

WE ARE PREMIER LEAGUE

Luton News & Dunstable Gazette

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Unfazed: Town manager Rob Edwards doesn't consider it an issue that his side have been tipped by many to go down - pic: Getty Images

Hatters boss has no issues being written off

by Mike Simmonds
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Luton boss Rob Edwards has absolutely no issues with his Town side being written off as relegation fodder before a ball has even been kicked this season.

The Hatters begin their Premier League campaign at Brighton & Hove Albion on Saturday, with their odds to go down at 4/11 with SkyBet, as they are without doubt the favourites for the drop.

However, that isn't something that is of any concern

to Edwards, who fully expected it to be the case, saying: "There's nothing wrong with that."

"That happens every year with whoever gets promoted through the play-offs, so that's nothing to be ashamed of."

"However long this has been going on for and the play-offs, that will be the same everyone who gets promoted through the play-offs will be written off."

"Sheffield United are getting written off, there's no shame in it, we are one of the smallest clubs who have ever been promoted and fine, no problem."

"We were written off last year, no-one was really talking about us last year, it was Middlesbrough, Middlesbrough, Middlesbrough and look what happened."

"So it's no problem, we can only control what we can only control and that's getting enough points and perform well."

The recent history is on Town's side though as last year Nottingham Forest triumphed at Wembley, going on to finish in 16th place, as before that Brentford stayed up too in 13th.

Edwards continued: "Last year they did, Brentford

would have done before that, they'll be a good number of clubs who can do it, so we get a lot of confidence from that."

With the Hatters starting a first ever season in the Premier League and Edwards himself a top flight manager for the first time, it is clearly something that has whetted his appetite about the upcoming campaign.

He continued: "I'm really looking forward to it, but I feel like this before every season to be honest."

"I know this is special for everybody, it's been a long time coming, we've known for a few months, so I am excited."

"We've got to be really intelligent this year and I think everyone's got to understand that we always want to be an aggressive team, we always want to try and press, but we're not going to be able to do that at every moment all the time now."

"Everyone's got to understand that, it's really important that we stress it."

"You watch every big team, they don't go and press everything."

"Last year I think you could probably get away with opening up a little bit more space. We've got to be careful how much space we open up from

a tactical point of view but really looking forward to the challenge."

Edwards has also noticed an extra intensity and levels going up from his players in training since they returned after a summer off following their penalty shootout triumph at Wembley in May.

He added: "It's obvious, we all want to be at this level."

"If you work in football you want to be at the highest level and we are."

"It is really exciting and I can feel that buzz, feel their concentration and if we're having a meeting or training, I can see their focus."

WE ARE PREMIER LEAGUE



Trophy lift: Town boss Rob Edwards and Luton mayor Mohammad Yaqub Hanif celebrate the Hatters' reaching the Premier League - pic: Getty Images

Edwards hasn't settled on his starting XI yet

by Mike Simmonds
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Luton boss Rob Edwards has revealed there are still one or two spots up for grabs when he chooses his XI for what will be a 'momentous occasion' as Town kick off their Premier League campaign at Brighton & Hove Albion this weekend.

After what feels like an age since they beat Coventry City in the play-off final at Wembley to reach the promised land, the Hatters are gearing up for what will be their first top flight game in almost 30

years at the Amex Stadium.

To get themselves as ready as possible for the obvious step-up in quality, Luton played six pre-season matches in preparation, wins over VfL Bochum, Sheffield Wednesday and Peterborough United, plus draws against Ipswich and Wolves, with one loss to Bochum during Saturday's double-header.

Picking two sides, the first, and more experienced, beaten 2-1 by their Bundesliga hosts at the VONOVIA Ruhrstadion, Luton's second team saw a number of younger players involved, including Aidan Francis-Clarke and Josh

Odell-Bature, as Luke Berry's double ensured a 3-1 victory.

Elijah Adebayo and Cauley Woodrow both also started for the visitors and asked if he had been given him some selection dilemmas going in to their south coast excursion this weekend, the boss said: "They knew there were areas of the first game we could have done better in and we were able to talk about that and say what we were looking for in the second game as well."

"I thought there was a greater intensity at times."

"The work-rate of Eli and Cauley, they made themselves difficult to play against, Bez

with a couple of goals, there was some good stuff in both games, but I think one or two will be thinking okay, as I don't know the team fully yet."

"There are spots that are available and we'll see what business we're able to do in this last week going into the game, but overall I feel like we're in a decent place going into a really difficult but exciting first fixture."

"We've got a full week and then we just get the right load in, the right work in, Monday through to Saturday."

"It's up to us to make sure we get that bit right."

"They've been pushed and

worked hard throughout pre-season, they've all given everything, it's been good to get good minutes into a lot of players."

"The vast majority now have had at least one go, some have had up to three or four and we'll be ready to go and ready to run as we're going to need to."

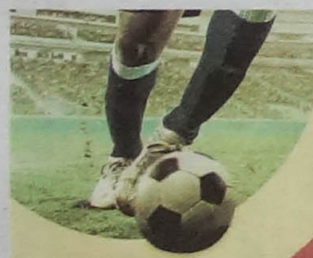
On just how crucial the build-up will be to taking on a Brighton side managed by Roberto De Zerbi who finished sixth last season, also qualifying for the Europa League as well, Edwards continued: "It's a really important week, they're all going to

be important weeks now, the five previous ones since we've come back, and everyone now until the end of the season."

"They're going to be big, big weeks, we're going to have to manage them right."

"They're going to be incredibly hard and we're all going to be learning, quickly, but I'm really excited and I think we all are."

"It's a momentous occasion for the football club isn't it? We've all got to enjoy it and I know that they (supporters) are, we are, but we want to go and be competitive and give a good account of ourselves against a top team."



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Job done! Town midfielder Marvelous Nakamba celebrates at Wembley after Luton reached the Premier League last season - pic: Getty Images

Nakamba urges Luton to 'give everything'

by Mike Simmonds
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Ahead of their first ever Premier League campaign, Hatters midfielder Marvelous Nakamba has urged his teammates to 'give everything' in their efforts to survive in a division they battled so hard to reach last term.

Following a season in which Luton suffered play-off heartache, when an injury-struck side was beaten 2-1 on aggregate in the semi-finals by Huddersfield Town, they returned for the 2022-23 campaign eager to go one better. Although previous man-

ager Nathan Jones left in November to join Southampton, Rob Edwards took over and if anything that gave Town the boost they needed to realise their goal.

With Nakamba himself arriving on loan from Aston Villa in January, Luton got up a head of steam that saw them not only reach the play-offs, but go on and win them, courtesy of a never to be forgotten penalty shoot-out victory over Coventry City at Wembley.

Town start their top flight season at Brighton this weekend as the bookies favourites to go down, but the Zimbabwean international, who has returned on a permanent ba-



Ready to go: Marvelous Nakamba

sis, said: "We just have to continue training hard, working hard and fight for the badge, for the club, give everything, and just be positive in everything we do."

"We're there to compete,

we have to give everything. "It's one of the best leagues in the world, so we just have to take it in our stride."

"We fought for it, to get where we are now, so we've just got to continue giving everything, trying hard and working hard and believe also."

Looking back at that magical day at Wembley just a few months ago, although the contest was eventually decided by the lottery that is spot-kicks, Nakamba felt his side were worthy winners.

He continued: "It was a special moment."

"I felt we deserved it, the way we were performing as a team, we just had to believe,

stick together and with the support from the fans, from everyone around the club, it was up to the players to give a positive result and give everything for the match."

"We had to celebrate as a team and as a group as it was a good day. I remember before the gaffer saying, 'you just have to give everything, it can be a funeral or a party.' Luckily for us, it was a party after the game in the dressing room."

"Everyone was celebrating, I was so happy to see everyone smiling."

Nakamba himself played a big role as Town's opening goal was started by his ability to be in the right place to

break up play inside his own half.

He also found the net from 12 yards during the shoot-out as well, adding: "The interception, it goes to Alfie (Doughty) and he passes it to Eli (Adebayo), a little bit of magic, Clicks (Jordan Clark) also, a good goal."

"We needed that goal after we missed a few chances, but as a team we're pushing each other, 'come on boys, this is the time, we just have to give everything.'"

"I spoke with the goalkeepers, everyone, I was more positive. I've scored one with my national team and missed one, but I was positive and confident."

WE ARE PREMIER LEAGUE

Campbell is thrilled to achieve his ambition

by Mike Simmonds
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Town midfielder Allan Campbell is elated to finally achieve his dream of becoming a Premier League player with the Hatters this season.

The 25-year-old started out in Motherwell's academy back 2008, eventually turning pro in 2016, as he played over 150 times for the Steelmen, also winning 24 U21 caps for Scotland before deciding to make the move to Kenilworth Road in the summer of 2021.

An excellent personal campaign followed, winning four prizes at the end of season awards night, although as a team, Luton just missed out on the play-off final after a 2-1 defeat on aggregate to Huddersfield Town in the semis.

Undeterred by the loss, Campbell went on to realise his ambition at the second attempt last term, the Hatters getting through against Sunderland and then defeating Coventry City in the final at Wembley to reach the top flight.

Discussing what it was like to achieve his goal, he said: "It's hard to actually sit and

think, you don't always get the chance, but I've had a wee bit of time to reflect."

"My personal goals coming down here, I made the move from Scotland, it was a big one for me, first time moving away from home, so one of my goals was to get to the Premier League, to call myself a Premier League player."

"The end of last season we were able to achieve that goal as a club, as a team, as an individual, so I was delighted."

With the dream realised, Campbell now wants to show he belongs in the top flight with Luton, as he prepares for what will no doubt be the toughest season of his career to date.

He continued: "You reflect for a wee bit, then my head just turns to, right, it's another step up and you need to be able to show that you're able to play that level, that you belong there."

"So as soon as that switch happens, it's just focus, make sure you're ready to get back into it."

"As a kid you just want to be a professional, but then you watch a lot of football and the top players always play in the Premier League."

"As a player you always

want to play in the best leagues and against the best players."

"If you know my personality, I want to challenge myself and if I'm going to come up against the likes of Man City, the best team in Europe, that's where you want to be."

"That was always my goal, to get to the top level that I can get to and this year is a real chance to show what I'm about and that I'm capable of playing at this level."

"There's still a lot more hard work to be done, still a lot more improvement to be had, but it will definitely be a nice moment to know that you're in the top league in the world and challenging yourself. It will be one that I'll relish."

On how he thinks the anticipation ahead of the Premier League campaign has been amongst both players and supporters, Campbell added: "It's definitely exciting, if it's not exciting what else can it be?"

"Luton in the Premier League, the fans have got that buzz about them, you see it all over social media."

"It's a real good place to be and everyone's just ready for the games to come."



Applause: Luton midfielder Allan Campbell applauds the Town faithful during pre-season - pic: Getty Images

Keeper to realise dream

by Mike Simmonds
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New Town stopper Thomas Kaminski can't wait to achieve his dream of playing in the Premier League for the first time in his career after joining the Hatters recently.

The 30-year-old has featured in the top division in his home country of Belgium for a number of years, plus Denmark and Cyprus, also featuring in the Champions League when at Anderlecht, while playing Europa League football for Gent as well.

After becoming Luton's sixth signing of a busy summer when agreeing a move from Championship outfit Blackburn Rovers, there is every chance that Kaminski

will get to instantly realise his ambition at the Amex Stadium on Saturday when Town travel to Brighton & Hove Albion for their top flight opener on the south coast.

It was one of the main reasons Kaminski decided to end his three year stint at Ewood Park and move to Kenilworth Road, saying: "It's a cliché maybe, but I think the Premier League is the best league in the world."

"To play in the Premier League is a dream for every footballer and I'm repeating a cliché but actually it's unbelievable."

While at Blackburn, Kaminski was a team-mate of defender Amari'i Bell, who made the switch to Bedfordshire in the summer of 2021 and gave his former stopper some rave reviews ahead of

his own decision.

The pair were back in the same team once more at the weekend as Town went down to a 2-1 defeat at Bundesliga outfit Bochum, with Kaminski adding: "Knowing Luton from playing against them, it's a well organised team."

"You can see the togetherness on the pitch from the guys and I've spoken many times to Belly, Amari'i Bell who was in Blackburn as well."

"He called it home, so that was maybe, to give me the next feeling about the club and it's the story behind, from hard work towards the Premier League."

"It's the best place for every player to be loved and in an environment when you can work hard, give the best of yourself and give everything for the club."



Lovely glove-ly: Thomas Kaminski has signed for the Hatters - pic: Luton Town FC

WE ARE PREMIER LEAGUE

Giles was eager to be reunited with Edwards

by Mike Simmonds
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New Town signing Ryan Giles is hoping to enjoy yet another successful spell with manager Rob Edwards after signing for the Luton boss for the third time in his career.

It was Edwards who gave Giles his first taste of senior football when in charge of AFC Telford United during the 2017-18 season, bringing the wingback, then aged just 18, to the Bucks, as they managed to avoid relegation from National League North thanks to two goals and seven assists in nine matches from the new boy.

When he returned to Molineux in 2018, Edwards had taken over the Wolves U23s, leading them to promotion to Premier League 2 Division 1.

It meant that once Town made their interest known in bringing Giles to Kenilworth Road this summer, the now 23-year-old was only too eager to make it happen.

He said: "I've been with Rob on two different occasions.

"I was 17, 18 at the time, I went to Telford United, only had the last 10 games, it was a youth loan at the time and he took me in, my first little taste of men's football at such a young age.

"We hit it off, it went really well, we managed to stay in the division as Telford were going through a bit of trouble at the time, but I came in and Rob really helped me.

"The following season, he was the U23 manager at Wolves, and we won the PL Two, which was the league we were in at the time, so I've had really, really good times with Rob.

"I appreciate him for giving me the opportunity for starters and hopefully it's third time lucky for sure."

Although he turned pro at Molineux soon afterwards, Edwards only featured once for his parent club, that coming in an FA Cup tie at Shrewsbury.

He spent last term on loan with Middlesbrough, playing a career high 47 games in the season, with 11 assists, the highest in the division.

It was on the back of that, plus a chance to play in the



Together again: Ryan Giles with Hatters manager Rob Edwards after agreeing to move to Kenilworth Road - pic: David Horn

Premier League, that saw him decide to put down some roots in Bedfordshire.

He continued: "I've had a lot of loans, had a lot of experience, played a lot of men's football now, especially in the Championship the last couple of years.

"It's been a mixture for sure, I've had ups, I've had downs, I think that's made me the person I am today.

"I don't regret any single loan I've done, I've had the experience, played with different team-mates, different managers, different styles of player.

"Every manager has their

own way really, their own vision and I've always had to adapt to it.

"I'd like to think I've done that reasonably well and all those experiences have made me the player I am and the person I am today.

"I'm very proud of that and now it's a different direction for me, a new beginning, one I'm really, really excited about and one I really want to hit the ground running with. It was at a point really, I was 23, I'm not getting any younger.

"I know I'm still at a young age in the game, but more of being able to settle with a club and really, really kick on,

get the chance to make this a home now."

On choosing the Hatters, he added: "I'm really looking forward to it, one I can really succeed with, with Luton Town.

"The opportunity for them as a club and the opportunity was here for me to make the step up, which I want to do.

"I've always wanted to do it from a young age, so I've got the opportunity to do it now and I'm really, really excited.

"The Premier League is the biggest league in the world and the best league in the world, the best players are in it."



Run-out: Ryan Giles in action for his new side

WE ARE PREMIER LEAGUE

New boy Chong reveals he was a late bloomer

by Mike Simmonds
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Summer signing Tahith Chong was definitely a late bloomer to the game after admitting football hadn't always been for him as a youngster.

The winger, who was one of the players to break Luton's club record transfer fee this summer, was born in the Dutch Caribbean island of Curaçao, as despite growing up seeing his father play, never really showed much interest in the game himself.

That was however until he watched the 2006 World Cup, the tournament held in Germany eventually won by Italy when beating France on penalties in the final.

His passion quickly ignited, Chong then moved to Feyenoord, before heading overseas to join the academy at Manchester United in 2016, going on to spend six years at Old Trafford.

Casting his eyes back to his formative years though, he said: "The 2006 World Cup, that's probably one of the first times I was watching football.

"My dad used to play football as well, he was all the time, 'you want to come along?'

"I was like, 'no, not for me' and then I watched the World Cup 2006 and after that I was like, I want to start playing football.

"I think it took him a few months to actually believe me, but that's how it started really.

"I was so young at the time, I don't think I knew all the rules and what was going on, it was just the atmosphere.

"I was living at the time still in the Caribbean, Curaçao, everyone watched the final, the whole family and it was a crazy final, when (Zinedine) Zidane did the headbutt.

"There was just something after that where I said, this is really a sport I kind of like, I would like to try it and see how good I really am."

Chong was to quickly find out that he was not only just good at it, he excelled in it, soon representing the Netherlands in their various age categories.

That saw the Premier League cast their net to bring



Summer signing: Tahith Chong joined the Hatters for an undisclosed fee this summer - pic: Getty Images

him to England, as he headed to the Red Devils when still only 17, quick to pay tribute to his parents for their help in making the move as simple as possible.

He continued: "I went to do the trials at Feyenoord and when you're so young you don't really realise, you just think I'm going to play football in a different country, nice.

"It's a compliment to my mum and dad as they probably sacrificed way more than I did at a young age, I just thought, this sounds fun.

"As you get older you realise what goes into it, so for me

it was enjoyable at the time, but looking back I can see what my mum and dad sacrificed.

"They just made it easy, they took all the burdens, for me it was just about going out and enjoy.

"At the time, mixing it with school, they just did their best, they just did a brilliant job.

"They probably had some stressful days, but they never let me know this as a kid at the time, which is a compliment to them really."

Loan spells in Germany with Werder Bremen and Club Brugge in Belgium

means that Chong is certainly well travelled despite still being just 23 years of age.

He remained in England last year, spending the campaign at Championship side Birmingham City before his move to Luton and it's those times away from home that he believes will stand him in good stead, adding: "Wherever I go or whatever experience, it's like I'm carrying a backpack and all the experiences, I just put them in there.

"Then in five, six years I might need them, and then I just open up my backpack and see what I can do with them experience-wise."



Wanting the ball: Hatters winger Tahith Chong

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Time to step up: Luton forward Carlton Morris will be looking to carry on his goalscoring form in the Premier League this campaign - pic: Getty Images.



Battling: Chidozie Ogbene was Luton's new addition of the summer after arriving on a free from Rotherham United - pic: Getty Images



First time: Long-serving Pelly-Ruddock Mpanzu will make history when becoming the first player to go from non-league to the Premier League with the same club - pic: Getty Images

WE ARE PREMIER LEAGUE



Sliding in: Plenty is expected from one of Luton's six summer signings in Birmingham City midfielder Tahith Chong - pic: Getty Images



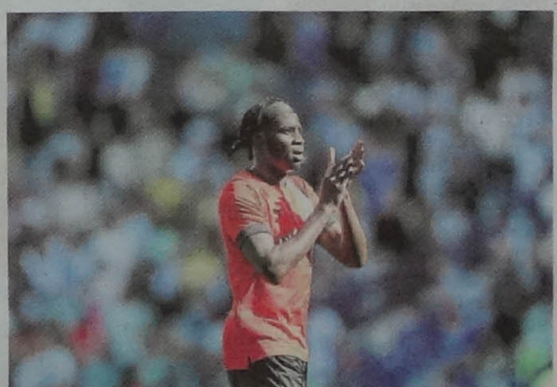
Fit and well: Centre half Tom Lockyer has recovered from his on-field collapse to play a big part for the Hatters - pic: Getty Images



Getting close: Ex-Barnsley defender Mads Andersen is testing himself in the Premier League for the very first time this season - pic: Getty Images



New boy: Ryan Giles will be one of Luton's main creative outlets after moving to Kenilworth Road from Wolves - pic: Getty Images



Clapping: Town forward Elijah Adebayo is looking to give the Hatters fans plenty to cheer about in the top flight - pic: Getty Images



Driving run: Amari Bell's powerful runs from defence were a big reason behind the Hatters' finishing third in the Championship - pic: Getty Images

WE ARE PREMIER LEAGUE

James will be happy to lose his claim to fame

by Mike Simmonds
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Luton's players still step out at the Amex Stadium this weekend with the ambition of opening the club's Premier League account and in doing so, become the first person to score for the Hatters in a top flight game for over 30 years.

The previous time Town found the net was way back on May 2, 1992, with that now rather dubious honour falling to Julian James.

With 18 minutes gone of a do-or-die contest against already relegated Notts County, a long throw fell kindly to the full back inside the box and he volleyed into the bottom corner on his less favoured left foot to put the Hatters in front.

Needing to win to stay up, the omens were good for Luton who had done so famously on the final day three times in the previous decade, beating Manchester City and Derby County twice, those victories over the Rams coming in the previous two seasons.

However, this time it was one step too far, as Rob Matthews levelled on 34 minutes and then the forward,



Previous scorer: Julian James is the last Luton player to find the net in the top flight - pic: Hatters Heritage

who joined Town the following campaign, found the net with 20 to go, ensuring Luton missed out on the first ever Premier League season.

Discussing the goal, James said: "It was a bit of a left foot scuff, which is not too bad really."

"You've got to swing it to

have a go, so I'll take that, it's not the claim to fame you want though!"

"What I remember about that game was that we went in there with a bit of hope, but in fairness I think we lost the midfield."

"Although we competed, we weren't really at it. (Neil)

Warnock was the manager of Notts County, so we huffed and puffed a little bit, got our noses in front and just failed to hold on to the lead."

"Second half we just weren't at the races at all I didn't think, so that was a bit of a shock really, quite upsetting and it wasn't a pleasant

experience."

Town had been banking on using the experience from the previous victories over Derby, particularly the 3-2 success at the Baseball Ground in May 1990 that James had been part of, plus a 2-0 triumph at Kenilworth Road 12 months later, when Luton legend Mick Har-

ford put through his own net.

Remembering that day, he continued: "That was something special really for any Luton fan."

"The odds really were stacked against us and Breacker's goal was just a freak, absolute freak. Tim never scored a goal in his life, never had a shot, when Preecey (David Preece) was stood next to him and he ran up, I thought what's he doing? Then what? Goal!"

"It just kept going didn't it and Kingsley (Black) scored a couple of goals as well."

"The next one, Mick was playing, so you'd have to ask him if he was putting himself about in that game."

Unfortunately, dropping out of the top flight, there was to be no instant return, Town finishing in the lower reaches of the second tier, in what was now called Division One, relegated again in 1996.

James added: "We dropped out of that league quite quickly and then we dropped out of the next one quite quickly, the rest is history really, Luton just tailed off. They've battled their way back from obscurity to where they are now though and you've got to give the whole club 10 out of 10."

Kabore 'excited' for the top flight challenge

Summer signing Issa Kabore is hugely excited to get his first chance to play in the Premier League after agreeing a season-long loan deal with Luton recently.

The 22-year-old began his career in the youth ranks of Burkina Faso club Rahimo FC, before moving to Belgian side Mechelen when still a teenager, then heading to England to join Manchester City in July 2020.

Kabore returned to his former side for a loan spell as the last two years has seen him borrowed by French Ligue 1 clubs Troyes and Marseille, going on to play Champions League football last term.

Returning to the Etihad in the summer though, Kabore's next port of call for manager Pep Guardiola is a season-long stint in Bedfordshire where it is hoped he will be-

come accustomed to the pace of English top flight football.

Speaking about the move south, Kabore said: "I'm very happy to be here, the club is family, everybody is very good, everybody is smiling, everyone welcomed me, so I'm very happy."

"I'm very, very excited to play Premier League, and I think everybody wants to play there and now I have a chance to play, so I will enjoy that."

Although he has only been around the Hatters for a short spell, Kabore has already been impressed with what he has seen from new manager Rob Edwards, as he continued: "He is positive at me, and then 'I like you,' so I want to give everything for him and then for the club as everyone is fantastic."

On what his targets are for the campaign ahead, the

wingback, who has been a regular feature on the right for Luton during their friendly matches, added: "This season my ambition is the club, club is first and then if the club is safe, my ambition is good."

"The fans, I want to meet them, to enjoy with them, give them the pleasure in the stadium."

"The referee for Luton's first ever game in the Premier League has been announced as David Coote."

The Nottinghamshire official took 33 games last season, showing 136 yellow cards and four red cards.

It will be his first Hatters match since the 3-1 FA Cup defeat at Chelsea in January 2021.

The assistant referees are Mark Scholes and Timothy Wood, with the fourth official John Busby.



Raring to go: Luton loan signing Issa Kabore is looking forward to the Premier League - pic: Getty Images

WE ARE PREMIER LEAGUE

Luton's record when starting in the top flight

by Mike Simmonds
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Luton Town are back in the big time once more this season, as they prepare for life in the Premier League.

With Rob Edwards' side heading to the south coast to take on Brighton & Hove Albion in their campaign-opener, the *Luton News* takes a look back at just how Town have kicked off their seasons in the top flight before.

Aug 20, 1955: Charlton Athletic 2 Luton Town

Town's first ever season as a top flight club saw the Hatters travel to the Valley and leave with a point courtesy of goals from Gordon Turner and MacEwan.

Aug 18, 1956: Luton Town 6 Sunderland 2

The Hatter made a stunning start to their second successive campaign in Division One as they hammered Sunderland at Kenilworth Road. Gordon Turner was the star of the show as he found the net four times, with John Groves and Mick Cullen on target, much to the delight of the 23,049 crowd.

Aug 24, 1957: Luton Town 1 Bolton Wanderers 0

As he had done for the past two seasons, Gordon Turner was on target once more in Luton's opening game of the campaign, scoring the only goal of the contest as Town edged out the Trotters on home soil.

Aug 23, 1958: Luton Town 1 West Bromwich Albion 1

In what was now a common theme, Gordon Turner proved to be the main man as he netted from the penalty spot as Luton started the 1958-59 campaign by registering a point against the Baggies, with 24,425 in attendance.

Aug 22, 1959: Everton 2 Luton Town 2

Luton were on the road with a tough opening encounter at Goodison, but they managed to head back from Merseyside with something to show for the spoils thanks to strikes from Allan Brown and Billy Bingham.

Aug 17, 1974: Luton Town 1 Liverpool 2

After returning to Division One following a 15 year absence, Luton had one of the



Point gained: Brian Stein earns Luton a 1-1 draw against Leicester in 1986



Own goal: Brian Horton celebrates at White Hart Lane in 1982

most difficult starts against a Liverpool side containing Ray Clemence and Kevin Keegan. Town did lead through Barry Butlin's first half header, but Tommy Smith quickly levelled and Steve Heighway won it with 15 minutes to go.

Aug 28, 1982: Spurs 2 Luton Town 2

Back in the top flight once more, David Pleat's side travelled to White Hart Lane for the opener and fought back to earn an excellent 2-2 draw against the FA Cup holders. Gary Mabbitt headed home Glen Hoddle's free kick, as Micky Hazard doubled the lead, before Luton got going, Lacey putting through his own net and Brian Stein salvaging the draw.

Aug 27, 1983: Arsenal 2 Luton Town 1

Up against Arsenal's new £750,000 signing Charlie Nicholas, but it was Tony Woodcock who put the hosts in front. Luton levelled after Stewart Robson blasted the ball into his own net, before Brian McDermott scored the Gunners' winner.

Aug 25, 1984: Luton Town 1 Stoke City 0

Luton ran out extremely comfortable winners against Stoke on the opening day, in front of 8,626 at Kenilworth Road. Steve Elliott set Town on their way with a disputed goal, as the Potters completed about a foul, before Frankie Bunn added a second from 18 yards.

Aug 17, 1985: Luton Town 1 Nottingham Forest 1

Town took the lead at Kenilworth Road when Brian Stein chipped Reds keeper Hans Segers to put the Hatters in front. Forest equalised, midfielder Neil Webb blasting home a harshly awarded 20-yard free kick.

Aug 23, 1986: Leicester City 1 Luton Town 1

Leicester striker Alan Smith, who went on to play for Arsenal, opened the scoring from close range, before Luton, who handed a debut to Danny Wilson, levelled through Brian Stein's wonderful solo goal, as he netted for the second successive opening day running.

Aug 15, 1987: Derby County 1 Luton Town 0

The Hatters got off to the worst possible start, with Mick Harford sent off after just four minutes courtesy of a late tackle. Down to 10 men, Luton conceded when John Gregory's header beat Les Sealey.

Aug 27, 1988: Sheffield Wednesday 1 Luton Town 0

Town travelled up to Hillsborough for the first game and made a losing start against a dominant Owls team. Mel Sterland netted the only goal with a near post header, but then saw his penalty saved by Les Sealey.

Aug 19, 1989: Spurs 2 Luton Town 1

Luton were playing in front of a restricted crowd at White Hart Lane due to the ground being redeveloped, as they went behind to Paul Stewart's header from Paul Gascoigne's free kick. Roy Wegerle netted a superb volley to make it 1-1, but Paul Allen won it late on for Spurs.

Aug 25, 1990: Luton Town 1 Crystal Palace 1

Luton's youthful-looking side were behind when Eric Young headed the hosts into

the lead. Striker Iain Dowie drew Town level and future England international Nigel Martyn was the busier of the two keepers after the break

Aug 17, 1991: West Ham United 0 Luton Town 0

Up against the newly-promoted Hammers, Luton couldn't find a way through in what was to be their last top flight opener for over 30 years. Brian Stein made his second debut for the club after three years in France but the deadlock wasn't to be broken.

Luton boss Rob Edwards will pick a Hatters side for a top flight match for the first time since May 2, 1992 on Saturday.

The XI that last took the field for Town at this level was a 2-1 defeat against Notts County.

1: Alec Chamberlain - Played 24 games in total that season.

2: Julian James - Former England U21 international scored the visitors only goal of the afternoon at Meadow Lane.

3: Darren Salton - After



Giving chase: Frankie Bunn closes down as Luton lost to Arsenal in 1983



On the spot: Gordon Turner nets against West Bromwich Albion in 1958

coming through the ranks, the Notts County game was just his second league start for Luton.

4: Chris Kamara - Signed from Leeds United for £150,000 in 1991, he started the final 28 games of the season.

5: John Dreyer - one of two players who started every single game of the campaign.

6: Trevor Peake - experienced FA Cup-winning defender made 38 appearances.

7: Scott Oakes - Exciting midfielder joined from Leicester City, with 21 outings and two goals.

8: Brian Stein - Returned to Kenilworth Road, but couldn't quite replicate his prolific scoring, with three goals in 39 matches

9: Mick Harford - Also back for a second stint, finishing as top scorer with 12 goals from 29 matches.

10: Mark Pembroke - Impressive season, starting every match and contributing five goals as well.

11: David Preece - Played 38 times that season, with three goals too.

12: David Preece - Played 38 times that season, with three goals too.

WE ARE PREMIER LEAGUE

Togetherness at Town is there for Turner

by Mike Simmonds
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Former Hatters midfielder Wayne Turner can see similar signs of the togetherness in the current squad at Kenilworth Road to the one he was part of when Town spent their longest period in the top flight back in the 1980s.

After being promoted to what was then Division One in 1982, Luton went on to enjoy a decade at the highest level of English football, eventually dropping out of the division at the end of the 1991-92 campaign.

Now back there for the first time since, Turner, who was part of the team that were under the stewardship of legendary manager David Pleat in those days, and now back at Kenilworth Road once more as head of academy development, said: "I can see a real togetherness that we had 40 years ago when I played and 30 years ago when I coached."

"I can see a similar situation going on which makes me very excited."

"It's a real close-knit club that has been brought together by Gary Sweet (chief executive) at the very top, and



Joy: Wayne Turner enjoys scoring a goal in the top flight for the Hatters - pic: Hatters Heritage

it filters down right through the football side of the club, so we're very lucky."

First time around, Turner had been a bit part of the squad as Luton made their way into the highest level of English football, spending time out on loan with Lincoln City, but once they were

there, he began to make his mark on the first team.

After featuring 30 times in their first season, he managed 19 Division One outings the following campaign and 24 in the 1984-85 campaign, before Peter Nicholas joined, which saw the midfielder move on in search of regular

first team football.

He still managed 83 of his 102 outings in the top flight though and on what it was like to be around the squad in those days, he continued: "It was amazing because when we became part of it, I say we, the players, the club was a bit of a yo-yo club."

"In the 70s it had been up and down, through the division and back again and it had slowly been growing and going up the leagues when David took over."

"We had a couple of near misses, when I wasn't really involved as an 18, 19-year-old, we had come close to getting

up, but then that year the boys did brilliant."

"I went away on loan, came back and had a good run in the end, so for me to walk back into the group, and them doing that well was twofold."

"One, for me to get back in the team, and two, to go into a team that was doing that well, as we got up with about two or three games to spare."

"It was a fantastic achievement and then we stayed there for about 10 years, which was even more of an achievement."

"It was all a rollercoaster, it was new to all of us, getting into that top league and going to the Liverpool's and drawing 3-3, losing 6-0 and going to West Ham and winning 3-2, Walshy (Paul Walsh) gets a hat-trick at Upton Park."

"Going to Goodison, winning 1-0, Walshy scored, away to Stoke, 4-4, it was some mad places to go."

"Beating Newcastle at home, beating Man United at home, going to Highbury, it was an incredible situation that just went week by week."

"It was amazing and you don't realise how massive it was until you look back."

"You think, that was me, it makes you proud of what you did and what you achieved."

Harford becomes Luton station announcer

Hatters legend Mick Harford has swapped the football stadium for life on the rails this week, taking on the role of station announcer at Luton to celebrate the club's first ever Premier League match on Saturday.

Town's opening fixture back in the top flight of English football in over 30 years sees them heading to the other end of the Thameslink network to take on Brighton & Hove Albion at the Amex Stadium, kicking off at 3pm.

The special announcements by Harford can be heard at Luton station throughout the week, including on match day, as the recordings commemorate an important moment in history for the Hatters and wider community.

Former player, manager, assistant manager and coach

Harford, who is now the club's chief recruitment officer, described the community was an important part of Luton Town's success, as he said: "This Saturday is a huge day for Luton Town FC, so it's been great to work with Thameslink to offer words of support for the club, whilst getting passengers excited about the game."

"It's not every day that you get to hear your voice on the loudspeaker at your local train station, so to have the opportunity to do it whilst celebrating Luton's incredible achievement is an honour."

"Good luck to the boys, I'm feeling confident for a win." Govia Thameslink Railway has a longstanding relationship with Luton Town FC, supporting its academy players with free travel passes for the past 15 years.

Jenny Saunders, customer services director for Thameslink, added: "Whether you're a football fan or not, this is a huge moment for Luton and it's incredibly exciting for the local community."

"With both teams on the Thameslink network, we're of course sharing our support for the Hatters and the Seagulls."

"Both teams have done extremely well to get into the Premier League and Europa League respectively."

"We wish all the players and fans the best of luck!"

"The Seagulls warmed up for the visit of Luton by drawing 1-1 against La Liga side Rayo Vallecano at the Amex on Saturday."

Former Watford player Joao Pedro scored Brighton's goal from the penalty spot in the second half.



On the mic: Mick Harford's voice will be heard at Luton Station this week - pic: Thameslink Railway

WE ARE PREMIER LEAGUE

How the last 10 play-off winners have done

by Mike Simmonds
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Luton Town are in the big time this season after their stunning Championship play-off final victory over Coventry City last term.

With a number of bookies and pundits tipping the Hatters to go straight back down, here's a look at how the last 10 play-off winners have done in the Premier League the following campaign.

2022-23: Nottingham Forest - 16th

Having beaten Huddersfield Town in the play-off final, with a much-changed squad but the same manager in Steve Cooper, the Reds went on to finish 16th place, four points clear of the drop zone. It was their form at the City Ground that proved key, beating both Arsenal and Liverpool.

2021-22: Brentford - 13th

The Bees stayed up by some margin in their first ever season in the top flight, post-World War II. Sitting 13th, Thomas Frank's team finished 11 points clear of the bottom three, winning at Stamford Bridge and also defeating Arsenal.

2020-21: Fulham - 18th

After seeing off Brentford to reach the Premier League, Fulham weren't able to retain their top flight status as although they finished above Sheffield United and West Bromwich Albion, were well



Premier League here we come! Pelly-Ruddock Mpanzu celebrates at Wembley in May - pic: Liam Smith

below Burnley, ending up third bottom.

2019-20: Aston Villa - 16th

With Derby County dispatched, Aston Villa managed to stay up, but only just. Going into the last game, the Villains

were in the drop zone, but their 1-1 draw at West Ham and Watford's defeat to Arsenal saw them finish one point above the dotted line.

2018-19: Fulham - 19th

After defeating Aston Villa 1-0 in the final, the Cottagers

couldn't stay in the Premier League after a terrible away record saw them win just once on the road. It meant they finished a fair 10 points away from safety, going back to the Championship with Huddersfield and Cardiff.

2017-18: Huddersfield Town - 16th

A penalty shoot-out win over Reading took the Terriers up and they surprised a number of sides by staying there, four points away from the drop zone. A good home

record was key, beating Manchester United and Newcastle to ensure they had a second successive campaign in the top flight.

2016-17: Hull - 18th

Having beaten Sheffield Wednesday at Wembley, it looked at one point like Hull were in with a real chance of staying in the top flight. Although winning eight in front of their home fans, like many, a poor away record saw them end up third bottom, six points away from Watford.

2015-16: Norwich - 19th

Defeating Middlesbrough 2-0 in the final, Norwich continued their yo-yoing between the top two divisions. The Canaries lost 13 of their last 19 top flight matches to end up second bottom on 34 points, five behind Sunderland.

2014-15: QPR - 20th

After Bobby Zamora scored in stoppage time to send the R's up against Derby, it was to prove a one-off season for QPR in the top flight as they ended up bottom of the pile, losing 13 from their final 19 matches.

2013-14: Crystal Palace - 11th

Seeing off Watford in the final, the Eagles eventually had a fine season, although it didn't look possible following a start in which they lost nine of their opening 10 games. Ian Holloway resigned and Tony Pulis took over, as Palace went on to win five in a row in the closing stages to finish in 11th.

Doughty aware Albion trip could be a 'shock'

Luton wingback Alfie Doughty knows that the Hatters' opening game of the Premier League season at Brighton could come as something of a shock to those who have never played at the level before.

Town's squad has precious little top flight experience in it, as going into the contest, only a handful of those who will line up at the Amex have experienced life at the top echelon of English football before.

Doughty is one of many who have not featured in the highest division previously, as he knew the work would have to be put in to make sure they

are ready for the step up.

He said: "It's probably going to be the biggest one yet for all the boys."

"A few of them have stepped up a few times, but a few like me, first time playing in the Prem, we're not going to be used to it."

"I think I need to make sure that I am as fit as I possibly can be to take the next step. Everything needs to go up times two."

"The speed, no-one knows the speed really, the first game might be a shock, especially Brighton away, it's going to be an intense game."

"But that just comes with it

really, everyone's going to get used to it, we'll just try and work at our best way possible for our shape."

Although there is a slight air of trepidation about what to expect on the south coast, that will turn to excitement for Doughty, who added: "I'm buzzing!"

"Playing in the Premier League, it's a pinch yourself moment, I'm really looking forward to it and see how well we can do."

» Former Luton boss John Still can't wait to see Kenilworth Road in the Premier League this season.

With the first game due

to be against another side that Still has allegiances to in West Ham United on Friday, September 1, he said: "I think the biggest plus, is whoever comes here to play hasn't half got to play well, because the atmosphere here, they won't be used to coming here."

"Playing here, particularly in the first year will be a plus for the football club, I really do."

"It's a unique ground isn't it, but I think that's a plus, as when I go to West Ham, I love it, but it's not like going to the old ground as that just has something you can never recreate."



Unknown: Alfie Doughty is ready for a first taste of the Premier League

WE ARE PREMIER LEAGUE

Town fans back the Hatters to stay up!

by Mike Simmonds
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Luton Town kick off their first ever Premier League campaign at the weekend when they head to Brighton & Hove Albion.

The Hatters have been written off by the majority of pundits and supporters to drop straight back down to the Championship, but that's not the case for those of a Town persuasion.

With over 1,000 voting on the Luton News social media page, then 75.8 percent believe Rob Edwards' side can avoid relegation.

Giving their reasons why, @DonnyLebowski said: "We need a good start. Make home advantage count. Beat the other teams around us."

"I think we'll get 42/43 points. Which will be enough."

@Elbechio: "Pure passion, guts and sticking with the manager will be the difference between us and the teams around us with over paid players who take the money and wait for their manager to get the blame and the sack."

@alexnewby3: "It's going to be close. Just want to have hope of staying up. Anything else the players have performed out of their skin. Everyone who was promoted last year stayed up. You never know."

@nptomlin: "I think we can finish 15th. Some of the clubs are in turmoil at the moment. We of course are in a good place. Trust the team, trust the management and trust the board. COYH."

@hatternick: "I have a feeling 16th place has our name on it. We will get tonked a few times, but we will cause a few bloody noses. recruitment has been excellent and still retained that spirit within the squad."

@arfasarnie: "Love that optimism. Positivity and effort are what will keep us up."

@frankj: "As a non-hatter I think you've got reasonable pace (not frightening premier pace) and a massive team spirit. KR will be a shock to a few teams too. I think you'll stay up, 15th."

@GeorgeOsborn: "I think the gulf in resources will be too much to bridge in the end."

"I do think though that we will fight much deeper into the season than the rest

expect and there's a world where there could be enough poorly run clubs (e.g. Everton) for us to finish above."

@RSebbage: "Kenilworth Rd will swing it for us."

@Larriek51410912: "As someone called a born pessimist (realist in reality), I'm very confident we'll stay up. More confident than I was that we'd get promoted..."

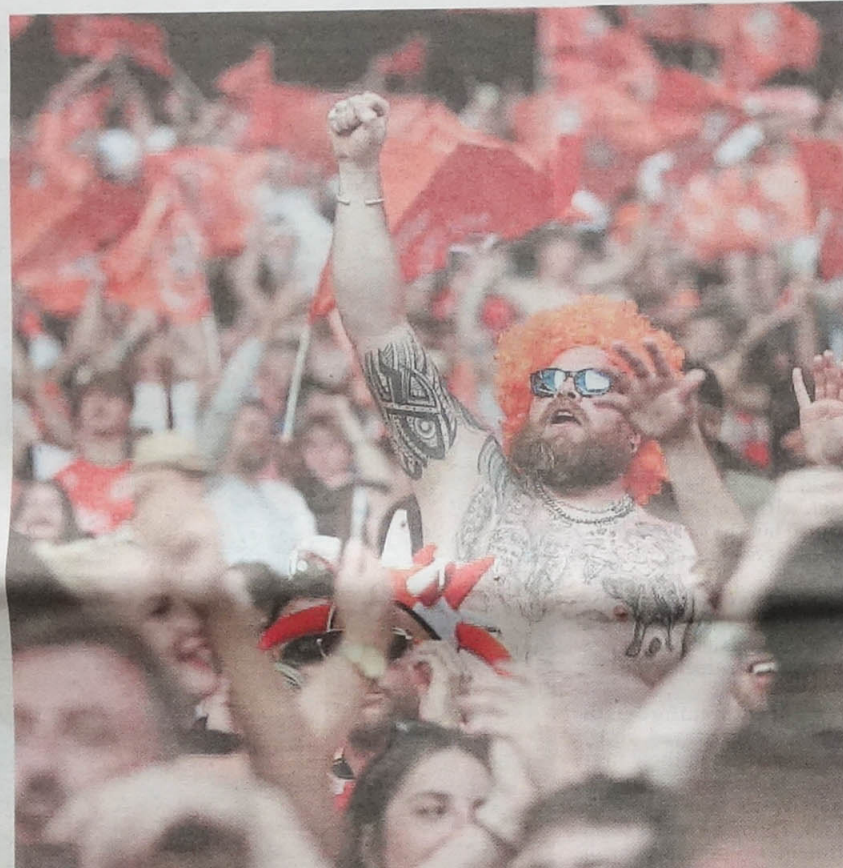
@ConnorLTFC: "Going to be completely honest, I just can't see it. I don't think we'll be rock bottom, but I can see us getting 18th or 19th."

"The perfect outcome is if we can slip into that 17th position, my heart would love it, but my head says it won't happen."

@justinhillo8: "Heart says yes head says no, I just don't think we have the budget and rightly so we have other priorities, that said it's possible."

@LesterBandy: "I said yes as I'm an optimist and I'd like to think that after the last 12 years that most Luton fans will say the same. But, in reality, it's gonna take a monumental effort to achieve it."

"We all have to be together. Yes, teams will beat us, heavily. But, the stronger the team etc..."



Confident: Luton supporters believe the Hatters can avoid relegation this season - pic: Getty Images

Mads wants Danish call

by Mike Simmonds
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Town's summer signing Mads Andersen is hoping to emulate his hero, Liverpool defender Daniel Agger, and earn a senior Denmark call-up during his time with the Hatters this season.

The 25-year-old has played once for his country before, that a 0-0 draw against Israel in the UEFA European U19 Championships in 2015, but senior honours have eluded him ever since.

However, a move to the Premier League could see his profile sky rocket, as his determination to feature for the Danes was clear to see.

He said: "Absolutely, that's a goal of mine obviously, so I

hope that Luton can help me get there."

"There are many Danes who don't know how good I am. I believe there are many who don't know how well I did in the Championship."

Growing up being such a fan of Agger, who had a 12-year career with Brøndby and the Reds, playing over 200 times when at Anfield and also winning 75 caps for Denmark too, definitely shaped Andersen's allegiances when growing up.

That has all changed now that he is at Kenilworth Road though, as he continued: "I did follow Liverpool because of Daniel Agger, and now I'm going to be following Luton."

"He played in my position. I don't think I will realise until we play them (Liverpool), so it's going to be a big moment for me."

"I think most of the stadiums are going to be a bit of a different experience to enter. Anfield, obviously, is a big one and hopefully, we can go there and do a good job."

With Andersen having another terrific season at Barnsley, named in the League One Team of the Year, then he wasn't at all shocked to hear of the Hatters' interest in bringing him to Kenilworth Road.

Headed: "I had an incredibly good season in League One, where I also made it to the Team of the Year."

"I attended Luton's match against Coventry knowing they were interested in me."

"I thought, okay, if they can get promoted, there could definitely be an opportunity here."

"So, no, this transfer didn't come as a surprise at all."



International ambition: New Luton defender Mads Andersen - pic: Getty Images



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