

CHAMPIONSHIP SPECIAL



Glory,
glory
Hatters



12
page

Luton News
Dunstable Gazette
**souvenir
pull-out**

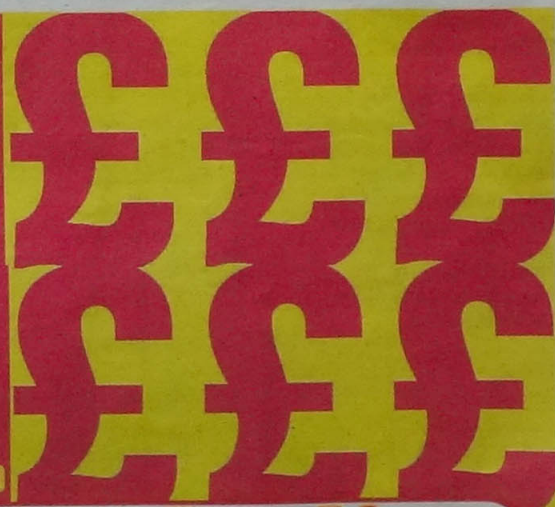
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WHO'S THE MAN: Enoch Showunmi plays it cool with Kevin Foley and Rowan Vine after hitting a late winner in the 2-1 success at Bristol City that prompted the first serious talk of promotion.

HATTERS will be playing Championship football next season after clinching promotion with four games to spare and securing the title on Saturday.

Today, we salute Mike Newell's boys with a 12-page Championship souvenir pull-out to celebrate a magnificent season.

Hatters deserve nothing less than the League One trophy after leading the way for all but two weeks after topping the table from Saturday, August 21. Here's how Newell's heroes did it...

AUGUST: Hatters lined up without 2003-04 Player of the Year Emmerson Boyce, Matt Spring and Adrian Forbes who moved to Crystal Palace, Leeds and Swansea respectively.

Danish keeper Morten Hyldgaard was released but in came Marlon Beresford, after impressing during three months at Hatters the previous campaign. Slovenian stopper Dino Seremet also signed on a two-year deal.

Strikers Rowan Vine and Matthew Blinkhorn arrived on loan from Portsmouth and Blackpool while Paul Underwood was as good as a new signing after recovering from injury.

Hatters warmed up with a glamorous pre-season friendly at Kenilworth Road against Dutch champions Ajax and the star-studded visitors won 4-0.

But the Amsterdam side's class clearly rubbed off on Luton as Town made a blistering start to the season. Underwood put one over his old boss Brian Talbot as he got the winner in a 2-1 victory over Oldham on the opening day.

High scoring away successes followed at Swindon (3-2) and Barnsley (4-3) before Luton went top of the pile with their fourth win on the trot over Torquay (1-0), marking the club's best-ever winning start to a season.

Town ended the month with an incredible 18 points from 18 after a 3-1 win at Blackpool that saw Luton fans evacuated after the collapse of a temporary stand, and a 1-0 win over Bournemouth.

Newell was voted League One manager of the month and Steve Howard the Powerade League One player of the month after five goals in five games.

SEPTEMBER: The winning start to the season was halted by a 0-0 draw at Sheffield Wednesday.

And Town suffered their first defeat in all competitions when they went down 4-3 after extra-

Hatters on top from start to the finish...

hatters2004-05

by Andy MacKenzie

time in their re-arranged Carling Cup tie at Boston United, who were missing Paul Gascoigne.

Hatters boss Newell was linked with the vacant manager's job at former club Blackburn Rovers after the departure of Graeme Souness for Newcastle, while teenager Curtis Davies earned glowing reviews from club scouts and national media for his fine early season form.

Vine scored the winner as Luton beat Chesterfield 1-0 to continue at the top.

Ex-Luton loanee Gary McSheffrey returned for another spell at

the Town and appeared as a substitute in Luton's 3-1 win at Stockport. Town scorched nine points clear at the top as Vine and Underwood goals gave Hatters a 2-1 win over Peterborough.

Hatters' second cup defeat came in a 2-0 LDV loss at Swansea where a virtual Luton reserve side faced a Swans team including former Hatter Forbes.

Vine was named the Powerade League One player of the month.

OCTOBER: Luton's unbeaten league run continued at Tranmere where a twice-taken penalty saw Seremet save each kick on his full league debut, only for Ryan Taylor to net from the rebound before Chris Coyne's late headed equaliser rescued a point.

Newell put one over his former club Hartlepool United with a 3-0 Friday night win at Kenilworth Road. McSheffrey made his last loan appearance against Hudders-



SO HIGH: Ahmet Brkovic after his overhead kick against Vale.



ALL SMILES: Paul Underwood, Steve Howard and Steve Robinson celebrate with Rowan Vine after the Pompey loan man scored his first Hatters goal in the 4-3 early season win at Barnsley.

sfield where Underwood's goal couldn't stop Town falling to a first league loss of the season.

Luton then slumped 2-0 to Paul Merson-inspired Walsall and 3-0 at Hull where skipper Kevin Nicholls was sent off.

But Hatters bounced back in style from three defeats on the spin with a super 4-0 home success over Bradford, where Ahmet Brkovic scored a brace including the pick of the four strikes with a spectacular overhead effort.

NOVEMBER: Director of Football Mick Harford shocked all by leaving to join former Hatters boss Joe Kinnear at Nottingham Forest.

But defender Sol Davis lifted the mood by scoring his first professional goal in 229 games for Swindon and Luton as Town stuffed Wrexham 5-1.

Howard scored his first ever Luton FA Cup goals as Hatters won 3-0 at Southend live on Sky.

Steve Robinson underwent hernia surgery after the game. A protest from Town fans against 'franchise football' couldn't detract from a super 4-1 Luton win against MK Dons at the National Hockey Stadium where Howard hit a 'perfect' hat-trick.

Hatters' lead at the top of the table was cut to four points at the end of the month after a 1-1 home draw with Doncaster. Curtis Davies won the Powerade Player of the Month award for November making him the third Hatter to pick-up the monthly gong.

DECEMBER: Hatters continued their unbeaten record at Wycombe's Causeway Stadium with a professional 3-0 FA Cup second round win against the Chairboys where in-form Steve Howard hit a brace.

But Howard was then sent off just 17 minutes into Luton's league game at Brentford as Hatters were stung 2-0. Town bounced back by beating Port Vale 1-0 at home thanks to Brkovic's late winner, another spectacular overhead kick.

Luton then showed they could cope without leading scorer Howard as they followed the Valiants win with a super 2-1 success at Bristol City and a 1-0 Boxing Day victory at Chesterfield where Enoch Showunmi scored late winners on each occasion.

Vine's double against his former club only gave the Town a 2-2 home draw with Colchester United, but Luton ended the year still on top of the league and with Newell admitting: "The lads are now beginning to believe they can achieve something here."

JANUARY: A high-tempo New Year's Day game at Kenilworth Road saw Luton draw 1-1 with in-form Sheffield Wednesday.

And a late Howard equaliser gave Town a point at struggling Peterborough after Kevin Nicholls had earlier put Luton ahead.

The game saw a massive 3,590 travelling Town fans journey to London Road - the highest away Luton following since the League Cup game at Aston Villa in October 2002.

But the result also marked Luton dropping off top spot for the first time since heading the table from August 21 as Hull took over.

Town then fell to a disappointing 2-0 home FA Cup loss to Martin Allen's Brentford, but Newell claimed the defeat could be a "blessing in disguise".

Hatters rallied by beating basement side Stockport 3-0 to return to the summit. They ended the month with a 0-0 draw at Colchester and a 1-1 draw with Tranmere to keep the chasing Wirral side at arm's length.

FEBRUARY: Hatters were robbed of three points at Huddersfield when Luke Beckett scored an equaliser in the fifth minute of injury time for the Terriers.

The result made it just one win in seven for Town although they had only lost once in 15 games in the league. And Newell's confidence in his team was justified as Brkovic struck a dramatic 89th minute winner to sink title rivals Hull 1-0 and spark wild scenes at Kenilworth Road.

Town put on one of their performances of the season to inflict a first home league defeat of the season upon Hartlepool in a 3-2 win. Slender wins followed at Bradford and against Walsall, where skipper Nicholls converted a last-minute penalty despite seeing a spot-kick saved at Valley Parade, before Luton then put in

arguably their worst showing of the campaign to slump 3-1 at lowly Port Vale.

But the defeat was only their second league loss in 20 games and they stayed six points clear.

MARCH: Once again Hatters showed their character to respond in style as they thrashed promotion chasing Bristol City 5-0 in a terrific all round display where Nicholls reached double figures in goals for the season and Brkovic hit his 13th and 14th strikes of the campaign.

Harford returned to Kenilworth Road as assistant boss at Swindon, but Town showed no



DELIGHT: Sol Davis celebrates his first ever professional goal.

mercy as they beat the Robins 3-1 to close in on promotion. Howard repeated his act from London Road earlier in the season when a last-gasp leveller gave Hatters a 2-2 draw at relegation haunted Oldham.

After signing Warren Feeney on transfer deadline day, Town suffered stage fright in front of the Sky cameras against Barnsley as they lost 3-1. But they responded in style to thump Torquay 4-1 on Easter Monday.

The win left Luton 13 points clear of Tranmere in third spot and within touching distance of promotion.

APRIL: A hard-earned 1-0 win over Blackpool was followed by a magnificent 1-0 success at Bournemouth where Luton played with 10 men for nearly 70 minutes after the sending off of Russ Perrett before Showunmi grabbed a late winner.

Brentford - Luton's bogey team of the season - did Hatters a favour by beating Tranmere in midweek and sent Town up into the Championship.

Luton scrapped out a 1-0 win over former Hatter Danny Wilson's MK Dons while Hull's 0-0 draw against Swindon handed Town the title advantage.

And Hatters were crowned champions at Wrexham where Davies and Coyne scored in a 2-1 win to spark a party with more than 2,000 travelling fans.



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SKIPPER KEVIN NICHOLLS: My highlight is the Bournemouth game. Going down to 10 men so early on and the emotion at the end of the game after we won was unbelievable. The players and fans knew it was so important. The fans have been magnificent all season and I would like to say a big thank-you personally to the whole squad. It's been a squad effort all season and even the players who haven't featured much have played their part. We're all Championship players now.



STEVE HOWARD: Away to MK Dons and scoring three against our (now) local rivals. The lads' performance and the fans reaction at the end of the game.



CHRIS COYNE: Seeing the ball hit the back of the net at Wrexham and hearing the fans chant '3-0 to Walsall'.



MARLON BERESFORD: Winning at Bournemouth to virtually gain promotion and to play regularly in a successful team.



KEVIN FOLEY: It's our last-minute win against Hull at home. We deserved it. My personal highlight? Scoring my first league goal of the season, against Hartlepool.

Golden moments

A MAGICAL season with lots and lots of golden moments... 20 Hatters players have been talking to the News-Gazette about their favourite moments during the super 2004-05 season...



AHMET BRKOVIC: When I scored my overhead goal against Port Vale because it was the winning strike.



STEVE ROBINSON: That late winner against Hull. It showed our resolve and determination to win.



PETER HOLMES: Beating Bristol City 5-0 at home and scoring a goal. That was a great result.

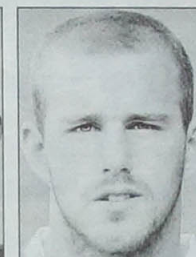


MICHAEL LEARY: The day we knew we were going up. It's such a great achievement by the Hatters.

CHAMPIONSHIP HATTERS 2005



ENOCH SHOWUNMI: Coming on to score against Bournemouth after we had played with 10 men.



ROWAN VINE: My two goals against Colchester and beating Hull, then Bournemouth with 10 men.



KEITH KEANE: Sol Davis' first goal for Luton, along with his funny celebration after he scored it.



STEPHEN O'LEARY: The moment we were promoted and my first goal of the season, v Wrexham.



CURTIS DAVIES: The feeling of scoring my first ever goal at Wrexham and seeing the reaction of the fans behind the goal was unbelievable. It was extra special for me having my mum, my dad and my brother there too.



SOL DAVIS: Getting my first-ever goal... against Wrexham in November.



WARREN FEENEY: Signing for a great club like Luton Town.



PAUL UNDERWOOD: The wins at Bournemouth and Chesterfield showed our resilience.



DINO SEREMET: The 1-1 draw at Trarners was a vital result at the time, also the win at Bournemouth.



ALAN NEILSON: Playing in the 1-0 win over Hull but the whole season has been just superb.



RUSSELL PERRETT: My first game back at Chesterfield after waiting in the wings for so long.

WIN a signed Hatters shirt

THE football season may be entering its final weeks, but there is still time to give your team the chance to Win A Player with Coca-Cola, worth £250,000!

To celebrate half-time in the Coca-Cola 'Win A Player' competition, The News-Gazette has teamed up with Coca-Cola, official sponsors of the Football League, to offer a lucky reader the chance to win a shirt signed by the entire Luton Town squad, plus a case of special promotional cans of Coca-Cola. Hatters' fans have been voting in their thousands to try to 'Win A Player' for the club next season. And the more votes Luton get the more chance they will have of securing the £250k prize fund.

The lucky-dip mechanic used to choose the winner ensures that every fan has a chance of winning. Fans can enter once a day, every day, by simply texting the word **player** followed by the name of their Football League or Scottish Premier League club to 80089 or online, www.coca-colafootball.co.uk

The lucky winner will be picked at random and announced live on Sky Sports at the Coca-Cola Championship play-off final. The winner will also get a personal cheque for £10,000.

Meanwhile, try to win that signed Luton shirt by telling us how much the Coca-Cola 'Win A Player' prize fund is worth? Is it: A £100,000, B £200,000 or C £250,000.

Write your answer, on a postcard or back of a sealed envelope, and send it to: Hatters shirt competition, Sports Desk, News-Gazette, Media House, 39 Upper George Street, Luton, LU1 2RD. Entries by next Wednesday, please.

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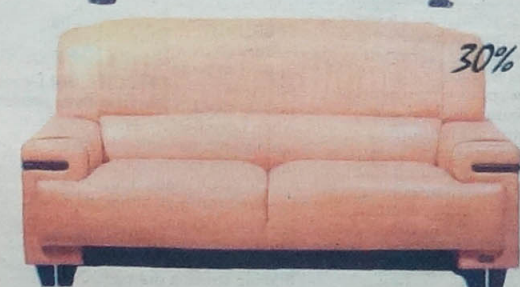
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A Brand New
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A Hatter's Promotion Diary



Caroline Dunn

CHAMPIONSHIP HATTERS 2005

Luton's St George's Day glory in Wales...

HATTERS players celebrate a St George's Day to remember after sealing the Coca-Cola League One with a 2-1 win at Wrexham. Pictured partying on the pitch are, back row, from left to right, Marlon Beresford, Steve Howard, Steve Robinson, Enoch Showunmi, Leon Barnett, Kevin Nicholls, Chris Coyne, Dino Seremet, Kevin Foley, Rowan Vine, Peter Holmes, Warren Feeney, Mike Newell, Sol Davis and Ahmet Brkovic. And front row, left to right, Keith Keane, Calvin Andrew and Curtis Davies. PICTURE: GARETH OWEN



Pictures copyright Gareth Owen 2005

CHAMPIONSHIP HATTERS 2005

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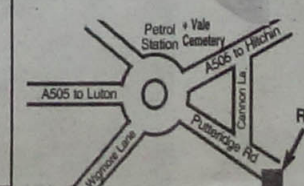
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Hatters old boys at the ready

Here are some of the former Luton Town players who may face Hatters next season

1
Emmerson Boyce
Age: 25
Club: Crystal Palace
Luton app: 194 (17)
Luton goals: 9

2
Kelvin Davis
Age: 28
Club: Ipswich Town
Luton app: 105
Luton goals: 0

3
Gary Doherty
Age: 25
Club: Norwich
Luton app: 53 (31)
Luton goals: 15

4
Gary McSheffrey
Age: 22
Club: Coventry
Luton app: 20 (4)
Luton goals: 10

5
Graham Alexander
Age: 33
Club: Preston
Luton app: 9 (3)
Luton goals: 0

6
Jean-Louis Valois
Age: 31
Club: Burnley
Luton app: 32 (2)
Luton goals: 6

7
Matthew Spring
Age: 25
Club: Leeds
Luton app: 281 (8)
Luton goals: 30

8
Matt Jackson
Age: 33
Club: Wigan
Luton app: 9 (3)
Luton goals: 0

9
Tony Thorpe
Age: 31
Club: QPR
Luton app: 151 (41)
Luton goals: 84

10
Paul Telfer
Age: 33
Club: Southampton
Luton app: 157 (8)
Luton goals: 22

Luton's Championship travels during the 05/06 season

1 Hull City The Tigers Stadium: Kingston Communications Capacity: 25,504 Last League meeting: 12:02:05 Score: Luton 1 - Hull 0	2 Brighton The Seagulls Stadium: Withdean Stadium Capacity: 7,053 Last League meeting: 10:02:04 Score: Luton 2 - Brighton 0	3 Burnley The Clarets Stadium: Turf Moor Capacity: 22,548 Last League meeting: 07:03:00 Score: Burnley 0 - Luton 2	4 Cardiff The Bluebirds Stadium: Ninian Park Capacity: 20,000 Last League meeting: 26:12:02 Score: Luton 2 - Cardiff 0	5 Coventry The Sky Blues Stadium: The Arena Capacity: 32,000 Last League meeting: 20:12:31 Score: Luton 1 - Coventry 0	6 Crewe The Railwaymen Stadium: Gresty Road Capacity: 10,066 Last League meeting: 22:03:03 Score: Luton 0 - Crewe 4	7 C Palace The Eagles Stadium: Selhurst Park Capacity: 26,309 Last League meeting: 19:03:56 Score: Palace 2 - Luton 1	8 Derby The Rams Stadium: Pride Park Capacity: 33,597 Last League meeting: 21:02:56 Score: Derby 1 - Luton 1	9 Fulham The Cottagers Stadium: Craven Cottage Capacity: 22,000 Last League meeting: 09:03:56 Score: Luton 0 - Fulham 4
10 Gillingham The Gills Stadium: Priestfield Capacity: 11,592 Last League meeting: 22:04:00 Score: Gillingham 2 - Luton 0	11 Ipswich Tractor Boys Stadium: Portman Road Capacity: 30,300 Last League meeting: 30:03:56 Score: Luton 1 - Ipswich 2	12 Leeds United Stadium: Elland Road Capacity: 40,204 Last League meeting: 29:02:52 Score: Leeds 2 - Luton 0	13 Leicester The Foxes Stadium: Walkers Stadium Capacity: 32,500 Last League meeting: 03:02:56 Score: Leicester 1 - Luton 1	14 Millwall The Lions Stadium: The New Den Capacity: 20,146 Last League meeting: 10:03:01 Score: Millwall 1 - Luton 0	15 Notts Forest The Reds Stadium: City Ground Capacity: 30,602 Last League meeting: 05:03:54 Score: Forest 2 - Luton 0	16 Norwich The Canaries Stadium: Carrow Road Capacity: 26,034 Last League meeting: 20:01:56 Score: Norwich 0 - Luton 1		
17 Plymouth The Pilgrims Stadium: Home Park Capacity: 20,922 Last League meeting: 20:03:04 Score: Luton 1 - Plymouth 1	18 Portsmouth Pompey Stadium: Fratton Park Capacity: 20,101 Last League meeting: 16:02:56 Score: Portsmouth 4 - Luton 0	19 Preston The Lilywhites Stadium: Deepdale Capacity: 22,225 Last League meeting: 18:03:00 Score: Luton 1 - Preston 0	20 QPR Superhoops Stadium: Loftus Road Capacity: 19,148 Last League meeting: 27:03:04 Score: QPR 1 - Luton 1	21 Reading The Royals Stadium: Madejski Stadium Capacity: 24,200 Last League meeting: 03:04:01 Score: Luton 1 - Reading 1	22 Sheffield Utd The Blades Stadium: Bramhall Lane Capacity: 30,936 Last League meeting: 23:03:56 Score: Sheffield 1 - Luton 0	23 Southampton The Saints Stadium: St Mary's Stadium Capacity: 32,251 Last League meeting: 20:03:52 Score: Saints 2 - Luton 1		
24 Stoke The Potters Stadium: Britannia Stadium Capacity: 26,218 Last League meeting: 07:04:01 Score: Luton 1 - Stoke 2	25 Watford The Hornets Stadium: Vicarage Road Capacity: 22,100 Last League meeting: 14:02:56 Score: Watford 1 - Luton 1	26 West Brom The Baggies Stadium: The Hawthorns Capacity: 28,000 Last League meeting: 02:04:56 Score: West Brom 0 - Luton 2	27 West Ham The Hammers Stadium: Upton Park Capacity: 35,647 Last League meeting: 13:04:53 Score: Luton 2 - West Ham 0	28 Wigan The Latics Stadium: JJB Stadium Capacity: 25,000 Last League meeting: 15:03:03 Score: Wigan 1 - Luton 1	29 Wolves Wolves Stadium: Molineux Capacity: 25,400 Last League meeting: 10:12:56 Score: Luton 2 - Wolves 3			

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Hatters' dramatic high life!



Luton Town club historian ROGER WASH recalls other glory years with a club never short of drama...

PRIOR to the current season the Hatters had won promotion eight times over their 120 year history, but had only topped the division at the season's end on three occasions.

The earliest promotion came in 1914 when the Town battled out of the Second Division of the Southern League, finishing runners-up to long since forgotten Croydon Common.

After entering the Football League once more in 1920, supporters had to wait 17 years for promotion with the 1936/1937 season finishing in glorious triumph as the Town won the championship of Division Three (South) on the back of the 55 goals netted by Joe Payne.

Further elevation came in 1955 when the Hatters won promotion from the old Division Two to the top flight.

In shades of the current season, the last game of 1954/1955 campaign was at Doncaster with the Town needing a win to maintain a fighting chance of going up.

The 3-0 victory finished with Luton supporters anxiously listening for results elsewhere, but it was quickly

confirmed that promotion had been won. Birmingham then went on to win their game in hand to go top for the first time in the season and deprive the Hatters of the championship.

After five years in the old Division One, relegation followed and by 1965

the Town had tumbled down the divisions and finished up in Division Four for three seasons. Promotion from Division Four came in 1968 in memorable fashion and with it the championship.

And, remarkably, the trophy and medals were handed out at the last

home game of the season which was, following other similarities to the current campaign, against Brentford.

Two seasons later the Hatters were back in the old Division Two following further promotion when they finished as runners-up to Orient in a season where the chance appeared to have

been thrown away with only a few games to go.

The remarkable turnaround was completed when Hatters clinched promotion again in 1974. They got back with the big boys by finishing a distant second to Jack Charlton's Middlesbrough.

Unfortunately, the stay was only of one year's duration but a much stronger outfit, under the management of David Pleat, won promotion back to the top flight again in 1982 with, this time, the championship won at a canter.

The 88 points gained represented a record in a 42-game season which was equalled during the current campaign.

As if to prove there is never a dull moment supporting the Hatters, 10 brilliant years at the top were followed by a gradual decline and by 2001 the club found itself back in the football basement.

Fortunately, the Hatters won promotion at the first attempt, finishing behind Plymouth in a tooth-and-nail contest which went to the wire.

Nevertheless, many Luton Town records were smashed that season with 97 points attained perhaps the most significant.

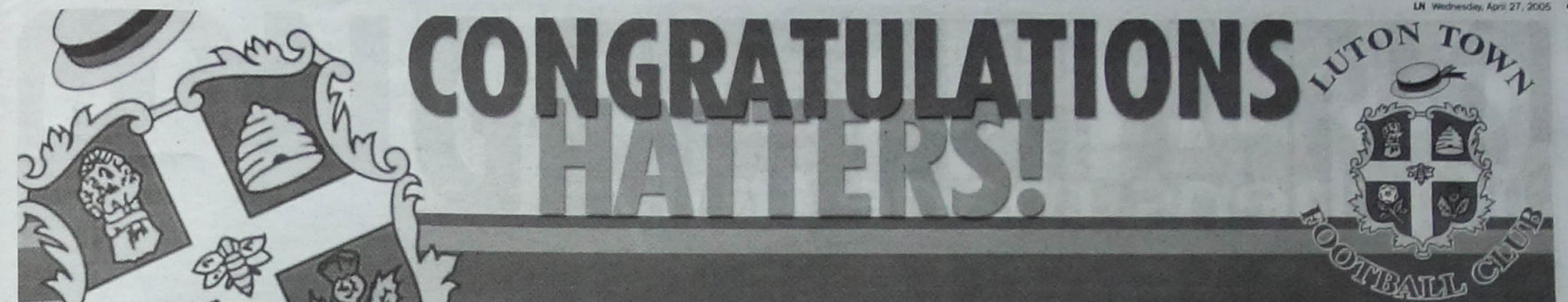
Are the Town now in line for a rise from the basement to the top flight for an unprecedented third time?

Watch this space...

● If you would like to share your memories of Town's past achievements, drop us a line to: Hatters Memories, Sports Desk, News-Gazette, Media House, 39 Upper George Street, Luton, LU1 2RD. But please keep your letters short.



FLASHBACK: Skipper Terry Branston with the Division Four Trophy awarded before, would you believe it, the home game with Brentford in 1968. Hatters face the Bees at home again this weekend. Other players are, from the left, Fred Jardine, John Moore, Graham French, Bruce Rioch and Ray Whittaker.



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