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By Hatters for Hatters



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## hatters matters

... a word from the editor

AND so another crisis engulfs Kenilworth Road.

Already out of the FA Trophy at the semi-final stage, our nailed-on play-off hopes have now faded and we face a real fight to even make sure we finish in the top five.

Stolid performances and an inability to score goals are proving costly and manager Gary Brabin is under real pressure to get a result against bogey side York City this evening.

Currently we are out of the play-offs for the first time since December and, although we have games in hand, are we truly confident that those games will bring



**UNDER-FIRE:** Luton Town boss Gary Brabin

the result we need?

This is the business end of the season and now we must start performing – starting this evening against the Minstermen.

Anything less than victory could leave us in deep trouble. Hopefully

we do at least now have a cutting edge in the form of Andre Gray.

Having impressed for Hinckley against the Hatters he made a goalscoring debut against Grimsby.

A la Phil, let's hope for another famous Gray.



Life at Luton Town is never dull. So why not send us your views on the Hatters by emailing

**[orange@bedsnews.com](mailto:orange@bedsnews.com)**

The best messages will be featured in this fanzine or the letters pages of the Luton News/Dunstable Gazette

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With special thanks to Gareth Owen

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## Odds on

by Graham  
Sharpe, Media  
Relations Director,  
William Hill.

William HILL  
ONLINE

I'VE been having an interesting week.

And Tuesday was quite a significant day in my life as it was an almost incredible FORTY years to the day I had first walked into a William Hill betting shop to start work as the guy who wrote the race runners up on the shop whiteboard (at which point I had been a Luton Town supporter for 13 years and counting).

I've managed to survive in the very hostile, competitive world of book-maker public relations for almost a third of a century, so I do understand something about the pressures which come with a high-profile position.

One of my first tasks each day is to send out some tweets and since the Great Forest Green humiliation I have been pointing out each successive disaster to befall us.

I had lunch on Tuesday with Bruce Millington, editor of the Racing Post, and a Crystal Palace fan, who asked me "Why can't your mob get out of the Conference?"

That evening, of course, I realised we had slipped out of the play-off positions as York won at Bath.

I had been at the Grimsby game and wondered yet again at our propensity for failing to hold on to a lead, failing to kill off teams, failing to make logical substitutions, failure to play specialist players in their specialist positions, failure to drop anyone with any remote connection to Cambridge United, and why Gary Brabin decided it would be a good idea to walk over to applaud the home fans after the game.

Especially when all of those fans had recently read the coruscating criticism of said manager in that day's programme, yet seen precious little in the previous couple of hours to suggest it was unwarranted.

If my boss had written that about me I would have felt I had no option whatsoever but to resign. And if I had followed up that criticism with yet another failure to produce the goods he would undoubtedly have kicked my rear end out of the building.

I do not hold any personal grudge against Gary Brabin. I have never met him. I understand he may suffer short-term financial hardship were he to lose his job. But that risk comes with the territory. Every football manager knows that only too well.

I can't believe that if Gary fails



**TOP MAN: Boss Gary Brabin**

– for the fourth time – to beat York on Friday night, that his own pride could allow him to stay in his job.

The players do not seem to have been 'playing for' him, which is a disgrace in itself, but it happened at Chelsea just before AVB got the chop, and it didn't do them much harm to change personnel. However, getting rid of Mick McCarthy was hardly positive for Wolves, so there are pros and cons to replacing a manager.

We could still fluke a play-off place – the arrival of our latest (seventh, eighth, ninth?) striking prospect, Andre Gray just might be the catalyst we need – but then he did score on his debut and the rest of the squad still couldn't respond to close it out.

The other thing that happened on Tuesday night was that there was one hell of a bust-up after the game between Bradford and Crawley Town, with players being sent off left, right and centre. It even made the BBC Radio 4 news – with the newsreader commenting that Crawley manager Steve Evans 'played the incident down'.

No, I don't think I would like my club run in the way Mr Evans seems to specialise in running his own.

But it cannot be denied that, as so often in a game in which the opposition has been thoroughly wound up, Mr Evans and his men walked off with all three points.

But do you think we could bear just one season in which we play nasty, yet still achieve escape from this hell-hole of a division? In which we become pretty unpopular yet still end up being promoted? Like we were under BFJ? Yes.

## Hatters chat

This month with Town winger Robbie Willmott

> **Q.** Whats your favourite goal you've scored for Luton?

> *My favourite goal is last season against Kiddie, the free-kick.*

> **Q.** Realistically, where do you see Luton finishing this season?

> *I see us finishing third and hopefully a strong finish to win the play-offs.*

> **Q.** How many pairs of socks do you own?

> *Erm just a normal amount of socks.*

> **Q.** What has been your best game in a Luton shirt?

> *My best game was probably against Eastbourne last season.*

> **Q.** Who is the biggest prankster in the dressing room?

> *Biggest prankster is prob-*

*ably Danny Crow.*

> **Q.** Were you the best player at school when you were younger?

> *I wasn't the best player at school there a few better, but never made it to a high level*

> **Q.** Which player has the worst car at the club?

> *Curtis Osano has a bright yellow MG which is held together by tape!*

> **Q.** Who's been the biggest influence on your career?

> *My dad has been my biggest influence on my career, he has stuck by me through everything.*

> **Q.** If you could sign one player for Luton who would it be?

> *I would probably sign the Brazilian Ronaldo when he was in his prime.*

HTO bullies a Luton Town player into answering questions from Hatters fans. Why not follow @LutonNews\_LTFC on Twitter for the chance to put your own question to next month's victim



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14 pts  
mark wood

22 pts  
steve sims

18 pts  
mike simmonds

16 pts  
steve nolan

Town 1 York 0  
Statistically we must, surely, at long last, finally be due to put one over the Minstermen?

Town 1 York 2  
Shot-shy Town fall to defeat before an audience of seven watching the match on Premier Sports.

Town 1 York 2  
Hatters fail to win against one of the top clubs once more as York continue their hoodoo.

Town 0 York 0  
Never many goals in these clashes and this could be a real switch-off for TV viewers.

Gateshead 0 Town 0  
We have not travelled well this season and we will need to show grit and determination.

Gateshead 1 Town 2  
Another vital game in the play-off race. The gloom is lifted with a late winner by sub Fleetwood.

Gateshead 2 Town 0  
More away day blues for the Hatters as Jon Shaw bags a brace in this defeat.

Gateshead 1 Town 1  
A ding-dong battle where Town edge ahead before Jon Shaw makes us pay with a leveller.

Braintree 1 Town 2  
Tricky tie, but this is the type of game we have to win if we are going to make the play-offs.

Braintree 1 Town 1  
How many slip-ups can we afford before we miss out on the play-offs altogether?

Braintree 1 Town 1  
Luton have struggled away from home all season and they pick up just a point here.

Braintree 0 Town 2  
Roared on by a big Town following, the only way is Essex when you want an away win.

Town 3 Hayes 0  
Not as emphatic as we may have hoped for but another victory helps to ease the worries away.

Town 3 Hayes 0  
Finally a convincing three points. Is the confidence returning ready for the final push?

Town 2 Hayes 0  
A nervy affair once more but Hatters get back to winning ways by beating the strugglers.

Town 2 Hayes 0  
At least we're getting a few goals, even if the entertainment level is slightly lacking.

it's 1pt for a right result and 2pts for a precise score  
our survey says...



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With Paul Stewart

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# What a beauty!

## Elizabeth

### VITAL STATISTICS

Full name: Elizabeth Haruna

Age: 27

Occupation: Deputy Housing  
Manager / Model

Attached? Yes

Been a supporter since: 1998

Best looking Hatter:

James Dance

Most valuable player:

Keith Keane

Ideal night out: An evening  
out at the theatre in London,  
fashion show parties, the  
movies...

Favourite TV shows:

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Malcolm in the Middle, The  
Simpsons

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# Tom's take



Tom Skinner  
gives his thoughts  
on the latest  
Hatters news

WHILE on the pitch drama has been in short supply this season, things usually get a bit tasty when York City are the opposition.

Going back, there was that infamous game at Bootham Crescent when Steve Howard publicly disobeyed Joe Kinnear's orders not to retake a penalty, promptly missed again and was then substituted in disgrace.

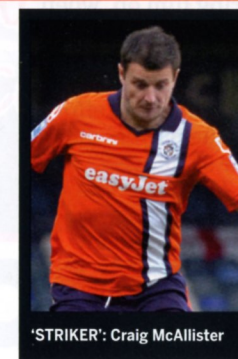
Two games later, Howie bagged his first of the season against Torquay, and never looked back, going on to score over 100 goals for the Town to become a club legend.

If only Craig McAllister could undergo a similar transformation. Now Fernando Torres has found the net again surely anything is possible?

Unfortunately, the majority of our recent experiences of York have been painful, with the latest nightmare instalment a last-gasp FA Trophy exit costing the club £250,000.

It was encouraging to see the players' passion – Kovacs whipping up the crowd, Taylor hunched inconsolable at the end – for a trophy of little sporting value.

We need that desire in our remaining



'STRIKER': Craig McAllister

league games and to use the hurt of defeat to spur us on to do better.

We've fallen well short of the points tally and form that Luton fans rightly expected for this season. The board seem to feel

that the situation is not serious enough to warrant making changes.

Yet if the supporters aren't to become disillusioned and apathetic, we need to start seeing more of a bullish refusal to accept mediocrity, to remember that Luton Town still get double, in most cases triple, the gates of any club in this league and that we must get a better return on this income.

Every game is huge now, so we've got to put our heart and soul into urging the team on – the promised land may seem far away, but where there's a will, there's a way.



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# From the Kenny End



With Petey Staniforth

I'M writing this month's column the day after the FA Trophy semi-final.

I've been very disappointed, and to be honest, disgusted to read late last night on Twitter, certain fans had been criticising and abusing the players.

One thing that has to be said is that the team had put in a great performance. Despite a very questionable substitution made by the manager in the second half (i.e. why didn't Adam Watkins start the game, and why take off a striker to

bring him on, when we are chasing for a winning goal?) any true Luton fan appreciated the efforts of the players during the 90 minutes.

The behaviour of York's keeper, when the whistle blew – which involved literally running up to Robbie Willmott's face, and shouting/laughing at him – is something I personally want to call out publicly, and say is ridiculously, unprofessional, and completely unjustified.

But, you'll be reading this column on a night that could well

make or break our season. I hope that it will be the former, and that we do what we know we are capable of, and that is securing our play-off spot, and getting back into the league.

These are the nights, and the games, that bring the players and the fans together and make us bond even closer.

It also has to be said, is there any other goalkeeper in the world that we would want to be between the sticks for us right now other than Mark Tyler? He has been simply incredible in

recent weeks, and if we do get promoted so much credit must go to our 'number one'.

Tonight, though, it's time to stand up, to step up, and put it all on the line.

Rather like in the business I work in, when the lights are bright, and it's time to perform you may be nervous beforehand, but when you're out there, there's no better feeling in the world.

So let's get behind the players, and show them we appreciate them!

*Take it easy,  
Petey*



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Date	Day	Destination	Adult	Conc.	Child	Depart
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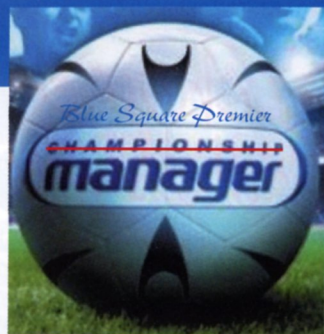
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If Half-time Orange's Steve Nolan was in charge of the team, this is what he'd do.



### Steve's line-up for today



SUBS: O'Connor, Lawless, Kissock, Crow, Blackett

CAN we beat York and end their recent hoodoo over the mighty Hatters?

I'm going to stick my neck out and say 'yes', but it's going to be another incredibly tight game – almost as tight as 2020 when we clearly should have paid a little bit extra to bag goal machine Jon Shaw from Gateshead earlier this year.

As for the line-up, the easiest decisions are Tyler in goal and the centre-half pairing of Kovacs and Pilks.

Assuming Greg Taylor is fit he'll slot in at left-back allowing Jake to push on from left midfield.

Right-back, well that's a tricky one, but it goes to Curtis Osano by virtue of being the last man standing.

Adam Watkins has had his obligatory rest, so can come

out firing to take the game to York and I'd partner Keano alongside him, with Lawless, who simply seems to try too hard against his former club, having to settle for a place on the bench.

With the need for a little width, and with Robbie Willmott blowing hot and cold, I'd give Charlie Henry the chance to attack down the right.

That just leaves the striking berths and to be honest there doesn't seem to be much to choose between our 'attackers'.

Given our tendency to boot it long when we face a tough battle I'll stick goal machine Craig McAllister up-top, partnered initially by Stuart Fleetwood.

But if either fails to produce the goods, I'd hoick one off by 55 minutes and give the raw-looking Andre Gray a run out.

# From beyond these shores

Roger Wash goes globetrotting to feature players born across the world who found their way to Hatters



STAR: Bontcho in the stripes of Luton!

## Bontcho Lubomisov Guentchev

BORN in General Toshevo, Bulgaria, in July 1964, Bontcho Guentchev made his way up through the Bulgarian leagues before, at the age of 27, he signed for Sporting Lisbon in Portugal where he made little impact.

Bontcho then signed for Ipswich for £250,000 to a great fanfare in 1992 and became a cult hero at Portman Road, due to his heroics in helping Bulgaria through to the 1994 World Cup semi-finals, but he often flattered to deceive in the blood and thunder of English football.

Moving to Terry Westley's Luton in 1995 he played in a side doomed to relegation and was often asked to turn out up front when his best position was out wide.

He failed to make an impact in Division Two and was handed a free transfer in 1997.

He then went back to his home country, signing for CSKA Sofia where he netted an amazing 20 times in only 32 league games before returning to England to play for Hendon!

After moving around the London non-league circuit, Bontcho became a coach at Hendon as well as opening a short-lived café in Kensington called Strikers.

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# A Diverse view



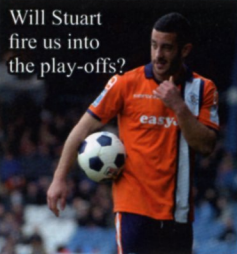
Steve Moore at Diverse FM has his say on all things Hatters

So that Matty Blair goal was the sucker punch.

Hopefully that is one blow that can be put right during the league game tonight.

While in truth, if it is one that we can successfully address then it has worked out relatively well for us as I am sure that most Luton fans will prefer the three points to a Trophy success.

However, that sucker punch is nothing compared to the news that came out not more than an hour-and-a-half after that.



Will Stuart fire us into the play-offs?

As was highlighted by the reactions of all the Hatters players that are on twitter, all things related to the FA Trophy and the play-off push took a reality check when Fabrice Muamba suffered a cardiac arrest.

Writing this 10 days away from this

fanzine coming out, we obviously do not know what the situation will be, as of now though things seem to be taking little steps in a positive direction and I hope things continue in that trend.

Moving back to the situation involving the play-offs though, the numbers of teams in the hunt seem to be narrowing down all the time.

The likes of Cambridge and Barrow are now certainly out of the hunt and of the others ahead of them; Kidderminster and Gateshead seem

to stumble every time they get close to breaking into the race.

It seems to be three from five therefore and with Grimsby having their run seemingly falter while short of the play-offs themselves it is looking more and more like three from four.

The odds are looking stacked in our favour, unless you are a glass quarter empty guy, because of the favourable run-in we have after Gateshead, but we need to improve if we are to capitalise.

# from the allotments

...with 'orrible 'ornet Don Monty



SO the end of season draws near. Soon we'll be wondering what to do with the lack of football to watch on a Saturday, although rumour has it you've been wondering that for some time already.

Mid-table obscurity beckons – no, not you, us.

Well, at the time of writing we still dream of play-off glory, we're now actually far closer to the top six than the bottom three.

Would we really want to go up?

You bet, but it

would be painful to watch.

Luckily we finished bottom the last two times we went up into the Premier League world so we couldn't do any worse than that.

But bear in mind we have one of the cheapest, if not THE cheapest, squads in the division and that's why we'll take top half with open arms.

However, I confess it does get a bit boring. Every league game since February has been pretty meaningless,

we were cruelly dumped out the FA Cup, and the League Cup as we all know has always been a meaningless piece of mantelpiece tat.

At least a relegation scrap has a sense of urgency about it – 16th placed Watford home to 15th placed Ipswich should mean seats available in all parts (or three sides anyway).

I sense you're not feeling quite the same love for a top half finish, and a midweek defeat at Melchester Forest

Rovers or whoever they are a week or so ago won't have helped morale.

Still, if you do make the play-offs – and I'm sure you will – it can't possibly be worse than the last two attempts.

And perhaps going into them off the pace may serve you better than the last two times.

What am I doing handing out hope and optimism?

I told you it was boring in mid-table.

Glory Horns.

**Alfie John Robinson**  
Happy 1st Birthday  
23rd March 2012  
Enjoy your birthday and your christening  
we all love you very Much!

Mummy, Daddy, Nanny Williams, Grandad Williams, Nanny Robinson and Grandad Robinson.  
Aunties, Kelly, Jo, Claire and Tracey, Uncles, Dave, Ian, Matthew and Iain. Cousins Cameron and Ellie.  
Cissy and the south Wales family  
Dee, Gary, Ella & Amy,  
The Harrison's Mich, Lee and Imogen  
Debbie, Emma and all the Girls!!!  
And everyone from the Herald & Post and Fanzine Team!!!

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