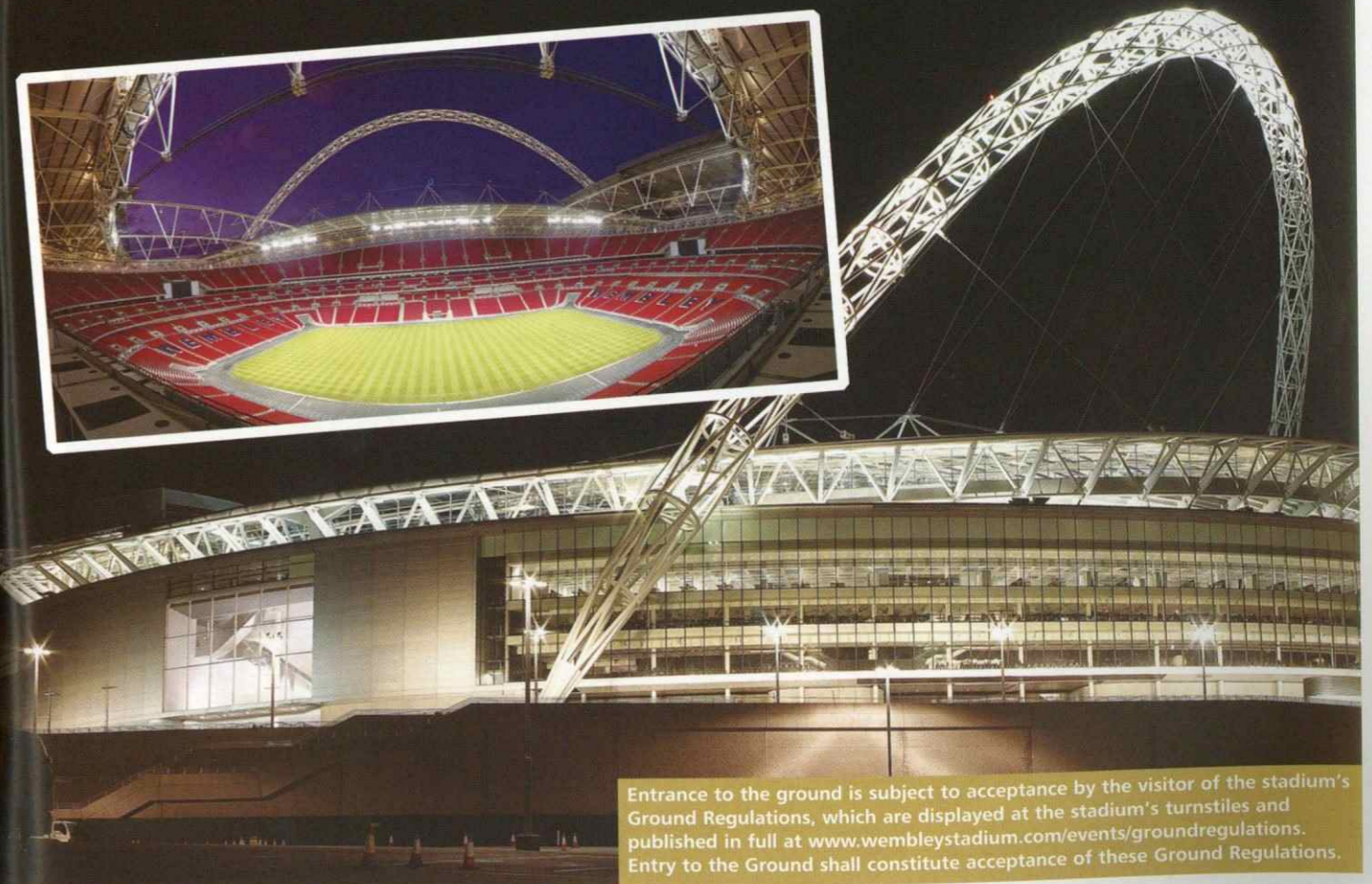
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- 3 Sol Davis
- 4 Keith Keane
- 5 Ian Roper
- 6 George Pilkington
- 7 Ian Henderson
- 8 Kevin Nicholls
- 9 Sam Parkin
- 11 Lewis Emanuel
- 12 Akanni-Sunday Wasiu
- 14 Asa Hall
- 15 Ed Asafu-Adjaye
- 16 Rossi Jarvis
- 18 Chris Martin
- 20 Michael Spillane
- 22 Mark Bower
- 24 Tom Craddock
- 25 George Beavan
- 27 Dean Morgan
- 28 Paul McVeigh
- 29 Jordan Patrick
- 30 Mark Farthing
- 32 Kevin Gallen
- 33 Jake Howells
- 35 David Button
- 36 Aaron Fletcher
- 40 Scott Sinclair

SCUNTHORPE UNITED

MANAGER
NIGEL ADKINS

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- 2 Kenny Milne
- 3 Marcus Williams
- 4 Andy Crosby
- 5 Joseph Mills
- 6 Cliff Byrne
- 7 Matt Sparrow
- 8 Garry Thompson
- 9 Paul Hayes
- 10 Gary Hooper
- 11 Ian Baraclough
- 14 Michael Lea
- 15 David Mirfin
- 16 Martyn Woolford
- 17 Grant McCann
- 18 Sam Togwell
- 19 Jonathan Forte
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