

MAD AS A HATTER!

THE LUTON TOWN FANZINE

Issue 35

Aug 96



"SO WHAT DID THE LADS GET
OUT OF THE SCOTLAND TOUR, LEN?"



MAD AS A HATTER!

THE LUTON TOWN FANZINE



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EDITORIAL

"The fans won't see this group of players together again, if I have anything to do with it." These were the words of Lennie Lawrence after the ignominious defeat by Barnsley late last season which were thought to herald a major clearout of players. Yet, of the players on show that day only Scott Oakes has left the club, so what happened? Other comments made at that time suggested that the size of the playing staff, and the wage bill had to be cut, and it is possible that the latter has been achieved, but the playing staff is still the same size with the ex-YTS youngsters taking the places of those who have left. To most of us it seems incredible that every player whose contract was expiring was offered a new contract, and the number that have signed suggest that this was a flawed strategy. To have released a few players would not have brought in transfer fees, but would certainly have made reductions in the wage bill, giving Lennie a little bit of flexibility to bring in the new faces that we still desperately need.

The club have given us plenty to moan about during the summer. First, we had the season ticket prices which, to most people's astonishment, were not reduced in what can best be described as a masterpiece of public relations. Apparently, sales have not suffered too much from this, which can only show what gluttons we are for punishment. Then the new 'third' kit was launched in not so much a blaze of publicity as an embarrassed silence. Not surprising in view of the colours selected. Perhaps someone will explain why Luton Town need to play in yellow, a colour generally despised due to it's association with our rivals down the road in Hertfordshire. The need for a third kit is vaguely understood, but is it too much to ask that fans views could be taken into account before the next set of kit is launched, next summer. But then that might see more orange in the kit, and that wouldn't do, would it.

During the last few weeks the Public Inquiry into the Kohlerdome planning application has got well under way. The entertainment at Luton Town Hall is, in all honesty, a bit thin on the ground, but it has had it's moments. One of the finest would have been that point at which Sir Graham Bright MP suddenly ceased to be sitting on the fence, and fell rather awkwardly on to the Slip End side of it. It seems he cannot help himself from interfering, and trying to ensure that the Inquiry will not be able to make an impartial decision. Well, Sir Graham, if that is what you call democracy, fair enough, but we suspect you will have more trouble with the real thing come the election in the spring.

What has come to light during the course of the Inquiry is what Wyncote have in mind for the football club. They have decided that a 12,000 seater stadium will be good enough, and that the club will be able to find £9 million or so to build it, after their donation of £3 million. Leaving aside the monetary issues, there will be few amongst us who would feel that a stadium of that size would be acceptable, with the restrictions it would impose. If Wyncote win the day, we really are in trouble.

TACTICAL VOTING

Firstly, thanks to those of you who took the trouble to vote in our annual end-of-season poll. The number was slightly down on last year, which is probably a reflection of the sort of season we had. The draw for the winning entry was made down at the pub, by drawing a number from the set used for the "Bonus Ball" draw. The number drawn was 22, which means the winner was Jenny Harrtree from Norfolk, who will be receiving an item of LTFC leisurewear in the near future. So, on to the first part of the results (second part in issue 36).

Town Player of the Season Ian Feuer

This really wasn't a contest, with Ian taking over 70% of the votes. Most of you did not feel any comment was necessary, but "since his arrival he has been world class" may have summed up how many of you felt. Of course, he "had plenty of opportunity to exercise his goalkeeping skills," but "we would have been down by February if it wasn't for him" is probably a bit optimistic. In second place was Steve Davis, with Waddock in third, and Alexander, Marshall and Thorpe lagging behind on one vote each.

Young Player of the Season Tony Thorpe

The age of the players seemed to cause many of you a problem ("they all look young to me, even Peakey"), after we suggested that the age limit should be 22. Well, we weren't going to be too strict about it, but Thorpe fits within that limit anyway, and took 65% of the vote. He was clearly helped by the fact that "no other youngster was given an extended run". There is no doubt that he "has come a long way since his debut," although "he certainly has his faults, (overplaying being the main one) but always gives his best and has the confidence to try and make things happen." The runner up in this category was Stuart Douglas, with about 30%. Stuart "looks like a nice polite young man. And he scored against Oldham transforming a terminally boring game into one which was only nearly terminally boring." Graham Alexander ("one for the top") and Paul McLaren took the remaining votes, with Sean Evers getting a mention.

Best Town Performance West Bromwich Albion (A)

Surprisingly, the votes in this category were spread over 13 matches, with 9 receiving one or two votes. This meant that the top four were only separated by four votes. Something about midweek, away, league games, and rarity perhaps? This was "the final flourish before the fall" and "makes you wonder how we finished last." "One of the highlights of the season — of course we were crap next game," could have referred to almost any match, but actually meant the Tranmere (home) game. Several of you came up with Norwich (away) as being one of the best ("I wonder if Dayoff agrees with me"), along with Grimsby at home, although revenge might have had something to do with this.

Worst Town Performance Grimsby Town (A, FA Cup)

No surprise at all here, except that half the votes went to seven other matches. It seems that even a 7-1 defeat can be outdone, although "you might just as well print the whole fixture list", or "all the games under Terry Westley — except Southend (away)" summed up the feelings of several of you. So, what of Grimsby? "The worst I've seen in 28 years," "you can't get much worse than letting in seven goals against a boatfull of fisherman," but the feelings of most of you were summed up in four words — "Wot can you say?" Stoke and Portsmouth (away) were well up in the voting, along with Barnsley at home, which many considered to have included the worst half of the season (the first one).

Best Goal for Town Tony Thorpe, v Barnsley (H)

As has happened previously the winner was one of the later goals of the season but then the second placed goal was scored by Oakes (his first v Southend at home) and some of you may have chosen between the two, preferring not to vote for Oakes. As for the winner, this was "a rare moment of composure by a Town player," "what a stormer." As for Oakes' goal, described as a "beautiful curler," it's likely that "if only he could do that more often instead of just standing there looking pretty," is a sentiment quite widely shared. Bontcho's goal against Sheffield United was at the head of the chasing pack, numbering a dozen. This means that nearly a third of the season's goals were considered worth voting for — is this a record?

Best Goal Against Julian James, v Sunderland (A)

The first time a Town player has won this, Jules was well clear of the opposition, even with so many to choose from. 12 others received votes, but none got close.... "Jules bullet header was a classic" and "possibly the most spectacular o.g. ever scored by one of our defenders." Apparently, Jules has a better own goal strike rate than even Marvin. Of those who actually intended to score against the Town (giving JJ the benefit of the doubt) the leader was "Thingy Bloke" with "the up and over, then volley goal" for Huddersfield at their place. Ahh, so we mean Rob Edwards, making his First Division debut in some style. Agreed, "it looked pretty tasty, even though it was up the other end. And we were defending pretty well that day. Well, comparatively well." Of the other goals, Portsmouth's fourth because "this probably got rid of Terry Westley," certainly deserves a mention. The number of Norwich goals getting votes seemed to exceed the number they scored against us!

Best Opponents Sunderland

Nine teams in what was our division received votes, but Sunderland were the clear winners. They are still tipped to struggle next season, probably due to the standard of the division they won — "no-one was that impressive really" — and they were described as "the best of a poor bunch." The same theme allowed one

voter to abstain from choosing "one of the other crap teams in a division full of crap." Southend received a vote for giving us "6 points and a nice day out at the sea," and Westley and McGiven got one for "obvious reasons." Outside of the First Division, Bournemouth received one vote, and Genoa were equal runners-up, in spite of the small numbers who actually saw them.

Worst Opponents

Watford

Taken, in the traditional style, with over 60% of the vote, and for the third time in four years. It's surprising that some of you feel you should qualify your vote, with such terms as "honestly," "totally objectively," and "they were genuinely dire." "Loyalty vote" is considered a perfectly acceptable reason, but it's fair to say "that we were so crap on April 20th that any other team would have beaten us convincingly." Southend were the closest challengers, thanks to their kind donation of 6 points, with Ancona and Millwall rising above the five teams with solitary nominations.

Best Referee

Uriah Rennie

Why do we persevere with this category? Poor old Uriah received only a third of the number of votes cast for "none of them," but really deserves the award, "by an absolute mile! Has mighty Dwight's pace," enabling him to keep up with play, unlike most of the others. Mr Riley, at the Oldham game, got a vote for "blowing the whistle on the season" which is as good a reason as any. However, the non-votes were summed up in the following statement; "I refuse to nominate anyone. To my certain knowledge we have suffered a 30+ year conspiracy by referees to prevent us from taking our rightful place as European champions. This season has been no exception."

Worst Referee

Trevor West

Managing to finish above "All of them" is quite an achievement, but our Trev managed it with a single decision. In case you were wondering, he took charge of the game against Sheffield United at Bramall Lane, and was the perpetrator of that awful backpass decision, when it was quite clear that "Mitchell couldn't have meant it, he's never meant anything." All of them, because "the standard gets worse" is fair comment. Edward Wolstenholme of Blackburn (Huddersfield away) "looked more than usually incompetent," but George Cain (Watford at home) and Mick Pierce (Huddersfield at home) achieved greater votes, the latter after sending off Steve Davis.

Best Opposing Player

Scott Oakes

With barely 15% of the votes cast, this is not exactly a resounding victory, but he came out on top of a total of 19 nominees. "How many players either put in such little effort?" But then, "Scott will surely set the Premiership alight next season with his superb talent, week in, week out commitment and his wonderful

attitude to the beautiful game." Comments on the others were not so much thin on the ground as non existent, but those who received more than one vote were Dean Richards, Simon Sturridge, Michael Gray and Ivano Bonnetti.

Worst Opposing Player

Devon White

A fine and resounding victory, with only Watford and Andy "complete tosser" Hessenthaler joining Mr Shite in getting more than one vote. "Big bloke, no skill," "a player devoid of any talent, skill or worth," and "a lamp post" were some of the comments made. Clearly not a man held in high regard. Among others suggested for this accolade were Mitchell "pass to the opposition" Thomas, Julian James, John Dreyer ("notice how Stoke improve when he goes off"), and, mysteriously, Spit the Dog.

Idiot of the Season

Terry Westley

Jointly awarded with Mick McGiven for being "just as 'king clueless" after suggesting we were top 6 material. Plenty of votes for David Kohler as well, for appointing Westley, allowing him to appoint McGiven and spend a small fortune. Honourable mentions for "all those dickheads who think booing players is a good idea," and "the bloke who gave Lennie Lawrence the Manager of the Month award — it was all downhill" from there. Also, "The groundsman at Palace for condemning me to a no-games season" and "Myself, for singing Jingle Bells with 5 minutes to go at Watford." Ahh, some people never learn. Finally, Scott Oakes for being "neither use nor ornament" in spite of looking quite nice, this from one of our lady readers who wishes "he'd just piss off and stand there looking gorgeous in another team's kit. What a prat."

Not quite a separate category, but one nomination was received for Julian James, who has been stunning since being sent off on his debut at Leeds a few years ago. Had one of his best seasons for own goals, but this nomination was "more a lifetime achievement award really."

Hero of the Season

Ian Feuer

No contest. Only six nominations, and those for Happy Harry and for the Hot Dog Sellers, both for keeping smiling, were unexpected to say the least. Ray Wilkins got his vote for taking Jurgen off our hands in exchange for £600,000, and Dwight Marshall's two votes are easy to understand. In second place were the fans for "putting up with that crap all year" and "watching such rubbish" whilst "never giving up hope we would avoid the drop." Ian Feuer took the title, though, because he "saved us from some right hammerings" and "without him we would have been relegated by Easter," and at the same time "for actually giving a shit." Also mentioned in despatches were Lennie Lawrence, and the Brighton fans "for showing that football supporters will not constantly put up with being treated like scum" (*what, even if they behave like scum? — Ed*).

CRYSTAL BALLS 5

Yes, it is that time of the year again. This time I have been consulting with my own psychic guru, Mystic Peg, who has been revealing all to me on a regular basis. But more about that in next week's *News of the World*. Before we get down to business, let me remind you that the talent of *Fantasy Football League* favourite Jason Lee was first commented on by none other than yours truly, in issue 21 of *Mad*, when I referred to him as "the personification of ineptitude". Spooky, eh...? Right, that's enough boasting. Let the predictions commence!

August

Middlesbrough's signing of Alan Shearer hits a snag due to language difficulties. "He is having trouble learning Portuguese," explains manager Robho through an interpreter, "so the rest of the squad wouldn't be able to communicate with him." Luton get off to a flying start, winning 5-0 away, while Watford amaze the nation by only losing 3-0 in their first match.

September

The *Daily Mirror* is accused of going too far after giving away a free bayonet with each copy on the eve of England's hastily arranged match with Argentina. "The Argies don't like it up 'em," says the editorial, "so when you find one, stick this where it hurts!" Carlos Valderrama of Colombia is sent to hospital after an unfortunate case of mistaken identity involving a short sighted cleaning lady and a toilet.

October

Watford manager Kenny 'Full Metal' Jackett dismisses suggestions that his new star full-back and centre-forward will have difficulties settling at their new club. "They will have no problems at all. Vicarage Road has always been full of people who play just like Dicks and Kuntz." West Ham's Harry Redknapp is appointed Secretary General of the United Nations.

November

ITV sue Ron Atkinson for breach of contract after he is alleged to have made an intelligent remark when commentating on the Champions League match between Manchester United and Isle of Wight title holders BSE Cowes. "Whilst we realise that this is completely out of character, it is a great shock to us. We do not condone this kind of attitude on ITV Sport," says spokesman Gary Lobotomy. Terry Westley takes a new job in Scotland.

December

The England team are invited to audition for a new film entitled 'Led

Zeppelin — the Early Years'. Spokesman Randy Hare explains, "None of them can sing or play, but they would be perfect for the hotel trashing scenes." It is revealed that Slaven Bilic of West Ham was sponsored by the *Daily Mirror* for brutally kicking German forward Freddy Bobic during Euro '96. He admits that he would have been paid more, but he lost the machine gun before the game.

January

West Ham deny reports that Iain Dowie is to leave the club to take a highly paid role in the new Addams Family film. Luton increase their lead to 20 points in Division 2, whilst Watford are in dire trouble at the bottom. Nick Barmby and Juninho of Middlesbrough spend an afternoon at the local detention centre after a policeman arrests them for playing truant.

February

Plans for a new comedy film called 'Carry on Scoring' are announced. It will feature genuine footballers with apparently amusing names. Among those involved are Neil Cox, Uwe Fuchs, Tranmere's John Thomas and Sri Lankan international Yushudda Seenisgoolismisssis. Jurgen Sommer is also to appear. "The script is lousy, so we have to get laughs from somewhere," says director Ivor Wopper.

March

After his colourful choice of suits during Euro '96, John Barnes announces his retirement from football in order to concentrate on his modelling career. He is due to appear in next year's Dulux catalogue. Bruce Grobelaar is cleared of match fixing in the High Court.

April

Southampton lose 12-0 to Yeovil in the FA Cup. Jurgen Sommer is due to take *Mad as a Hatter!* to court for defamation of character, but he drops the charge.... David Pleat remains calm after Sheffield Wednesday suffer their 20th consecutive 5-0 defeat. "The true fans will appreciate our excellent consistency," he explains. Karren Brady of Birmingham City is accused of attacking a MacDonalds employee. It is alleged that she ordered a burger and reacted angrily when asked if she wanted Fries with it.

May

As Luton celebrate their runaway success in Division 2, Watford look forward to weekend trips to Scarborough and Torquay. Terry Westley is voted Celtic's Man of the Season after getting Rangers relegated in style, and Kevin Keegan is left to work out how Newcastle managed to lose the Premiership title after having a 40 point lead in February.

So, there we are, another action packed season ahead. It doesn't take a crystal ball to see that we are going to have a much better time of it next season. We'll be up again in no time. Shame about the Hornets.....

Graham Johnson

CONTRIBUTIONS PLEASE

It's no good saying that you've always been meaning to write something but never get round to it, get pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard) and send that article, letter or whatever off to us. We've got six more issues to fill this season, and we can't do it without your help. The next issue will be on sale on September 28th, and the deadline for that issue will be September 14th. And if you include your name and address we'll send you a free issue of *Mad as a Hatter!* by way of thanks.

EXILED HATTERS FAN?

If you are an exile, you'll want to keep up to date with what's going on at Kenilworth Road, and with Hatters Matters you can do just that. Hatters Matters is a monthly newsletter designed specifically for the exiled fan, and provides all the news that you won't find on teletext.

To subscribe for one year (12 issues) send a cheque for £6 (payable to Hatters Matters) to: Hatters Matters, 292 Icknield Way, Luton, LU3 2JS. Or just send an SAE for a free sample copy.

ATTRACTIONS:

From the *Push CD '96 Which University Guide*. Maybe a tad unfair, but something tells us the author wasn't a big Luton fan!

Luton's biggest sporting *non-attraction* are 'the Hatters' (Luton FC) who for years *cheated* with their plastic *so-called* 'pitch', until they were finally made to get rid of it and then started to slide down one division per season.

The text in italics is PUSH's opinion take it or leave it.

Seeing Red over Yellow

This time last year it had all seemed so reasonable. Pony had come up with two half decent designs which just had to be better than the crappy DMF and "own brand" efforts of previous seasons. We had to wait the usual couple of months before the shirts went on sale but when they did come out they were smart, available in all sizes (the material scrimping DMF tops clung like clingfilm to the more ample frames..... i.e. fat sods like myself), and had a two season guarantee for the fashion victim. There were a few small misdemeanours; the fabric snags too easily, the 'Pony' lettering on my away top has started to come away in the wash, the badge — beautifully sewn on though it is — is the shape of Playschool's arched window and is so obviously generated on DAK's PC that it should be copywritten to Microsoft. However, the shirts are the best we've had in a number of years — the replicas arguably the best quality we've ever had.

Then Pony have to spoil it by bringing out a new "3rd strip" in, of all colours, yellow. Is it because we let Pony down by being relegated? Did they over order the yellow material for the Spurs away shirt and decide to knock up a new LTFC kit out of that? Whatever the case, Pony have ignored, or failed in bothering to look into, the history of the club and our fiercest rivals. Doubtless they've looked after their Premiership customers better — I haven't seen a new red Spurs kit yet.

Maybe it is time we re-evaluate the relationship with our "friends" at Watford — it's all been getting a bit nasty over the past few years. However, I don't for one moment see that as an excuse to dress up in their colours. And, quite frankly, the thought of Kenilworth Road being liberally sprinkled with fans in yellow tops makes me feel nauseous. Perhaps I'm overreacting, but I don't know, one of the principles that has kept kit manufacturers from totally running riot in the English game is the tradition of club colours. The colour of home kits doesn't change (although the designs obviously do) because the fans, they say, won't stand for it. If we stand, purchase and wear, the new yellow top then it'll be yet another indication that football fans will indeed wear any old crap.

Umbro had their fingers burnt over the bloody horrible grey shirts in which England lost the Euro '96 semi-final. Nobody wanted it, nobody liked it, only a few sad cases (and the England football team) actually wore it. There seemed to be far more replica red 1966 on show at Wembley during Euro '96 (TOFFS must be laughing almost as hard as Alan Shearer). Umbro have apparently now ditched the grey top and are going back to traditional red — surprise, surprise. Hopefully, Pony will be similarly embarrassed, albeit on a smaller scale, for bringing out their new Watford style Luton kit. In the

meantime, if you've got £30 and are seriously considering buying a new Town shirt — for God's sake follow the example of the England fans who bought red 66 shirts — the new *Mad as a Hatter!* white replica away shirt from seventy-whatever is surely on sale soon. Buy that instead.

Tim Kingston

Low scorers in the Euro 96 song contest



Frank Keating

BILLY CONNOLLY suggests that The Archers theme tune should be sung as England's anthem at Wembley. Somebody on a radio phone-in yesterday suggested the Match of the Day catchy darum-darum-darumdum would be just the job. An alleged poet rang from a phone-box in Luton to suggest that *The press called Gazza a wally*
But he stuffed 'em
With a chip and a volley
should be set to music.

From *The Guardian*, 21/6/96. Will anyone own up to being the Phone Box Poet?

you've first tried memorising something usually does the trick.

Tip number two is to try and visualise everything you learn, whether as a mental image of the content of the information or as the arrangement of the words on the page, or the images on the screen. That's how people with photographic memories do it.

If you haven't got a visual memory the above tip obviously falls apart, but you could try this instead: sometimes the neurons and axons between you and the desired memory just need a little bit of a rebore. Try remembering something half-forgotten such as a nursery rhyme, or the last time Luton won away, and you should find the desired information coming through unbidden.

Not sure where this came from, but if this works, we should all have excellent memories.

SHORT CUTS

Brian Sewell — Evening Standard 27/6/96

By the end of this article there is little doubt that Brian Sewell wasted a lot of money on a semi-final ticket. But the boy Kandinsky obviously knew his colours — it's only natural to hate W**f**d's yellow and red.

That "vibration of the soul" is something Town fans know all too well — it brings on nausea too.

to the task ahead.

Angry Luton fans jeered Oakes even before the start of the game on Saturday and again at half-time, when he was substituted. Oakes said: "I was trying really hard out there and I don't deserve that kind of response."

"I have been the man-of-the-match in away games, but I suppose that counts for nothing."

"I was surprised and saddened by

homelands (S) (920857).

8.25 * **ALEXANDER: THE GOD KING**

(T): See Critics' Choice (S) (529302).

9.15 **HAVE I GOT NEWS FOR YOU (T):**

Well, we like Alexander, and we sponsor his kit, but he surely isn't that good.

Interesting one from the *Luton News*. Notice how the man who laid on the second goal wasn't even in the team.

INDIGO blue is not the colour to heighten the emotion of a great event. It is dull, and its crepuscular tone more suits the maiden aunt than assorted examples of male muscularity assembled as the flower of the nation. Kandinsky, first of abstract painters, declared that colour "calls forth a vibration from the soul" — but not if it is indigo; that is a response to red and yellow, one the colour of blood and rage and prostitute's garters, the other of adultery, treachery and evil (and only by chance of referees' cards).

Think this came from the *Herald & Post*. It prompts two thoughts:

- 1 Oakes trying? Pull the other one Scotty.
- 2 Man of the Match in away games? A reminder of which ones please. (Oakes did not get any MoM awards in our HatterLeague competition).

Big match facts

TUESDAY'S DETAILS

LUTON TOWN 3 PORT VALE 2

TOWN: K. Davis; Chenery, Johnson, Davis, Thomas; Alexander, Waddock, Evers (McLaren 71 mins), Thorpe; Douglas (Guentchev 76 mins), Grant (Taylor 80 mins).

PORT VALE: Musselwhite; Hill, D. Glover, Aspin, Stokes; McCarthy, Porter, Bogie (Walker 76 mins), Guppy; Mills (L. Glover 88 mins), Naylor. Unused sub Sandeman.

THE GOALS: 0-1 7 mins: Andy Porter, unmarked to meet Steve Guppy's left wing cross; 1-1 22 mins: Tony Thorpe from the rebound after Stuart Douglas shot against the bar; 2-1 78 mins: Bontcho Guentchev, after Kim Grant flicked on a long free kick by Darren Patterson; 3-1 82 mins: Thorpe

Cricket Corner

It's not often we give any coverage to cricket in the pages of *Mad as a Hatter!*, particularly at this end of the season, but then it isn't often we have a local success story to report on. By local, we mean Bedfordshire CCC, more recently known as the whipping boys of the Minor Counties Championship. This season things have changed a bit, and although still a little fragile, the team have proved more of a match for most sides. In their one day games, however, they have been unbeatable, and now feature in the final of the MCC Trophy, to be played at Lord's, on Wednesday 28th August. In that match they play against Cheshire, one of the stronger sides in the Western division of the Minor Counties. Entry to Lord's for the game is only £6 and this game provides what is probably the first ever opportunity to see the county side play at "headquarters." As Beds have possibly the smallest membership of any Minor County, let's get plenty of support down there for the game.

For those unfamiliar with the side, the catalyst for the improvement this season has been the recruitment of Wayne Larkins to open the batting. After being discarded by Durham from the first class game, he is now one of the Beds professionals and has scored five centuries this season in nine matches. The former Northants and England player was born in the county, so it has some meaning for him. Alongside him in the batting is Neil Stanley, another former Northants player, and David Clarke, who has played a number of times for England Amateurs. Then comes captain Phil Hoare of Luton Town CC, and Chris Bullen, a former professional who played first class cricket with Surrey. The other pro is Ricky Williams, a fast bowler, and hard hitting batsman, previously with Gloucestershire, who opens the bowling with Matt White. Keeping wicket is likely to be Toby Bailey, a youngster also playing for Northants second XI, but the Beds strength lies in it's all rounders, with Richard Dalton, Andy Trott, and Bobby Sher all capable of making an impact with either bat or ball. These players make up the county's "first" team, which is likely to be the one selected for the final.

In addition to the Lord's final, the county side are poised to gain a place in the NatWest Trophy next season with a match against a first class side, which will satisfy the targets set at the start of this, their centenary season. And in case you were wondering where there could be a link between LTFC and Beds CCC, I can tell you that none other than Joe Payne represented both in his time. In fact in one match in 1950, Payne scored more than 50 runs and bowled eleven overs for two runs! So there, in a way, is a link.

Membership of the county club is available for £10, from Mr M.E.Green, 33 The Embankment, Bedford, MK40 3PE.



A *Mad as a Hatter!* exclusive (ooh, that is exciting) with the only photos you're likely to see of the friendly at Ayr. Above, we have Marvin Johnson in action, and, below, Stuart Douglas making a dash to escape the sunshine.



Here Comes Sommer

At the beginning of Luton's ill fated 1995-6 campaign (I know, I know, we're all trying to forget those lofty expectations/eventually nightmarish nine months), there appeared an article in issue 28 of *Mad*, concerning my efforts, and lack thereof to secure an interview with the Town's then first team goalkeeper, Juergen Sommer. Titled 'Why Doesn't Juergen Sommer Like Me?', the open letter chronicled my unsuccessful attempts, one in the United States and one in England, to pow-wow with the big lad. Well, as they say, third time lucky.

Prior to the June, US Cup '96 match between the United States and the Republic of Ireland, played at Foxboro Stadium outside of Boston (2-1 to the colonists), Sommer and Surette finally squared off. In the pecking order of the United States Soccer federation, Sommer currently ranks as the national side's third-choice 'keeper behind Brad Friedel (Galatasaray) and Kasey Keller (Millwall). The Hatters' Ian Feuer is currently listed as number four.

And while many of this country's too few knowledgeable sportswriters and fans may argue the merits of this order, there is total agreement in the fact that this is a very strong group. Thankfully, the only time former US number one 'keeper and team captain Tony 'Tubby' Meola is now seen is when he is picking the ball out of the back of the net for Major League Soccer's New York/New Jersey MetroStars.

Sommer was more than happy to talk about his four year tenure with Luton Town and he maintains he has no bitter feelings toward the club surrounding the circumstances of his transfer to Loftus Road and Queens Park Rangers. The former Indiana University standout (*err, what? — Ed*) said his departure was a mutual agreement between himself and the club. Chairman and Managing Director, David Kohler, had wanted Sommer to sign a four year contract but Sommer balked at the length of the agreement and refused the deal. At this, Sommer states, he was told by Kohler that Kelvin Davis would then take his place as the team's number one 'keeper.

At this point the handwriting was on the wall and he knew it would be only a matter of time before his 6'5" frame would be blocking another side's goalmouth. Though Sommer is philosophical in his assessment of the whole situation. "A player has to keep moving up and the idea of playing for someone like Ray Wilkins was just too good to pass up," he said. And while on the subject of his watching the last matches of the 94-95 season from the sidelines, Sommer was frank and to the point. "Any thoughts of Kelvin Davis replacing me in the first team were crazy."

Davis' age and emotions were not ready for the rigours of week in/week out First Division action, Sommer said, and this was proven by the standard to which Davis' play fell when he became the Town's main stopper.

His current contract at QPR has two years to run and the team have offered an extension of an additional two years. The extension, he said, would have been a foregone conclusion if the United States had remained the soccer backwater it had been in recent years. Now, though, with offers from several MLS clubs, he declined to say which ones, this option has added a new twist to Sommer's decision process. On his return to England, he will sit down with his agent and talk over his long range plans.

As to his last days at Kenilworth Road, Sommer said he didn't feel the fans treated him badly. However his ball catching and handling abilities might have been perceived, Sommer felt the fans were fair and he was very pleased with the amount of support mail he received from Luton supporters after his transfer. So, what would he like to say in return?

"I love Luton Town fans and the club, and it's unfortunate they've gone down to the Second Division. I hope they find an owner and go straight back up."

An interesting two sentences. As with so many Town backers, Sommer feels the Luton Town flagship is missing THE main component — its captain — and even with past managerial problems, there is precious little separating the current side from most First Division squads. [Funny how most Town talk is broken down into two categories: 1) Pro-club, and 2) Anti-Kohler]

As we parted, I reminded Sommer that the Yanks three English based 'keepers were all relegated last season and asked him if quick return trips were planned.

"Yes, but we'll all need some luck," he chuckled.

Brian Surette

Eric Hall
I've forgotten most of the other names Elton used, though I have a feeling that when he was Watford chairman his manager Graham Taylor was known as Liz — probably because she's scored more times than Watford — though I wouldn't monster swear to it.

Good God, it's a rare example of humour from Eric Hall — or it might be if it wasn't true.

The Division Two Who's Who

There's a title we don't want to be using more than once. Now, you've been watching the Town for years, and know nothing about what we used to call the lower divisions, so here's a briefing on the teams we meet this season to help you out. Or not, as the case may be.....

AFC Bournemouth: Looked ordinary when they beat us in the Coca Cola Cup last season, they have limited resources and are likely to struggle.

Blackpool: After the mother of all cock-ups at the end of last season, together with the jailing of their chairman, it's difficult to see them doing much.

Brentford: Struggled last season after nearly making it through the play-offs the year before. Should finish in the top half.

Bristol City: Oh joy! Delighted to see their name back on our fixture list so soon. No idea what they're like, but expect them to be crap and beat us home and away.

Bristol Rovers: Now back in Bristol, which comes as a disappointment to those who enjoyed their days out in Bath over the years. Much will depend on how they replace Marcus Stewart, and how they react to returning 'home'.

Burnley: Managed these days by Adrian Heath, which is as good a reason as any to hope they have a wretched season.

Bury: Errm, they've got a short name and will probably struggle. Next.....

Chesterfield: Nearly made play-offs last season; unlikely to do as well this time around. Play kick and run, like the shit.

Crewe Alexandra: Quality footballing side who keep unearthing class youngsters (and Geoff Thomas). Play-offs last year, a feat they are capable of repeating.

Gillingham: Won promotion with a miserly defence and, believe it or not, Jim Stannard in goal. Another class footballing outfit (not!), may find things more difficult this year.

Millwall: Extremely funny relegation last season, which they may struggle to recover from. Nice to see Gerard Lavin again, bring waterproofs if sitting in the first 15 rows!

Notts County: Embarrassingly bad two seasons ago, yet they made last season's play-offs (after offloading Devon Shite). Excellent ground and nearby pubs, friendly (if small) support, team likely to be in contention.

Peterborough United: Will sign 50 ex-Barnet, Southend and/or Birmingham players, as Barry Bullshit continues his policy of mediocrity in depth. Should stay up, but unlikely to do any more.

Plymouth Argyle: Managed by Neil Warnock — book your holidays now to avoid sitting through games against them. Hopefully will kick their way back to where they came from.

Preston North End: Proverbial sleeping giant who could prove to be the surprise promotion contenders. On the other hand, they could emulate Carlisle

last season, and go straight back down.

Rotherham United: Won last season's Auto Windscreens Shield (wow!), but likely to be amongst the strugglers this time round.

Shrewsbury Town: Remember beating them 4-1 in 1981/82 to get promotion? Yep, me too. Know anything else about them? Nope, me neither. Relegation fodder.

Stockport County: Excellent nickname. Mid table last season, and unlikely to improve significantly.

Walsall: Recently lost two players to Peterborough, which suggests a lack of ambition which could prove to be well founded.

Watford: Shit. Relegation certainties. You can just hear their fans (both of 'em) now, can't you; "We're only on loan to Division Two". Too 'kin right, you're on loan from Division Three and they'll get you back come May.

Wrexham: Yet another team we haven't met since the promotion year. Welsh, but only just; top half of the table, but only just.

Wycombe Wanderers: First ever meeting with them, it's easy to forget they've come a long way very quickly (especially when you go nowhere very slowly trying to get away from their ground). Alan Smith is a shrewd manager, and they could be a useful outside bet.

York City: Beat Man United last year in the Coca Cola Cup, but lucky to avoid relegation, mainly courtesy of the Brighton crowd trouble. May not escape this time.

So, having dealt with the also-rans, what of the championship contenders? One-horse-race, methinks, and that horse is called Luton Town FC. Seriously, though, if we can score goals on a more regular basis this season the defence (which was by no means the worst in Division One last year) should be solid enough to ensure a challenge for promotion can be mounted — we are long overdue some success, as indeed are these predictions!

Clair Voyant

Ten Reasons to Support Luton Town

- 1 We've got four current internationals in the team (all world class)
- 2 We haven't got four away kits
- 3 We've got a sexy goalkeeper (so my Mum says!)
- 4 We aren't bad losers
- 5 We've got Happy Harry as a mascot
- 6 We haven't got Elton John as a fan
- 7 Our players don't spit at the W***d fans
- 8 We've got a star striker who didn't score in the league all last season
- 9 We're going to win the FA Cup this season (as well as the league — but I said that last year)
- 10 We've got a fantastic fanzine!

Peter Bulkely (aged 7)

RAVING MAD!!!

Dear "Mad",

After reading Nicky Bush's article "Sexy Legs" in issue 33 and Sandra Dunn's letter in issue 34, I felt I had to write in too. I agree with Sandra — Ian Feuer IS sexy, isn't he? (especially when he hasn't shaved) and I loved his baggy shorts at West Brom. Wouldn't he look even better in short shorts?

Another sexy man for me is Gary Waddock. Gary's the reason I started to support Luton in the first place. As soon as I saw him I was in love with Luton and I just had to give up Aston Villa and follow Luton — he's just gorgeous!

And why wasn't Tony Thorpe mentioned? He looks SO sweet (Kelvin's the same) — they both look as though they need a BIG cuddle!

Jayne
Walsall.

Dear "Mad",

I've been told there is a Mohican-topped woman from Luton living here in Moseley too, but haven't identified her as yet. Another LTFC supporter apparently.

Yeah, born in Luton in 1959 after that FA Cup Final (got hold of the match programme the other month — £3!), my first match was home v Torquay United in October 1969, in the old Third Division, a 1-1 draw. Now the club are back in the same division (in reality) so my supporting has gone full circle — sliding back from those heady 1988 days far quicker than it took to reach it. They've done all this before, of course. But we could do without them doing it again..... Last season was the worst ever since I've supported them. I only went to six games (due to other interests — money, transport) — not only didn't I see them win, I didn't see them score! Best result I saw: 0-0 at Wolves (missed the 2-0 win at WBA).

Although I will be moving home again this year, probably still in Moseley, but maybe Amsterdam — should I support the local side there? I didn't support Birmingham City or Aston Villa here, that's for sure — follow their results, just to keep in with the locals — but for good or ill, it's still (and never anyone else) Luton Town for me.

Ian W. Lee
Moseley, Birmingham.

During the summer we have received two requests for penpals, one from Italy and one from South Africa, as follows:

Desperately Seeking Penpals

The lure of English Football is felt all over the world, especially in the former colonies of the British Empire where the names Liverpool, Tottenham and Everton inspire a large number of the local population.

Yet while the glory hunters prance around our beachfronts dressed as Messrs Cantona, Ruddick and Giggs, there are those amongst us (myself included) who ask inane questions like "Where the hell is Port Vale?" and "If Yeovil Town's pitch has a slope why isn't it used for downhill racing?"

Through the pages of your esteemed publication, I am appealing for a penpal. Someone to whom I can relate the joys of watching visiting English cricket and rugby teams being soundly thrashed while at the same time acknowledging Britain's role in our current political tangle.

I am 27 years old, a civil servant, currently studying towards a Bachelor of Commerce degree. Having recently purchased a three bedroomed home with swimming pool just south of Durban and close to the beach, my pilgrimage to the home of football has been placed on hold. Besides supporting the local provincial rugby and cricket sides, I play a reasonable game of squash and have been known to run occasionally. Other leisure activities include reading publications like *When Saturday Comes*, *Total Football*, local political journals and watching Newcastle United throw away the title.

What sort of person should write to me?

Ideally someone who can a) read, b) write, c) perform options a & b frequently, d) follows and attends matches of Endsleigh League teams, e) wouldn't mind a visit to South Africa some time over the next 20 years and f) wouldn't mind receiving the odd postal order to purchase the latest football kit for posting. Though this may seem odd, please bear in mind that a favourite ploy amongst foreign firms has been to accept our bank drafts and then inform us "the goods are in the mail."

All letters will be answered either by myself or others of the same calibre who spend our glorious summers watching Englishmen battle each other in rain and mud.

Write to:

Kevin J. Roche
PO Box 21789,
Brighton Beach, 4052,
Republic of South Africa.

My name is Gianluca Besana, I'm twenty five years old and I'm an Italian fan of English football. I'm very interesting to Luton Town and Luton Town supporters.

I wish to correspond with some Luton Town supporters, and would exchange Italian football material (scarves, video, magazine, programme) with Luton Town supporter material. How can I do?

I'm sorry for my write mistake, but my English is not very well. Thank you very much.

My address is:

Gianluca Besana,
Via S. G. Barbarigo 33,
24036 Ponte San Pietro,
Bergamo,
Italy.

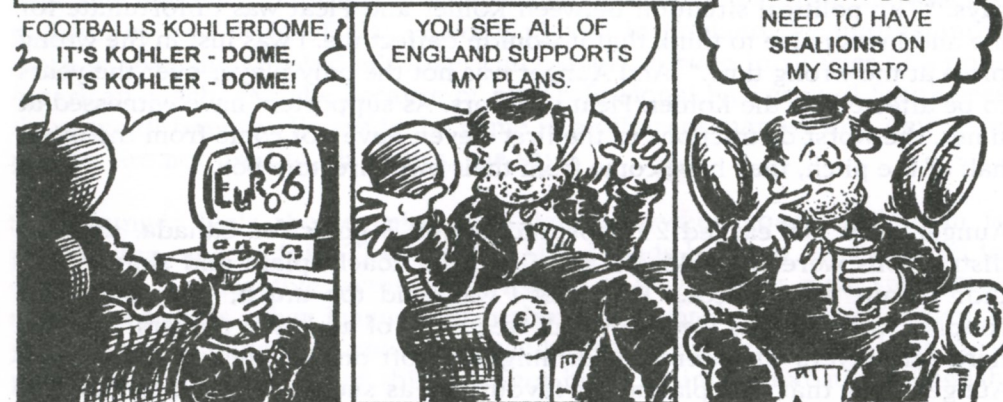
The Great Summer of Sport



THEN IT WAS TIME FOR THE PRE-SEASON TRAINING



BUT WHAT SORT OF SUMMER DID THE CHAIRMAN HAVE?



The American Connection

"With our thirteenth pick in the draft, the New England Revolution select Geoff Auger." In that one short sentence last February, Revolution General Manager Brian O'Donovan linked forever America's Foxboro Stadium and Luton Town's Kenilworth Road.

And while Auger has already played in more matches for the fledgling New England entry in Major League Soccer (MLS) than with the Hatters, his brief stay in Bedfordshire was not without excitement or controversy.

The former Vancouver 86er and Red Deer, Alberta, native made six appearances and scored one goal (*with his first touch — Ed*) for the Hatters during the 1993-94 season. Unfortunately, a boardroom battle between Town chairman David Kohler and then coach (*sic*) David Pleat resulted in Auger being the casualty. "I didn't get a true opportunity in the first team," he says. "The political situation between Kohler and Pleat was unfortunate for me and I was naive to think that it wouldn't affect me. I was just in the wrong place at the wrong time." And Auger was not the only player over the years to be affected by the Kohler/Pleat ego wars. As supporters have witnessed at times, the worst distractions to the first eleven have not come from the other half of the pitch, they have come from their own directors box.

Auger, who has earned 29 caps and scored 3 goals for Canada, said his distractions were two-fold. On the field, the coach, plain and simply put, didn't want his services. "Pleat felt I was paid too much," he said. And coupled with this was Pleat's overall treatment of all Luton players. "He was hard on players who were performing and soft on the ones who weren't." Auger feels that this playing of favourites, as such, was not beneficial to morale. He cites as an example Pleat's condoning of the attitude problems of Ceri Hughes at the expense of other players who were more than willing to do their on-field duties.

Also, both Geoff and his wife, Janine, found trying to establish a lifestyle outside of soccer hard in England. He is the first to admit they feel more at home in North America than in north London. Still, he enjoyed his short stay at Kenilworth Road and understands it was a learning experience.

As to the post-Pleat situation at the club, Auger was straight to the point. He felt Wayne Turner, not Terry Westley, should have been named first-team coach.

At this point in time, Auger is pleased with where his life is and what he is doing. "I'm happy," he says. "So far I've done all right but I think I can do

better." He has scored three goals (all from the penalty spot) to date and is coach Frank Stapleton's second choice as team captain when teammate Mike Burns is out injured or away on United States national team duty. "A lot of responsibility has been put on me. I'm twenty-eight now and a leadership position has been given me. I'd like to be scoring more, but I've been asked to perform a defensive role."

And this is not to mean he is unhappy with this role, to the contrary. Stapleton regularly states the fact that Auger's play is the cement that holds the Revolution's midfield together.

It is this confidence, in the first half of the MLS season, that has more than rewarded the New England organization for making the "baby faced assassin" (Auger has already been suspended one match for accumulating five yellow cards) their lucky 13th choice.

And the feeling is mutual as Auger is quite at home with his coach's philosophy and style of play. Having played in England, he understands, more so than the Revolution's American players, certain intricacies of a non-American coach. "Maybe because of his professional background Frank sees the game differently. He reads the game in a different manner and American players are not used to his tactics," he says.

Still, Auger feels the learning experience between coach and team is progressing on schedule. The fact that MLS squads have no reserve sides to draw from is a negative factor of the league as new players must start from scratch, whereas other leagues throughout the world have developmental youth teams playing the same team style to promote from. "He has been very patient and allows a lot of things to get by in training that many English coaches would not. His communication has been very good, as well," Auger states.

The idea of playing and finishing his career in America with MLS is one that appeals to him. He understands that teammates such as Argentinian Alberto (Beto) Naveda and Brazilian Welton are looking to get experience and move on. Though, right now, as far as Geoff Auger is concerned, North America is the best of both worlds (one home and one work) and he is not about to complain with that fact.

Lastly, he would like the Kenilworth Road faithful to know he thinks of them and that he keeps up with the trials and tribulations of Luton Town (and, as he receives this writers extra copy of *Mad as a Hatter!*, I will attest to that fact). "I wish the fans well," he says with a smile, "they deserve success."

Geoff Auger was interviewed by Brian Surette

DOWN, DOWN..

And so we bid farewell to the top division of the Football League after fourteen years. The final match reports of last season from the editor and *The Beatie*.

23.04.96 PORT VALE 1 TOWN 0

The match was pretty much what the season had led us to expect. The opposition were not terribly bothered, but still managed to win through a heavily deflected shot which left Feuer stranded. And, of course, we lost a striker through injury. Graeme Tomlinson, making his first start, suffered a very badly broken leg in an incident which overshadowed the rest of the game. Nothing malicious about the tackle — just sheer bad luck. We can just hope that Graeme makes a full recovery, and is able to continue his career.

27.04.96 TOWN 1 BARNSELEY 3

No fight, no spirit, no hope....

This match confirmed two things. One, we were mathematically relegated, and two, Scott Oakes is a bit of a wanker. He had an atrocious first half, and the boos and jeers forced him off at half time. The performance was disgraceful by all the outfield players, and not even a wonder strike by Tony Thorpe could let us go down with any pride. St. Feuer kept the score down to a semi-respectable level, and a touching moment came at half-time, when everybody was jeered off the pitch with cries of "what a load of rubbish," except the player of the year who received a standing ovation. Says it all really.

30.04.96 TOWN 3 PORT VALE 2

Bloody hell — a win....

I don't care that Vale didn't really try in this match — we'll still claim it as a morale boosting final 3 points of the season. Lawrence experimented with youth — and of the young players Evers looks very impressive. Goals by Thorpe (after Douglas hit the bar), and Thorpe again sandwiched an 'open-play' goal from the hero of Euro '96, Guentchev, with a tap in from one yard after a brilliant shimmy around the goalkeeper. Vale scored two, David maybe at fault for one of them, but the home season finished with a win.

05.05.96 OLDHAM ATHLETIC 1 TOWN 0

Forget this match. Forget the tussle to avoid Premiership relegation. Even forget Manchester United and Newcastle. The important part of this day came in the following commentary: "So a Leicester corner is floated in. Headed across his own goal by Devon White straight to Izzet. Izzet puts it in the back of the net and Leicester are ahead..... could that be the goal to put W**f**d down to Division Two?" YES — they are down, so at least we have some scant consolation from our relegation, and another 4 points guaranteed in next season's campaign.

12.05.96 LUTON TOWN ALL-STARS 15 CHILTERN DJS 0

£3 was a small price to pay to go and pay homage to the stars of Luton past — players like Mick 'God' Harford, 'Bruno' Stein, Donaghy, Sealey, Price and — wait for it — Kevin Lamb (who?). It also made a pleasant change for a Luton side to win so convincingly, even though they were playing with 14 players at one point (well, Chiltern did play for 70 minutes with 18!). Harford, Sealey and Stein all grabbed hat-tricks, and even by half time they were 9-0 up. The full list of scorers was Harford (3), Stein (3), Sealey (3), Price (2), Turner, Moore, Lamb and an own goal. Chiltern really were quite poor and even blazed a penalty over the bar. They couldn't score at all, even with 9 strikers poaching in the area. A fun day, and all for charity (YMCA) as well.

INTO A NEW SEASON...

23.07.96 LIVINGSTON 0 TOWN 3

If nothing else, there is some consolation in starting the new season with a win. This visit to Scotland's newest football ground, a smart little affair with a stand on either side, but nothing at the ends, also marked the appearances of Steve McCormick and Paul Showler, as 'triallists'. McCormick scored the opener, which was laid on by Showler while I was at the Pie stall. Apparently an awful bounce which almost fell on his head, but at least it went in. Grant scored the second and Thorpe got the third against opposition who look as if they could struggle after their promotion last term. And those trialists? Well, let's just say you shouldn't get too excited.

24.07.96 AYR UNITED 1 TOWN 0

If anyone tries to tell you this match was crap, don't believe them. It wasn't that good. Fortunately, I enjoyed myself, due to the pub crawl beforehand.

27.07.96 STIRLING ALBION 4 TOWN 1

Didn't go — and just as well, really.

02.08.96 BARNET 0 TOWN 1

Another game notable for very little, apart from a rare Des Linton goal, and the Town support providing rather more than half the crowd. Gosh, what pulling power! Encouraging performances from some of the younger players, but not much else to report other than some bizarre refereeing.

Notes, Quips and Quotes

Just a few notes, quips and quotes from Foxboro Stadium, outside of Boston, where the United States national eleven continued its amazing streak of 221 years since an Auld Enemy (George III was playing the role of central defender back then) won a "pitched" battle on New England soil by defeating a very young Republic of Ireland squad, 2-1, in each side's opening match of US Cup '96 (America's answer to that tournament across the pond).

US national coach Steve Sampson in discussing Town keeper Ian Feuer being named to the big squad for the pre-cup friendly against Scotland (2-1 to the Yanks and, yes, in New England) was straight to the point. "His play at Luton certainly warranted his call-up for the Scotland match, but right now that's (goalkeeping) our strongest position. We'll continue to keep our eyes on him, though." Feuer backed up Millwall's Kasey Keller and did not play. . . . While on the subject of keepers, US #1 Brad Friedel was a cup winner with his club side Galatasaray this past season. . . . Unfortunately, America's #2, 3 & 4 keepers (Keller, Sommer and Feuer), all playing in England, suffered the fate of relegation with their respective clubs. . . . An interesting aside: US teammates Paul Caligiuri (who has played for 5 German clubs) and Thomas Dooley (who IS German - Dad was a Yank serviceman) converse during practice sessions in German. . . . Sampson prior to the match: "Ireland has a rich (football) tradition and I'm not sure if they really respect us. Their tradition makes them feel they are better than us. But we usually play our best as underdogs". . . . New England Revolution coach and ex-Republic marksman Frank Stapleton's pre-match prediction: "I'll give a score of 2-0 and it doesn't really matter for who, now does it? I'm right either way". . . . Guinness Stout (surprise!) was sold along with American flavored water at the beer concession stands. . . . Former US (fired 14 months ago) and present coach of Mexico Bora Milutinovic could only gloat on observing an unchanged US side from the last one he put forth. "I look at the roster and there's no change," he smugly said. . . . Played on a cold and damp afternoon, with a touch of fog overhanging the stadium, and with a predominantly Irish feel to the crowd of 25,332 (there are more Irish in the metropolitan Boston area than Dublin) it was easy to believe one was sitting in Lansdowne Road. . . . The first half was akin to watching grass grow, though the second semester's (*half to you and me* — Ed) three goals and take-no-prisoners tempo more than made up for it. . . . Each sides designated Goliath (Niall Quinn and Alexi Lalas) literally battled for every inch they contested. . . . Tab Ramos (NY/NJ MetroStars) and Claudio Reyna (Bayer Leverkusen) scored for the red, white and blue. . . . Late in the match an attempt was made by a member of the audience to streak across the pitch. As was to be expected, though, the lad did not seem to have a high wattage bulb for a brain — he waited until he got to mid-field to try to drop his pants.

Security was johnny-on-the-spot before a spectacle could be witnessed by all. . . . Irish boss Mick McCarthy was none to pleased with his side's marking after the match. "I feel sorry for (keeper) Shay Given. We keep allowing people to shoot at him. The young players are doing well but we should have won the match when we went ahead. We were naive in conceding those goals". . . . US Captain-For-Life (how's that for a title) and ex-Sheffield Wednesday, Derby and West Ham midfielder John Harkes on his side's record (W4 D1 L3) against UK sides over the past 5 years: "Yeah (I get) a great deal of personal satisfaction. They get really pissed off when we beat them". . . . While teammate Eric Wynalda offered: "I think Ireland is a better side, actually, than Scotland". . . . Finally, it must be sadly noted that Republic striker David Connolly (yes, the W**f**d wanker) was one of the bright spots for the lads in green. He scored the opener and missed a late sitter (ha-ha-ha) that would have knotted the score. Still, it appears he could be quite a handful for the vast majority of second (third?) division defenders in the new season... Be forewarned!

Brian Surette

ANAGRAMMATICALLY CHALLENGED

Our competition in issue 34 attracted just 11 entries, and of those 8 were fully correct. It looks like the one that gave you the most trouble was Matt Tees, indicating that we went back a bit too far for some. One entrant tried guesswork to fill in his missing answers, but I honestly can't remember Gordon MacHunder or Sam Tette playing for the Town. And there are no prizes for pedantry, whether the compiler (Orpington Man) spelt Darren McDonough's first name correctly or not. The competition winner was Kristopher Joseph of Portsmouth, who will be receiving a prize of some sort, but we haven't decided what it will be yet.

The answers are as follows: 1 TOMB WREATHS - Rob Matthews. 2 TIN BIN ARSE - Brian Stein. 3 GEC KINKY BALLS - Kingsley Black. 4 A HULL WASP - Paul Walsh. 5 WEE MEN KILL - Mike Newell. 6 I'M NINJA BEAN - Ian Benjamin. 7 HUNDRED CON MARGO - Darren McDonough. 8 ODD WACKY RAG - Gary Waddock. 9 LOVER HAD KID - David Kohler. 10 PER TAKEOVER - Trevor Peake. 11 NEAR RODENTS PART - Darren Patterson. 12 WE VET SHITE - Steve White. 13 ONLY MAD HAG - Mal Donaghy. 14 MEAT TEST - Matt Tees. 15 WANT SALE - Alan West. 16 A SHIT DRIVER - Vidar Riseth. 17 ARCH HAY DRIVER - Richard Harvey. 18 ETON TROPHY - Tony Thorpe. 19 MAJOR VON SHINN - Marvin Johnson. 20 MALCOLM THE SHIT - Mitchell Thomas. 21 COUNT HOT VEG BENCH - Bontcho Guentchev. 22 DAD FILLED VOID - David Oldfield.



More of those pics from Ayr. Above, Tricky Dicky Harvey in a tussle, watched by David Oldfield, with proof in the background that there was a crowd at the game. Below, Patterson and Chenery in action. In the background note one of those new fangled 'assistant referees' and Peakey with his new beard.



Soccer — Making it Big?

Listening to the way officials of Major League Soccer (MLS) spin their tale concerning the status of America's newest professional sports league as it reached the inaugural season's halfway point, one would be hard pressed not to think of the biggest summer of love in almost thirty years was happening before our eyes.

Attendance figures and television ratings are double what was originally projected at this point. Sponsors are constantly signing on and doling out bundles of money. Stadium personnel are helpful, friendly, and smile as fans pass through the turnstiles, and the "Anglos" and immigrants are happily co-existing, and trying to create an atmosphere, alongside one another in the stands. Sing hallelujah and praise his name! Soccer is finally making it big in the United States.

Yeah, well, I don't want to rain on anyone's parade or, for that matter, be an ant in their picnic of life, but....

Just for the sake of argument, let's take a closer look and try and decipher if the giddy atmosphere is truly deserved or if it possibly comes from sniffing a bit too much of that good stuff at the dentist's office.

All ten teams have been together for only a few months and as has been seen, with the exception of Los Angeles and Tampa Bay, there are eight Jekyll & Hyde squads taking to the pitch every week. While this does make it exciting for the casual fan, the much smaller groups of hard core supporters (yes, there are bums in the seats that know quality soccer, even here in the colonies) attend each match wondering just which side will turn out. The marketing maestros call this parity. And while that may be the case there is a niggling thought that until these other eight squads develop into cohesive units, mediocrity might be an even better term. Still, this is a minor point of debate.

What is not to debate, though, is the quality of the league's referees. The United States Soccer Federation and MLS has fast discovered the woeful, pitiful, disgraceful (you supply the adjective) level of it's on-field officials. They have been nothing short of a major league embarrassment. All these years American soccer has worked to develop quality players. MLS was set up and designed to showcase American talent. The league limited each team to five foreign players for this express purpose. Unfortunately, it looks as if America's soccer bosses greatly overvalued the talent of their on-field officials. Instead of importing players maybe the league should have imported a few quality referees instead.

One referee did his first MLS match on June 1, as Kansas City hosted the New England. It was also his last MLS match — he was dropped from the league list the next day. Granted, this situation was extreme. The referee was inexperienced and in way over his head. But it was just the sort of embarrassment the new league had hoped to avoid. Obviously somebody, somewhere messed up with this dud.

Then there was the case of American referee Raul Dominguez. He was so card happy (both yellow and red), that after he red carded the Republic of Ireland's Liam Daish, Niall Quinn and coach Mick McCarthy, during the US Cup '96 match against Mexico, both the federation and the league decided Mr Dominguez should take an extended leave of absence from officiating. Hard to believe the 21,322 paid spectators for that match actually wanted to watch the players perform and not Mr Dominguez. If Arsenal's Ian Wright thinks British referees are "little Hitlers," well, Ian, my friend, come on over.

Low overall quality of the on-field product can and will be overcome. But the talent must not deteriorate any further and the risk of that is there if the quality of the men in charge of policing that talent is not upgraded, and fast.

When speaking for the record, officials are 100 per cent upbeat. Off the record, though, they readily admit there are problems the League has yet to solve. Commissioner Doug Logan is quick to discuss his assessment of the highs and lows he feels the league has experienced in its infancy and while he retains a big grin, he understands there is still a ways to go.

So, while purists may grumble about the problems in a newborn league (shoot-outs to determine a winner because MLS officials feel Americans cannot comprehend the idea of a level match is another story), everyone knows only patience will allow this baby to grow and become all we have been waiting so long for.

It's time to stop become a nervous Nellie and looking for ghosts in the forest and not seeing the trees. Besides, if longevity were a key to any league's success, then the English FA would have by now come up with a plan for the disposal of such hazardous waste as W**f**d.

Brian Surette

Cuttings

I support Aston Villa but I'm still a human being.

John Taylor, Tory prospective candidate for Cheltenham

A cutting from *Mad* issue 5. Obviously Taylor lost at Cheltenham, and took the easy option of signing for Luton and becoming a world class scorer. Well, he signed anyway.

End of the Line

In recent years we have become used to FIFA trying to change our game in various ways, with assorted consequences. However, the latest edict from football's governing body is surely one of the most obscure. From now on, that fellow with a flag in his hand, the one who waves it about (the flag) to indicate offside decisions and throw-ins, is to be known as an Assistant Referee rather than a linesman.

It's difficult to understand why FIFA feels it is necessary to make such a change, but if it is to give them more authority it is surely doomed to failure. The only logical reason is to better indicate the role of these officials in the match, which is fair enough, but it does mark the fact that FIFA are finding it more and more difficult to avoid tampering with the Laws of the game, and is having to make changes for the sake of change.

Of course, it is the side effects of the 'death' of the linesman that could prove interesting. Are players now going to be cautioned for abusive language or ungentlemanly conduct for calling the poor flag waver "Lino"? Or is there a risk that they will corrupt his new title and receive a yellow or red card when their appeals to "Asso" are misheard, a risk that will probably extend to those of us on the terraces or in the stands. It may be that it will be policed sensibly, but somehow I don't think so. Still, we can always resort to a variation of one of the old favourite songs — "Who's the assistant wanker in the black?" OK, perhaps not.

K.F.H.

Terry Westley to manage The Beatles Part Two

Yes I know you are a left hander Paul, but I want to be innovative!



RA + B Dan B.

The LT-X Files

"The Truth is..... we're crap"

David Kohler — Space Alien?

If the Kohlerdome drawings look a little bit like a flying saucer don't be surprised. Evidence has come to light that David Kohler is an alien. When Kohler announced that he had been the victim of racial abuse he was quickly urged by advisers to claim the taunts were anti-Semitic. However, reports from the time suggest that what Kohler took exception to was the question "what f**kin' planet are you on, Kohler?" A leaked report, which includes a contingency plan should the Kohlerdome proposal be thrown out, has increased suspicion. The report suggests that Kohler originally hails from the planet "Ego". The Kohlerdome will double as a spacecraft and, when not in use for football matches or other events, will fly back to Ego to pick up tourists. By 2020 Kohler aims to turn Earth into a theme park — provisionally named "KohlerWorld". If the government decides not to allow planning permission for the Dome, then Kohler threatens to blow up the world using a "bloody great laser gun" to be built on Mars (subject to planning permission).

Eric Morecambe and Harry Haslam haunt Kenilworth Road?

Whispers around Kenilworth Road suggest that the ground may be haunted. Staff have been surprised by strange sounds. One frightened staff member said "I've heard stories, rumours, that people used to come here and..... enjoy themselves. It hasn't happened for so long..... we thought that sort of thing was dead at Luton." Recent Town sides have done much to exorcise ghosts of merriment at Kenilworth Road. Experts feel another doleful campaign could help kill them off altogether.

McKenna and Geller help Town players to leave Kenilworth Rd?

Rumour has it that Scotty Oakes asked Paul McKenna to hypnotise him to help him become the £2m player that a Premiership club might still want. McKenna's services didn't come cheap, but Scott was in luck; apparently he was affected by headlines in the *Daily Mirror* after the West Ham game in 1994 and has been in a hypnotic trance ever since. McKenna had only to snap his fingers and say "wake up," and his job was done. However, it may be a little too early to say whether Scott has fully recovered — on going to train with Sheffield Wednesday he was reported as saying he was "off to see the Wizard" (we can take this to mean David Pleat) who, Scott hoped, "will give me a heart...." He was last seen skipping and singing up the M1 in a northerly direction (moaning that motorists were shouting at him).

It has also been rumoured that Ceri Hughes procured the services of Uri Geller some time ago, to help the young Welsh maestro (or is that Maelstrom?) in a

move off to a Premiership club. Uri was in Legends too and, as it was before his own career took off again, a little the worse for wear. Even so, he urged a group of Ceri's friends, and other drinkers, to place their hands on a pint of lager and chant "Ceri - Ceri - Ceri - Off - Off - Off."

Although the spell didn't seem to have worked regarding a move away from Luton, believers do claim it had an effect on Hughes' disciplinary record. Not put off by scary characters Hughes signed up with agent Eric Hall, who is helping to arrange a move to Crystal Palace. Physios at Selhurst park are going through extra training to accommodate Ceri, while his new occasional team-mates are practising playing with 10 men.

Invasion of the Bodysnatchers at Luton Town ticket office?

Long term Luton Town fans have been confused and frightened by ticket office staff at the club. Apparently they look the same as before, and sound the same as before, but there's something un-nerving in their manner that makes fans think they're not who they once were. Bemused fans have reportedly been coming out of the ticket office having been subjected to civility, courtesy, to have been thanked, and to have found staff..... helpful. If these allegations are found to be true, if the surly days are truly over, supporters may be looking for other signs of improved working practices..... possibly to include refreshment stalls with adequate stock, friendly stewards and a team that looks like it can be bothered.

Tim Kingston

TOWN GET FRAMED

Luton Town 1950s Family Tree — Special Offer

It's not often that we're in a position to tell you about a product that is destined to become a collector's piece, but this is one of those rare occasions. Many of you will have heard of Pete Frame, known for his Rock Family Trees, and, more recently, the Man United Family Tree, which got quite a bit of coverage in the football press. Well, Pete is a Town fan, and to follow up the Man United has taken time out from paying work to put together a LUTON TOWN FAMILY TREE. Pete describes this as a labour of love, as a thank you to the players he idolised as a kid, which, as it covers the seasons 1950-51 to 1959-60, might be seen as offering clues to Pete's age. Anyway, copies of this rare item are available from Pete. It is in a limited edition of 100, on thick glossy paper (595mm x 845 mm), signed and numbered, and will cost £10 including post and packing, or £5 if you call round for one and save Pete from having to fart around with postage, expensive cardboard tubes etc. Pete can be contacted at Yeoman Cottage, Church Street, North Marston, Buckingham, MK18 3PH. Tel: 01296 670257. Remember, it's a limited edition and, to quote Pete, "When they're gone, they're gone."

TOWN TRAVELS

Well, it's a new season, and there are plenty of new grounds to visit, for most of us anyway. It has already started in fact, with the predicted (see issue 34) pre-season tour to Scotland, where we failed to beat two thirds of the opposition. And some might have taken in new grounds at Barnet, and perhaps, for the younger supporters, Brighton — which at least gave a trip to the seaside in the summer. After saying all that, it's probably inevitable that the first two away games are at grounds we have visited in the last 2 or 3 years. We start off at Brentford, the ground famous for having a pub on each corner, which should suit Ceri rather well. The nearest station to the ground is Brentford which is served by trains from Waterloo, whilst Gunnersbury on the District Line is about a mile and a half away. As for pubs, one of the four at the corners does not sell Fullers, but all are said to be football friendly, whilst further afield, opposite Gunnersbury tube station is the modestly titled WORLD FAMOUS JOHN BULL (what do you mean you've never heard of it) where the landlord claims to be able to discuss any club in the league, and offers a free pint in return for football club mementos, so stock up on the 30p badges now!

Our next trip is down to Bristol for a visit to Ashton Gate, the more familiar of the city's two football grounds. It's all seated for Town fans, but costs just a tenner to get in. Many of you will be going down straight after work so won't have much time for a beer, but if you do the ROBINS, on Winterstoke Road, may be OK, and it welcomes families apparently.

A week later we're in Bristol again, for our first visit to the Memorial Ground. This is very much unknown territory, but I can tell you that it is about a mile from the old Eastville ground, and on the North side of the city, near Stapleton Road station. What's more, we'll be standing on an old fashioned open terrace, so pray for good weather. As for pubs, the best point is that this football lark is going to be completely new to any pubs close to the ground, so they'll either be terrified or welcome you with open arms. Who knows.....

Thw visit to Wycombe on September 7th is one that everyone seems to be looking forward to. I do not know why. Nice ground, but miles out of town, and bloody murder for a quick getaway (or a slow one, come to that). And, being on an industrial estate on the edge of town, there ain't many pubs. There is a pub at the ground, but being as we're away supporters..... Realistically, there are no pubs near the ground that will definitely admit away fans, so you'll have to make your own plans. Sorry.

Our final away game to be covered in this issue is that at Bury on September 21. By contrast with Wycombe, the number of decent pubs in the area is much better. The nearest station is the Bury Interchange terminus of the Metrolink, which runs every six minutes from central Manchester, and if you're using this stop off for half an hour at Besses o' th' Barn, nip back across the motorway (bridge) and call in at the COACH AND HORSES, a Holts pub — superb beer at incredible prices. Walking from the Metrolink to Gigg Lane try the STAFF OF LIFE, 111 Manchester

Road, and the TAP AND SPILE, 36 Manchester Old Road. When arriving at the ground, we'll be seated in the Cemetery End, so let's hope we're not dead and Bury'd by 4.45!

For more information on away grounds look out for a new edition of the FOOTBALL FAN'S GUIDE in the bookshops. Janet Williams and Mark Johnson's excellent book should even have an introduction to the section on LTFC this year!

K.F.H.

"Mad" Merchandise

Just an update rather than the full page adverts we usually carry. We still have in stock the 1974 style orange shirts which come in L and XL sizes, and are priced at a bargain £26.95. All outstanding orders should now have been fulfilled, but if you haven't received your shirt please get in touch.

In addition, we will soon be able to offer you the 1974 away shirt. We hope to be receiving initial supplies of these very shortly, and should be able to give you full details in the next issue, so watch this space.

Also available and new to our stock are aerial colour photos of the Kenilworth Road stadium. Why new, you ask? Because this is a different photo to the one we have previously been selling. This is priced at £3.50 including post and packing.

Aerial photos and 1974 (home) shirts are available from us at the usual address.

From the Office of Sir Graham Shite MP



HatterLeague 1 — The Final Score

Whilst we don't intend to go into this in great depth, we did promise to give you the results of the first HatterLeague competition in this issue. To cut a long story short, the eventual winner was Karen Maxfield of Reading, whose team "Hatterbears Six-Pack" finished with a total of -39 points, with Tony Thorpe and Ian Feuer redeeming the sins of her other selections. Karen has received her prize of a £25 William Hill betting voucher, although we haven't heard whether this has enabled her to achieve millionaire status! The runners-up position was attained by Brian Dillingham of Kempston, his "Brian's Invincibles" proving almost worthy of their name with -54 points, and in 3rd place David Rolt of Luton, whose team "Who Are You?" finished with -59. Only 4 other managers achieved scores better than -100, but Edna Durbridge of Epsom managed to do worse than anyone else, finishing more than 50 points clear in 148th and last place. Her team "The Swingers" having a final total of -325.

Of the players available in the competition, only Thorpe and Waddock, of those available for the whole season, managed to finish with points totals better than zero, with Bontcho Guentchev narrowly missing out with -3. Ian Feuer also finished with a positive total, but in his case for only half of the season. No less than 5 players achieved the worst total possible (-78) with another two coming very close to that. What is completely clear is that the points system was, to put it bluntly, wrong, although it has been suggested that it did reasonably reflect the Town's season. Whatever, the scoring system has been revamped for this season's competition, in the hope that most competitors will achieve scores that don't start with the word 'minus'.

Finally, thanks to all the 148 of you who entered, and we hope that you weren't so disillusioned that you won't enter again.

K.F.H.

Return of the HatterLeague

So, here we are again. Despite the tragic points system of last year, the HatterLeague was deemed a success and has been commissioned for another season. However, we have made major changes. The rules are still just as simple — you have to hope that your players score enough points to win you the Championship — but, this season, you have an extra player to score points for your team, in what is now your HatterSeven squad.

Another change we have made this year is that the HatterLeague will finish earlier than the end of the Nationwide League season, which will enable us to publish the final results in the last issue of *Mad* of the season.

The points system has also been revised, and if you manage to get minus points this season you will deserve shooting.

Goals:	3 points for a goal scored by an attacker
	4 points for a goal scored by a midfielder
	5 points for a goal scored by a defender
	10 points for a goal scored by a goalkeeper
Assist:	2 points for last player Town player to touch the ball before the goalscorer
Defence:	3 points for clean sheet (defender playing 30 mins or more)
	1 point for clean sheet (defender playing less than 30 mins)
	4 points for a goalkeepers clean sheet
	-1 points for every goal conceded (defenders/keepers)
Performance:	5 points for Town Man of Match (to be selected by Brian Swain)
Discipline:	-1 points for a yellow card (booking)
	-2 points for a red card (sending off)
Appearances:	1 points for player playing 45 minutes or more
	-1 point for defender or goalkeeper not selected

A dip into the HatterLeague fund has found £4 million for each manager to spend on their HatterSeven squad (we're still waiting for donations from Sir John Hall!). This year you have a choice of formation as well — you must play with 1 goalkeeper, 2 defenders, 2 midfielders and a striker, but your seventh player can be a striker or midfield player. The HatterSeven Players are as follows:

Code	Player	£	Code	Player	£
<u>Goalkeepers</u>					
101	Ian Feuer	0.8 m	103	Nathan Abbey	0.2 m
102	Kelvin Davis	0.5 m			
<u>Defenders</u>					
111	Steve Davis	0.7 m	116	Mitchell Thomas	0.5 m
112	Darren Patterson	0.6 m	117	Ben Chenery	0.4 m
113	Marvin Johnson	0.6 m	118	Des Linton	0.5 m
114	Richard Harvey	0.5 m	119	Trevor Peake	0.4 m
115	Julian James	0.5 m			
<u>Midfielders</u>					
121	Gary Waddock	0.6 m	125	David Oldfield	0.6 m
122	Tony Thorpe	0.6 m	127	Paul McLaren	0.4 m
123	Graham Alexander	0.5 m	128	Sean Evers	0.3 m
124	Ceri Hughes	0.5 m			
<u>Strikers</u>					
131	Dwight Marshall	0.7 m	134	John Taylor	0.4 m
132	Kim Grant	0.5 m	135	Stuart Douglas	0.5 m
133	Bontcho Guentchev	0.5 m	136	Jamie Woodsford	0.3 m

The Sharpe End

So, how do YOU think we're going to do in Division Two? You may be talking a good game on behalf of the lads, but you certainly haven't been putting your money where your mouth is.

At the time of writing William Hill were offering odds of 12/1 about Luton winning the Nationwide Second Division — a generous offer which had attracted virtually no bets at all. Certainly none of three figures, very few of two, and only the odd quid or two.

Conversely, someone, somewhere seems convinced that the mob down the road are likely to do pretty well. With one bet of three grand placed at 8/1 and plenty of three figure ones as well, their odds had come down to 4/1 favourites — oh well, at least they're going to have the pleasure of losing their cash — we can but hope!

Surely you've got to be optimistic that the squad we've got of gnarled old veterans, promising youngsters and decent journeyman pros should be able to perform at Second Division level — haven't you?

It all depends on their attitude to the job in hand. If they go out expecting an easy ride, they'll be in for a few nasty shocks and some large bruises, but if they buckle down and realise that the best way to put themselves in the shop window if they have aspirations of moving to 'bigger' clubs is to shine at a lower level, or that they owe it to the supporters to make up for that pig's ear of a season last time out, then perhaps we'll get what we've been starved of for so long — a season full of promotion possibilities rather than relegation worries.

Personally, I see us finishing in the top eight, with every chance of a play-off place — but I ain't gonna bet on it until I've seen for myself what the motivation of the side is — over to you, Lennie.

+++++

It's been a quiet old close season as I pen these meanderings — scouring the soccer gossip columns has produced few sightings of the name Luton — the odd promise of a move for Mitchell here or a bid for Paul Wilkinson there, but nothing to raise the pulse rate too high. This is a situation we're likely to have to get used to, I suppose, although I can't help believing that Luton is a club never far away from some kind of controversy, cock-up or catastrophe, and I'm not sure which of the three I'd prefer.

+++++

I'm not impressed with this season's policy for season tickets which basically involved not putting the prices up from last season — which has been presented as some sort of big deal.

Of course the tickets couldn't have gone up, we've got relegated for God's sake. Wouldn't it have been more productive to have put the prices down — as did that club down the M1, in order to reward those loyal enough to stick with it for another season, and perhaps encourage along a few more of the stay-aways with the lure of a successful season at bargain prices?

But no, rip off the mugs was the prevailing decision. I will not be best pleased if, later in the season, they start offering seats at give-away prices or making special offers to boost attendances — because it will be me and the other captive supporters who will be subsidising such a ploy.

+++++

As if getting relegated wasn't bad enough, poor old Nick Owen also lost his job — symbolic, really. Well, I hope he bounces back quickly — if only because he has a long-term bet with me of a sporting nature, and I wouldn't like to think he'd have to come round asking for his stake money back because he's down to his last couple of bob!

Seriously, Nick is a good bloke and I'm sure he'll bounce back in a high-profile TV role — I'd certainly vote for him to replace bore of the decade Bob Wilson as a TV football presenter.

+++++

A small matter, but odd nonetheless. The two biggest bookmakers in this country, nay, the world, now both boast Luton Town supporters as their PR men — me at William Hill and one Ian Wassell at L@δβpo*es.

What CAN it all mean?

Graham Sharpe

EXCLUSIVE

by Starbug

W****d's

new

away

kit

launched



ENGLISH FOOTBALL'S DOZY DWARF??

For those of us lucky enough to be able to afford Sky Sports, the real joy is not the abundant live and uninterrupted sports coverage (nice though it is), but the existence of a daily sports letters page on the teletext system. Yes, day in and day out, calling up page 242 on Sky Sportstext is an absolute guarantee of a laugh or three. Never was this more so than on 9th May.

Usually, this medium is dominated by Manchester United "fans" from Barnet, Chichester or wherever throwing their toys around because someone has the cheek to criticise The World's Greatest Club™, or the type of inane yet deadly dull comments that David Mellor's 6:06 show attracts these days. 9th May was different.

So, what was different about 9th May? Well, a prize lunatic called Garry from Hemel Hempstead made a contribution, although what he actually said was beyond me as I was too busy wiping the tears of laughter from my eyes. The basic gist of it though was that the team he supported (The Shit) were absolute certainties for promotion next season, and rightly so, because they are **A SLEEPING GIANT!!!!!!!!!!**

Now, I'll buy the sleeping bit by all means, but giant? No, to be fair a club with their illustrious history probably deserves the title "Giant" — a look through their honours (below) merely serves to emphasise what a driving force they've been in English football over the past 100 years:

WATFORD FC — CLUB HONOURS

Division 4 Champions 1978

erm, that's it.

So impressive that I think we should start a campaign here for this biggest of all sleeping giants to be given automatic life membership of the Premier League — in fact I think we should be congratulating ourselves on somehow managing to keep up with such a traditional powerhouse of English football.....

Elton's Pathetic Sad Wig