

MAD AS A FLATTER!

THE LUTON TOWN FANZINE



Issue 40

Mar 97



MAD AS A HATTER!

THE LUTON TOWN FANZINE



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SPORTSPAGES, Caxton Walk, 94-96 Charing Cross Road, London WC2.

BRICKLAYERS ARMS, High Town Road, Luton.

THE CLUB SHOP, Luton Town FC, Kenilworth Road, Luton.

THE LUTON TOWN SHOP at ASDA, Wigmore Lane, Luton.

EDITORIAL

As I write this, our team still hold second place in the division, which is little short of a miracle in view of recent results. What we must hope is that this is a poor run, and not our real form after an exceptionally good run before Christmas. But what is certain is that the team will not be helped by getting loads of abuse from the terraces. We have high expectations, but should be careful not to let this get in the way of actually supporting the team when it matters. Turning up for a game is important, but get behind the team during each. Sing a few pro-Luton songs to let them know we're there, and not just the usual anti-Watford crap, and appreciate that strikers cannot score every time they have a shot, rather than abusing them when they miss. If you want to see players score at every attempt go and watch basketball instead. And for God's sake stop all this ridiculous infighting over whether so-and-so is a good player or not. We're all entitled to our opinion, and it would be a boring world if we all agreed on everything, but having to get police involved in arguments over whether player X should be on the pitch or not is taking it all a bit too far.

Having said that, one or two of Lennie's decisions have struck some of us as a bit odd lately. For example, the double substitution at Wrexham, where Thorpe and Oldfield were replaced by two strikers who could best be described as looking a bit out of touch. This would have paled into insignificance if there had been any substitutions at Crewe, where KG was joined on the bench by a certain Bulgarian international. Had he made it onto the pitch that day, I suspect he would have rapidly found out where he stands in the popularity ratings.

Changing the subject, I want to congratulate Bruce Grobelaar. Some aspects of Bruce's honesty may be subject to the judicial process, but he should be commended for his actions in taking a stand against racism. At Shrewsbury, he identified to the police a Plymouth supporter who was racially abusing several Shrewsbury players. All credit to Bruce for that, it's a pity there are not more players prepared to take such action. And, come to think of it, a lot of stewards could learn something from him too. Racism simply is not acceptable and anything that helps stamp it out has to be welcomed.

Finally, another local derby looms. On Tuesday 25th March the Town take on Watford in the quarter final of the FA Youth Cup. The match is being played at Kenilworth Road, so let's get plenty of support at the ground for our team, and cheer them on to another victory over our local rivals.

Stop Press: General Election on May 1st. Just after I'd managed to write an editorial without having a go at Graham Bright. He may not even be an MP by the time you read my next one. Does this mark the end of an era?

Strip Poker

You can only wonder what is going through the minds of the marketing people at Pony sports and leisure wear as the time approaches when they have to renegotiate supply contracts, attempt to fend off competition for the lucrative deals and work their way out of the others. That said, I do sometimes wonder about the whole crazy football strip industry (though hopefully not enough to warrant my wearing a grubby DMF anorak).

In the mid-80's it seemed that every club was kitted out by Adidas. Then Umbro seemed to take over, and then they started to shed unfashionable clubs. Luton's last Umbro top — part of the romper suit relegation special — was a shoddy piece of merchandise by today's standards, but the DMF effort that replaced it was poor in comparison. Apart from the daft "no text" Badge, the kit looked nice from a distance (ie. from the back of the Kenny) but close up they were less than impressive. Us fat kids suffered the most from the apparent scrimping on material, whilst other problems were badge/logo peeling, discolouring in the wash and pull away seams.

Then came the "Luton own brand" kit — the baseball home top and the barcode away shirt which threatened to give Luton's loyal travelling support migraine. Marketed as part of a quaint, cottage industry, revolution in club merchandise. The contrived spirit of independence lasted just one season.

After we'd moaned for a while, it was with some relief that we saw Pony gallop (the pun is, of course, obligatory) to the rescue at the start of last season to kit Luton Town out properly again. The Pony kits (as has been written before) are well made and come in sizes to fit even the fattest fan. The third/Watford kit is a disgrace (but that's been covered before too). Pony deserve all the flak they got for bringing out a yellow Luton top and hopefully the sales of that shirt were way down as a result — I'm amazed to see Town fans wearing it but it's still, thankfully, not as common around the ground as the other designs.

Hopefully Pony had their fingers burned. However, even though they tried to dress us up like Hornets, let's not make Pony think we can't forgive them. Unless sanity prevails, and it isn't likely, early next season (or late November in Luton's case) we'll be asked to purchase the all new LTFC kit from the club shop. Veteran players like Gary Waddock and Andrew Fotiadis will tell the Herald how much they like the new design, and the strip will more than likely incorporate a brilliant new gimmick — maybe a new badge design, "go faster" action vents or three button collars by Ben Sherman.

Hopefully, new high standards in replica shirt quality will prevail. But this certainly can't be taken for granted if Mr Kohler decides that the best (ie. most potentially profitable) choice is from a bright new sports clothing manufacturer — as eager to please and as ill equipped to cope as a sixth form design project.

Whilst we're on the subject of fanciful designs, it's never safe to assume a big name manufacturer necessarily makes good kits. Some of Umbro's latest designs have been very nasty. We'll ignore their disgraceful money grabbing practice of bringing out a new England and/or Man United kit every other month — especially in the second instance; a parent who kowtows to a spoilt kids' media/peer induced allegiance to the Mighty Reds may deserve to be ripped off. But the stuff Umbro bring out is often bloody horrible. England shirts obviously spring to mind — remember the powder blue effort with the enlarged three lion print? They appear to have cutesie smiles — and looked like Bungle. How about the dirty red number with the flapping collars? Then the ignominy of the grey kit in the Euro '96 semi-final and the latest rugby shirts with attention to tacky detail shown in the St George's flag tag and plastic emblem button. At club level — what about the horrible Notts Forest home and away shirts this season?

In the early 90's when popularity for old fashioned shirts first blossomed, Umbro and the like were worried into reproducing embroidered badges (and a few nods towards tradition, like lace-up collars and bigger shorts). But it isn't in the interests of the business to bring out styles that "never go out of fashion". And so they continued with gusto to establish the throwaway kit culture which they, but hardly anyone else, enjoy today.

At least Pony, with their line of football kits which came out at the beginning of last season (and included our relegation '96 — hopefully promotion '97 — strip), seem to have recaught the traditional mood. Although the first wave of the traditional shirt trend died down, Euro '96 saw a reaction against crappy Umbro shirts manifest itself in sales of the TOFFS (The Old Fashioned Football Shirt Co.) 1966 England red shirt. And, of course, MAAH produced the early 70's Luton kits for discerning Town fans although the second (white away) "shrinks somewhat in the wash" — and the fanzine might want to attribute that quote to the Luton News too (*er, maybe not, but thanks for the offer - Ed*). Pony's shirts (with the exception of Spurs over flash, silver buttoned, home shirt..... and our third kit) are traditional and, as a result, pretty smart. Whether they decide to keep up the good work remains to be seen but on the basis of their last kit for Luton Town, and if they understand that one colour in particular isn't welcome on our shirts, I won't be too upset to hear that Pony are to bring out a new kit for 1997/98. Then again, if the

Pony computer is allowed to run too long and/or David Kohler has drunk too much coffee, who knows what we'll be wearing next season. A panel of supporters should be invited in the voting process to ensure their fellow Town fans don't look idiots and to warn against anymore stupid mistakes. Meanwhile Lennie Lawrence has the comparatively easy task of picking the players to turn out in the new style kits — and earn promotion to the Premiership in time for the opening season in the Dome.

Tim Kingston

B.O.F.

The Boring Old Fart's lines penned while drowning his sorrows and wishing he could have shot the Lions himself.

Oh dear what can the matter be?
Lennie's team has had a calamity,
We were stuffed by the Lions last Saturday,
Though ten men played out of their socks.

Questions:

- 1 BOF, along with most of us in the Kenny, decided that the referee was blind for most of the game or must have shares in Millwall FC. Does the match video support this view I wonder?
- 2 What caused Jules to have such a rush of blood to the foot after being harshly yellow carded?
- 3 How often can so many strikes on target fail to score through no fault of the team?
- 4 Who up there has got it in for us?

The Boring Old Fart

Going Down.....?

Rumours abound that Elton John and Geri out of the Spice Girls had planned to get together in the event of Watford slipping into the relegation zone. Reports have it that they considered recording a benefit single of "I won't let the scum go down on me". Kenny Jackett reportedly scotched the rumours, saying "they have both on occasion visited the players in the dressing room and, to be honest, neither appears to have been that fussy".

HILLSBOROUGH APPEAL

Dear Fanzine reader,

As you probably know, the *Hillsborough* documentary broadcast in early December has re-awakened public and political interest in the Hillsborough disaster and has opened the possibility of the families and survivors of that day finally getting some justice. But the only way the politicians will recognise the significance of the issue is if there is mass public backing for a new inquiry. Brighton's recent Day of Action showed that getting lots of supporters together can be a very effective way of getting publicity and action. If football fans from all different clubs came together on this issue like we did over Brighton, the politicians will find it very hard to ignore the calls for justice. Already we have had huge support for petitions organised by the *Daily Mirror* and the families, plus petitions posted on the Internet, from fans at all different clubs.

Ultimately, regardless of our club loyalties and rivalries, we were all fans: had Nottingham Forest supporters been in the Leppings Lane end that fateful day, there is every reason to believe the same events would have happened. Tottenham fans in fact nearly had a similar disaster in Leppings Lane in 1981 — the only difference between that day and 1989 was that in 1981 the police opened the gates onto the pitch relieving the crush. *It could have been fans from any club killed on April 15th 1989.* This is the most important point: it was a total failure to ensure the safety of supporters as a whole. The aftermath and the coverage by various newspapers was also not just an attack on Liverpool fans, but on all supporters. Making the politicians admit that justice has been denied and that fans did not cause the Disaster will restore the reputation of all supporters.

We would ask all fans to join us in expressing their support for the campaign for justice, either by writing to your MP or direct to the Home Secretary (at 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London, SW1 1BA). Ultimately, as the events at Brighton showed, fans are basically all the same, and an attack on one set of fans attacks us all. We hope you feel this issue is not just about Liverpool supporters, but all of us.

Thanks

The Football Supporters Association, Merseyside Branch.
The Liverpool fanzines, *Through the Wind and Rain*, *Red All Over the Land*, and *Another Vintage Liverpool Performance*.

SUGAR AND SPICE (AND ALL THINGS NICE)

"I'll tell you what I want, what I really, really want."
 "So tell me what you want, what you really, really want."
 "I wanna, I wanna, I wanna, I wanna, I wanna really really really wanna..... support a shit football team"

Unless you've been on another planet since the summer you'll know that the most asked question of recent times has been "Who's your favourite Spice Girl?"

The jury is still out on that one — so let's take a look at the contenders: Way back in last place is Mel C, the Liverpool fan, who wouldn't be out of place on TFI Friday's 'Ugly Bloke' section. In fourth is Mel B, who is northern and loud — two features in a lass that people really love (honest!). However, the difficulty comes in the next three possibilities for Best Spice. Some people like Victoria — the 'posh' one, others like Emma — the blonde one (even though she does like Tottenham 'long ball cloggers' Hotspur!) (*it's always easier to forgive a Spurs fan — Ed*). But many people's favourite, and my favourite is (well, was) ginger Geri Halliwell — until....



GERI

GINGER Spice Geri, 24, supports her local team, second division Watford.

She says: "I'm proud to represent the underdog. I'd like to say hello to their midfielder Gary Porter and defender Dominic Ludden, because he likes me."

"I got more into football during Euro '96, but for the wrong reasons!"



Can you 'kin believe it. She's a scummer. How can someone so gorgeous like something so shit. So, going back to the ultimate question Geri gets cast by the wayside and now it's a two-horse (if that's the appropriate word) race for the top spot.

Looking at her comment, "I got more into football during Euro '96, but for the wrong reasons," well, you support W*tf*rd; what other wrong reasons can there possibly be.

Looking back at the photo though, to instantly improve the picture I think that she should just be made to take that disgusting kit off — it would most

certainly be a better pic then (wa hey!).

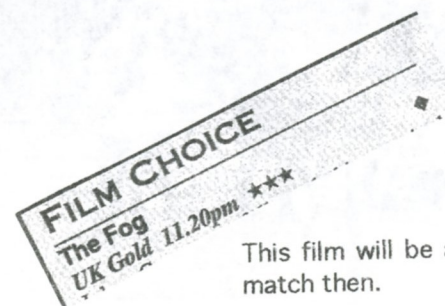
The Beatle '97

PS: Actually, sod it — I forgive her for supporting the scum — we can't all be perfect, after all (and I like her too much!).

*Ed's comment: An apology to any of our female readers who are upset by the 'blokey' tone of this item, with an assurance that unlike Beatle we have no intention of forgiving Geri for revealing her soft spot for W*tf*rd. We generally try not to be sexist, but occasionally these things sneak through.*

On the cards...

Down at the club shop the range of goods on sale has improved dramatically over the past couple of years, and with the appointment of a full time retail manager it looks to be getting even better. The fact that birthday cards are now sold has already got me out of a tight spot on a Saturday afternoon more than once. But why the hell is it so difficult to get the cards into the damned envelopes? Surely it's not that difficult to get cards and envelopes that give the impression of being designed to go together, is it?





With the transfer deadline approaching, it's probably tempting things to be printing pictures of our leading goalscorer. But here he is anyway, Tony Thorpe trying to find a way past the Crewe Alexandra defence.

Below, we have the referee in the Crewe match calling for a stretcher. We couldn't fail to be impressed by the way the four stretcher bearers arrived separately — one from each corner of the ground.



SHORT CUTS



NAP SACKS: Geri and Victoria snatch forty winks

So Geri (from the Spice Girls) is a Watford fan, eh? It's true. Here she is enjoying the thrills and spills of a typical match.

And from *The Guardian*, a tale of very bad luck on the part of a man who had it within his power to pull the plug. But he got it wrong and they just managed to avoid further ridicule.

And below, from *The Mirror*, another bumper attendance at Kenilworth Road.

RESULTS

FA CUP

(In association with Littlewoods)

Third Round

Watford (0) 1 Oxford (0) 0
White 71 9,502

Connolly 80

(Watford away to Brentford/Man C)

Luton (0) 1 Bolton (1) 1
Johnson 90 Pollock 26

1,414

(Winners home to Chesterfield)
Gillham (0) 0 Nashby (0) 2

JUST as Watford's home FA Cup tie with Oxford United was about to be postponed for a third time following a power failure before kick-off on Tuesday, enter Tony Taylor, a spectator but, more importantly, an electrician.

He volunteered his expertise and, heroically, got the floodlights working. The game kicked off 45 minutes late and Watford won 2-0. Which was bad news for Tony, who is an Oxford fan.

"In a way I wish I hadn't helped out," he said. "With 10 minutes to go I thought about switching the lights off again."

Luton's going up...

So went the song after our expected victory, but if we keep playing this badly there could be lots of egg-stained faces in Bedfordshire come May. There are few certainties in life, but one of them is that Notts County are in a worse state than Bob Dylan's voice. Any side which can lose 2-0 at home to Bournemouth is in trouble. And yet we struggled against them for an hour, including the whole of one of the worst first halves I have ever witnessed. To put things in perspective, County were on level terms at half time and, like ourselves, were still booed off the pitch. All this despite a new signing called Bontcho Guentchev (according to the announcer).

Embarrassingly, the Magpies (and this hurts, because I hate them deeply) deserved to lead by at least two goals at the interval, having had four good chances to score. Julian James made their left back, Ian 'Roy' Barraclough, look like Maldini. The amount of space he was given defies belief, and we should count ourselves lucky that the home side had no-one capable of putting the killer touch to his crosses. Our passing was woeful, the midfield showed no ability to keep the ball and Tony Thorpe made me wonder what all the fuss was about. All in all, a half best forgotten.

The second half could only be better, and we were not disappointed. Lennie the Lion obviously tore into his toothless troops in the dressing room and we showed more adventure. Passes were becoming more accurate, and the situation looked more encouraging. Until, that is, Notts spoiled things by scoring. I can't remember much about the goal, but I think it came after someone on the left (Tony Batterbrains, I think) was unmarked and had all the time in the world to shoot. Desperately trying to rationalise the situation, I said to my sister that, like Manchester United against Wimbledon, we needed to go behind to make us start playing. Did I believe that? Is the Pope Madonna's father? So I was as amazed as anyone when we started our own impression of Holland at their peak — total football after 25 minutes of total crap. The first goal followed some rousing stuff, and it was a 25-yard cracker from another new signing. I had never heard of Cherry Hughes until the scorer was announced. Wherever she came from, she's pretty damned good. After that there was, as the saying goes, only one team in it. Thorpe had a glorious chance to put us ahead after beating the defence, but looked behind him to check if he was onside and shot wide when he should have run on and banged it past the keeper. He went off shortly afterwards.

The search for the winner was on, and Luton looked increasingly likely to score it. It finally arrived three minutes from time, when Alexander received the ball just outside the penalty area and shot unstoppable past Ward.

YEESS!! Now why wasn't it like that all the way through?

At the end of the day, Brian, we deserved the victory, but only because County were so weak up front. Marvin and Steve Davis (great to see him winning again....) were good at clearing the ball, but not, unfortunately, to their team mates; we need a central defender who can pass the ball properly. Julian improved as the game progressed, but started abysmally, Bontcho was far too slow and indecisive, as was Oldfield, and Thorpe looked shattered. Gary Waddock was sorely missed. A useful win, then, but the team must learn that they can't always afford to wait so long before turning on the style.

Graham Johnson

In defence of Bontcho

I believe that Bontcho, our 'useless Bulgar', has been unfairly criticised. OK, I can only make it to a few games a season, but the five or six times I've seen Bontcho he has looked as if he's trying. He may not be blessed with fantastic pace or skill, but at least he isn't afraid to try. The referee at Bristol Rovers effectively lost us the game. God only knows what the referee was thinking — my reasoning was that he spoke fluent Bulgarian — but as I'm a qualified referee myself, that wasn't even a bookable offence. So, congratulations to Mr Stretton, those points could cost us dear.

As Retardo the Clown pointed out in 'Mid Season Reports' (issue 39) Bontcho has the capability to be our best player if we let him play instead of getting on his back all the time. He is the only Euro '96 'star' in the Second Division, so he deserves some kind of recognition from the fans.

I watch my local Southern League side, Gloucester City, and believe me all the fans down there would die to have someone of Bontcho's class in the team (*there is probably an answer to that....* - Ed).

Give Bontcho another chance please, if he can win us another couple of games between now and the end of the season it could earn us promotion. Besides, how many penalty taking specialists have we got!

Dave Church (*the other Frampton Hatter*)

Wycombe 0 Watford 0
KEVIN MILLER enhanced his
reputation as the best keeper
outside the Premier League.

Surely there's at least one better keeper outside the Premiership than Kevin Miller. Or are we not counting tall Americans?

AWAY THE LADS

This season has seen a marked increase in the away support at Town games, and I'll own up now to the fact that I'm guilty of this myself. Admittedly there have been opportunities to visit "new" grounds, and success has played its part, but this has also sadly been attracting a small undesirable element. This is in contrast to home games, where a classic example has been the matches at home to Gillingham and away to Watford. The Town support at Watford was around 5,000, whereas at Home to Gillingham the total gate was 4,604 including around 800 Gills supporters — giving a total home support of 3,800.

I can only wonder at the loyalty of some supporters who happily give WFC £12 of their money, and yet cannot be bothered to turn up for LTFC home matches. This brings into question the so called hatred of our rivals. Personally, I have no dislike of Watford fans, but can see nothing wrong in verbal banter (*piss taking to put it another way - Ed*). However, anything beyond this is inexcusable. I refer to the reasons for the heavy policing required at both Vicarage Road and Kenilworth Road for the derby matches this season, which, in the long run, we supporters will foot the bill for.

Admittedly the Watford home game was live on the box, but the lack of away support was very apparent, due to the threat of violence from home supporters. And before anyone suggests cowardice as a reason for this, the same could be said of our own fans, where 2,500 travelled to Wimbledon in October and yet less than 1,000 turned out for the trip to Millwall, which is probably the easiest away game to get to.

I find it very difficult to accept that this so called hatred has to turn to violence, and that violence can ever be justified by football supporters on any occasion. Those who feel the need to terrorise those towns where Luton Town happen to be playing are certainly not what I call supporters and, as they don't seem to be willing to make any financial commitment to our own club, wouldn't be missed very much. What's worse is that their behaviour is giving us all a bad reputation, and most of us can do without that.

To conclude, I can accept that some northern and west country grounds are difficult to get to, and this will have an effect on support at those games. But the support at Town home games is still very poor in comparison to many away games and needs to be better for the good of our club, and out team. So if you're having lots of good days out following the Town, pop down to Kenilworth Road for a home game once in a while.

The Farmer

TOWN TRAVELS

As if we had not had enough travelling this season, eh? There are times when it seems to be never ending. And as recent seasons have shown, that time is usually somewhere around April. And so it follows with this season. We start off a few days early, in fact, on Easter Saturday, March 29th, when we are scheduled to visit Burnley.

The ground should look a bit different from our last visit a couple of years back following some redevelopment work, but whether we get a terrace or seats I'm not sure. And as far as pre-match drinking is concerned, this is not an activity that is usually strongly recommended in Burnley, so no recommendations here. In fact, wearing your team's colours is not advised in the town either.

A week later and we make the short (?) journey up to Rotherham. What can you say about this ground? It backs onto a scrap yard, and in parts looks as though it would be more at home there. But it's another ground where we get to stand on a terrace, and it's worth remembering that on our last league visit we were also on the promotion trail. Those with long enough memories will remember a crucial penalty save by Alan Judge. The choice of watering holes is vastly expanded by Sheffield being just down the road (or railway), although those who haven't been back since 1981/81 ought to bear in mind that the railway station has moved since then, and is now a little further from the ground. The MILLMOOR, is a pub right next to the ground, on the corner of Millmoor Lane which leads down the side of the ground to the visitors turnstiles. Slightly further away is the MOULDERS REST, 110 Masbrough Street, 200 yards from the ground. For families, the EFFINGHAM ARMS, Dropping Well, Upper Wortley Road is on the way in to Rotherham from junction 35 of the M1.

Another week later, on the 12th, we have a short trip up the motorway for Town's first ever visit to the Bescot Stadium. Most of you will have seen Walsall's ground from the M6 on trips further north, although you may not have realised. If in doubt, look for it on the way to Burnley. It's very distinctive, due mainly to the bloody great Daewoo advert on the roof of the stand (the slogan could be referring to Walsall's chances of promotion). And if you haven't been to Scunthorpe's new(ish) ground either, this is virtually identical, so Graham Alexander should feel at home. Just round the corner from junction 9 of the M6 is the KING GEORGE V, on Wallows Lane, a large pub with a family room, opposite Morrisons supermarket. For those planning a few beers in Birmingham or Walsall itself, the ground, conveniently, has its own railway station, Bescot Stadium.

Tuesday 15th, and it's Blackpool. Oh, we do like to be beside the seaside, especially when it isn't in the depths of winter. If the weather is half decent this

could be a really good day out (unless, of course, you get the wrong mixture of food, beer, and rides at the Pleasure Beach....). It's a great shame that it's a midweek game though, as it will spoil the opportunity for some to make a weekend of it. We actually gave some recommended pubs in issue 38, and briefly these were the FLEECE, Market Street, the MITRE, West Street, the WATERLOO HOTEL, Waterloo Road and DUTTON'S ARMS and YATES on the Promenade. Realistically, if you have trouble finding a pub in Blackpool there is little hope left for you.

And finally, for April and, unless we've really cocked it up, for the whole season, to Peterborough for our last away game. If Barry Fry is still working his magic we may be involved in the home side's relegation battle, and could witness their 50th player of the season making his appearance. At least this one is only a short journey. There has been a suggestion that for our final away trip of the season, and with a large Town following expected, we should do something different, like making this a 'hat day'. Sounds fair enough to me. So, all we are asking is for everyone who attends this game to wear some sort of headgear, as silly or as sensible as you like. We are the Hatters, after all. The pubs closest to the ground tend to be restricted on who they will let in on matchdays, which is a pity as Charters, the Dutch barge by the Town Bridge is one of the best freehouses for many a mile. JOHNNY BYRNE'S, at 72 Oundle Road, allows in only respectable fans, so if you don't fit the description you'll probably have to settle for the WORTLEY ALMSHOUSES on Westgate (Sam Smiths), or the TUT'N'SHIVE, just along the same road (a Whitbread real ale pub). For families, other than the aforementioned Johnny Byrne's, the BOTOLPH ARMS, 465 Oundle Road, is near the junction of the A1260 with Oundle Road. And that, we hope, will be the lot for the 1996/97 season.

K.F.H.



"Mad" Merchandise



Have you got one yet? Because Jimmy Ryan hasn't. The new '74 away shirt from Mad as a Hatter! is available now, in wonderful white, blue and orange. Made in England in 100% cotton with an embroidered LTFC 'football' badge, and definitely not a replica of the one modelled in the picture. Already modelled at Town games by a select few, this is now on general release, and can be yours for just £28.95, including post and packing, and comes in two sizes — L & XL.

The home shirt, as pictured, is still available, but now also priced at £28.95.

Another excellent product - Luton News

Please send me a 1974 home/away* shirt. I enclose a cheque for £28.95

Name:..... Size: L/XL*

Address:.....

(*Delete as appropriate)

Cheques payable to Mad as a Hatter!

Send orders to: 38 Twigden Court, Mount Pleasant Road, Luton, LU3 2RL.

Kenilworth Road Aerial Photo

10"x8" Aerial colour photograph

A visual reminder of the ground's character before the days of the Taylor Report (and before the Kohlerdome?)



ONLY £3.50

Two versions available — new (as above) and old (as in Issue 34). Special price for the pair - £6.00

Please send me the new/old aerial photo. I enclose a cheque for £3.50/6.00

Name:.....

Address:.....

.....

.....

Cheques payable to *Mad as a Hatter!* Orders to the address on page 2.

RAVING MAD!!!

Dear "Mad",

We might have a famous person in our midst. I was listening to the BBC News Quiz tapes which came out a few months ago, and there is a clip sent in by someone called Ray Aspden of Luton. Is this the same man who does the superb cartoons? Fame at last.....

Graham Johnson

Hucknall, Notts.

Dear "Mad",

It may have escaped your notice, but the name Bontcho Guentchev is an anagram for "Useless Bulgarian sheep farmer".

Give or take a few letters.

Pipe Smoker

Luton.

Dear "Mad",

When the fixtures were first released in the summer, one game stood out a mile (apart from the two scum games), Peterborough away. Being the eternal optimist, I saw this to be the game where we secure promotion. This being the case, our usual good away support should be boosted by several thousands. I recommend that the fans choose this day to be 'Mad Hat' day. If the majority of us wear some kind of head gear, what a bunch of prats we will look — but it would be a laugh. Come on you Hatters!

Steve H.

Dear "Mad",

I have just been reading the lovely article 'Is it my imagination?' by an alias known as "Beaker, the Slip End Hatter", slagging me off for a) not including Marv in my 'Half Term Reports' (issue 38), and b) at the same time, for me praising David Oldfield.

Keeping this rather short and sweet, apologies, but Marvel Johnson must have escaped me at the time, and Oldfield has just netted a hat-trick against Preston. How's that for a possible 'Pussy of the Year' award, "Beaker" son.

Cheers for now,

Tony Allbones, the Kempston stud.

Dear "Mad",

I'd just like to have a moan. I don't moan too much (well, not this season anyway) but these issues are beginning to piss me right off. I am, of course, talking about the ticketing arrangements at the Kenilworth. In the 3 or so seasons since the seats came in, I have been infuriated every week by the complete stupidity of the

way we have to gain entry to our beloved ground. Why, oh why, do we have to go through the hassle of the 'cinema' style ticketing system. I could understand this if we were a Premier league team. Sadly, we are not. We don't have capacity crowds, so why the cinema? Why not have the gates like they used to be? Different gates and prices for different areas of the ground. If it went back to the old system I wouldn't have to shout at latecomers drifting in a 3.20. Also, the atmosphere is still shit. OK, the season ticket boys in the ends do their best, but we should all sing, let the team know they do have fans and aren't playing in a morgue (doesn't the chant "You're supposed to be at home" hurt?). Let's have an atmosphere at home like we have at away games. Believe me some fans are put off home games by the shit atmosphere and only go to away games. That is one reason why we took 5,000 to the donkey sanctuary and yet only get 6,000 at home! Having non-entity teams like Crewe out singing us at home is crap, so sing your hearts out for the lads!

Victor Meldrew, the Bedford Hatter.

I don't believe it! Ed. Seriously though, there is an atmosphere problem at Kenilworth Road. Maybe it would be better if we weren't always looking for reasons to criticise the players during a match. As for ticketing arrangements, over to you, LTFC.

Dear "Mad",
Hey! My letter (issue 38) worked! LTFC put an ad in the local press telling people how easy it is to get into a Luton game — and 6,400 turned up for a very average looking fixture. There ya go, the power of the fanzines.

Kev.

Luton.

Dear "Mad",
Am I the only Hatter in Leicestershire?
James Woodgate,
Clipston, Leics.

* No!

Dear "Mad",
I am writing to appeal to all those so-called Town fans who say that they support the club, but don't travel to the games, home or away, and don't keep the numbers up and the money rolling in. Not travelling to the Kenny even once or twice a season, and just buying souvenirs from the club shop doesn't pay the wages of those great players we are graced with. Don't get me wrong, this isn't about money, it's also about honour and showing your loyalty for the team. As I live in London and support Luton Town I feel that I am a dedicated Town fan

as I travel up and down the country spending my money on train tickets and tickets to sit/stand in away ends that are worse than w*tf*rd (with the exception of the Den), and get to the majority of games, home and away. So, living in Feltham I have to spend four hours on the train, there and back, to watch the team that I support on Saturdays, and the same for midweek games, in the process seeing some good games (Crewe, 6-0) and some very boring games (Watford, 0-0). So, I can say to my mates that I was there feeling the buzz, and being able to go into school the next day with a smile and being able to knock back any remark with a quick "6-0".

But my problem is when they start taking the 'P' out of me about the attendance on Saturday and I can't come back with anything except that we took 4000 to w*tf*rd (no capital W as you can't call it a place), which becomes a bit useless after you've used it a lot.

I believe that the present position that we're at in the league, the team need all the support they can get to get back some of the killer instinct they were showing before the break. And although we're in a league with teams we could beat if Thorpe only had one leg, this should be even more of an incentive for you to attend games, to watch us play some premier standard football.

So, come on you 'atters, don't let the scum down the road beat us with attendances, as they sure can't beat us with points, can they?

Alan Long,
Feltham, Middx.

Dear "Mad",
Last month I ordered two of your splendid footie shirts, one of each in fact. The white one arrived but alas no orange shirt. You posted the white shirt on 13th February, but have you forgotten the orange garment?!

At the moment the situation is similar to the game at Chesterfield. Full price, half the goods!

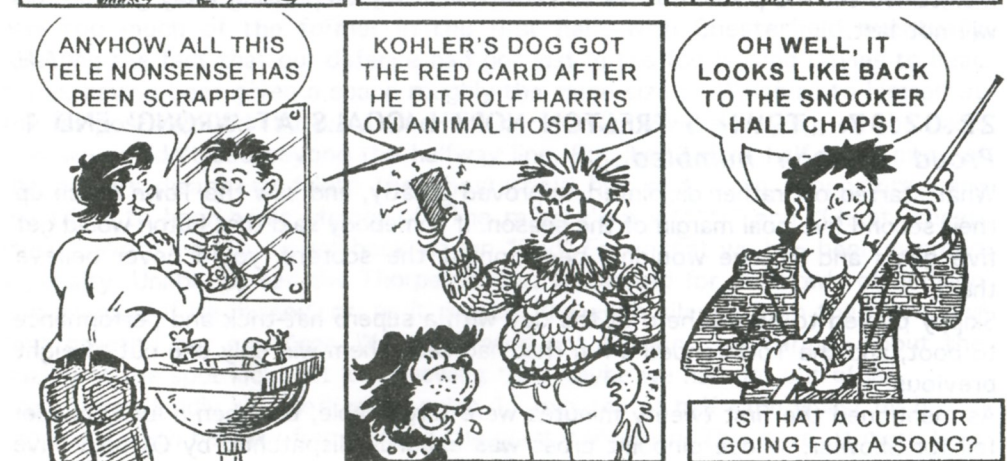
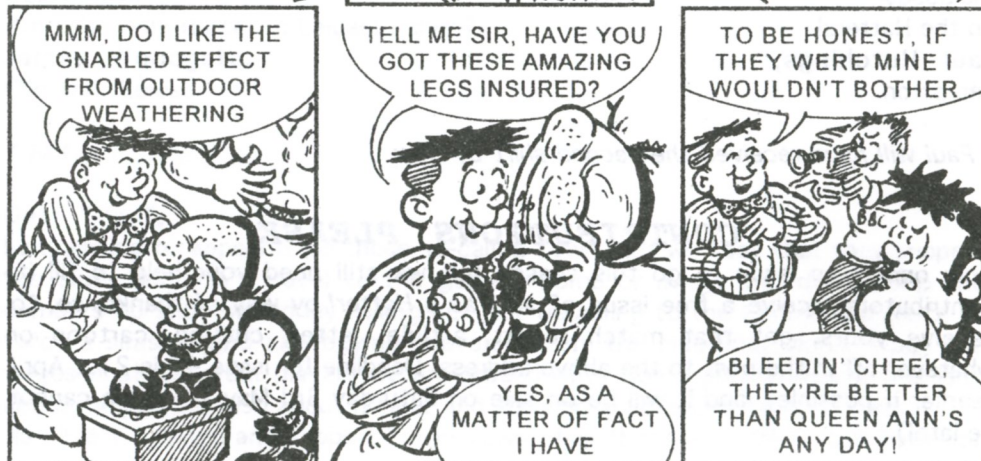
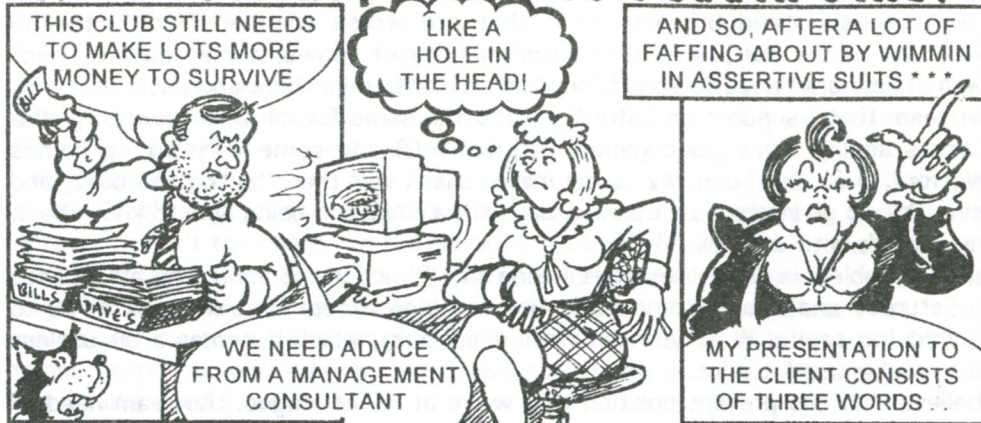
Up the Hatters!
Paul Hutchings,
Kempston.

* Paul will have received the second shirt by now.

CONTRIBUTIONS PLEASE

Only one more issue to go this season but we still need your help to fill it. Contributors receive a free issue of *Mad as a Hatter!* by way of thanks, so, to receive yours, get that match report, article, letter, cutting, cartoon or whatever off in the post to the above address. Deadline for issue 41 is 21st April (earlier if possible), and it will be on sale on Saturday 3rd May (this one cannot be late!).

Whatever happened to Bobbin Dino?



ON FORM FOR THE PLAY-OFFS

We've printed three match reports for the Chesterfield match simply due to the fact that in the circumstances several points of view may be beneficial. The last issue of this season will have 10 or 11 matches to cover, so we'd like to receive match reports from readers to give plenty of variety. Please send your reports to the address on page 2.

15.02.97 BRISTOL ROVERS 3 TOWN 2

Once again the Town give away the lead, and go on to lose an away game by a 3-2 scoreline. Last season we'd probably have said that we were at least scoring goals, but this season we're supposed to be going for promotion and this really isn't good enough. The referee chose to send off Bontcho Guentchev, and although reducing us to 10 men was not terribly helpful no-one, even Lennie Lawrence, seemed terribly bothered about the prospect of losing the Bulgar for another three matches.

When we took the lead through a penalty, we should have been able to follow the job through, and after going in at half time with the scores level the last thing we needed was to give away an early goal in the second half. So, with this being the last thing we needed, we did it twice, and eight minutes after half time we were 3-1 down. Only the most optimistic of Town supporters could have expected us to get anything better than a draw out of the game after that, judging by away results this season. And so it proved, with the only consolation being the return of Gary Waddock, and his rare appearance on the scoresheet. After a neat exchange of passes Waddock whacked the ball from 25 yards, and the blistering shot passed the hapless keeper on the bounce. The jubilation on the Town terrace was probably more to do with the scorer than the scoreline.

As ever, all the other teams below us in the table also faltered, and we maintained second place. But we all know that if we keep losing away games, this will not last.

K.F.H.

22.02.97 TOWN 5 PRESTON NORTH 'GOALS AT WRONG' END 1 *Proud Preston humbled....*

What started off rather disjointed, improved greatly, and saw the Town notch up their second five goal margin of the season. If somebody said that Luton would get five goals and Thorpe wouldn't be amongst the scorers, you'd never believe them.

Skippy proved to be the hero of the day with a superb hat-trick and performance to boot, and the Town ended a run that had seen them win only one out of eight previous.

As mentioned the first twenty minutes were forgettable, but then a lucky header fell for Showler, whose pinpoint cross was expertly dispatched by Oldfield. Five

minutes later, Showler's excellent work was once again converted by Skippy's turn and shot. A bullet strike completed the hat-trick a few minutes later and Waddock added a fourth just before half time, amazingly two in two games for the "sideways" man. A standing ovation at half time followed.

To be honest, a pretty ordinary second half, with Preston scoring immediately after the break, and Mitchell nodding in from a corner. And Grant replacing Thorpe. Mmmm, not exactly class replacing class. Top performance from everyone, especially Showler. Go home Guentchev, I give you the red card!

Tony Allbones, The Kempston Stud.

01.03.97 YORK CITY 1 TOWN 1

As virtually the only sober (not by choice — over indulgence the night before) 'Mad' correspondent present, I am the only one capable of remembering anything about this match.

A pretty enjoyable first half: the Town absolutely cruising at 1-0, seven balls used due to virtually every clearance by either team ending up in the streets. The 'Spider' went down injured. Once he left the field, we became a disorganised mess. Jules clearly cannot play left back to save his life — every right-footed clearance went into touch. For the first 20 minutes of the second half we were mauled almost into submission. Then gradually York ran out of steam (railway town — ha-ha!!) and Luton finally started to string more than one pass together, even creating a couple of chances. But we failed to score and 2 points were lost.

Objét

04.03.97 CHESTERFOG 1 TOWN 1

Or, The fog on the Town is all mine, all mine.....

A good following for a Tuesday night were eventually talked into the fog shrouded ground about 10 minutes before kick-off, and quickly worked out that if we could see the ball we were defending, if we couldn't, we were on the attack. Sadly it was too much of the former in the first half, with Chesterfield eventually rumbling the fact that our defence had got lost in the fog leaving Davies to head home, having been given a space roughly the same size as Wales all to himself at the far post. We didn't have a clue how our forwards were playing, on the basis that we couldn't see beyond the halfway line. But just before half time, most of the players disappeared into the Chesterfield half and Town supporters were mystified to hear home chants of "The referee's a w****r" and "Cheat, cheat, cheat". Word eventually got back via Ian "God" Feuer that we had been awarded a penalty. Unable to see the Thorpemeister, we waited for the howls of derision and laughter if he missed, or, as it proved, the eerie silence from the home end that greeted our equaliser. We celebrated not knowing (or caring) about the quality of the spot kick, but just knowing that maybe we had got out of jail.

The referee kindly awarded us an extra 15 minutes at half time whilst he held a fog watch with his new found friend the giant policeman. This gave us more time

to enjoy our pasties and to fully appreciate the the stunning black and white action photos in the programme (the words box brownie spring to mind), before he decided that he would play on, thus letting us see our previously unseen Town forwards at our clear end. The fog improved, but unfortunately the play didn't, two Thorpey "please give us another penalty" swallow dives being the nearest we got. Still, away draws are OK, as long as we win at Kenny Road..... please.

Roger Whichelow

CHESTERFIELD 1 TOWN (We think) 1

What a fiasco! All that way up there to watch half a pitch. The ref was a brave man to start this game, with the fog worsening all the time. With Chesterfield attacking our end we were fortunate to see our lads perform some schoolboy defending — what a soft goal.

Shortly before half time, the ref blew his whistle, and the home end let out a groan. What was it? A free kick to the Town? Word filtered from our fellow Hatters at the side that we had been given a penalty — YES! We heard the whistle being blown again, the thud of a ball being kicked, deathly silence at the other end, and our players returning to the halfway line to restart — YYYEEESSS!!!

At half time it was announced that the goalkeepers had complained about the poor visibility, and it seemed sensible to, at 1-1, call the game off. The ref opted for a 30 minute stoppage, to see if the fog cleared, which as it happens, it did a bit — we could actually see the other goal now. But, sod's law, once the game had restarted the fog came down again — it had merely taken a half-time break — and visibility became even poorer than earlier. We just had to hope the home fans didn't let out a cheer — we couldn't see what Chesterfield were up to in our half. They couldn't see what the Town were up to in their half — they weren't missing much.

An 'interesting' 90 minutes. Personally, I'm glad it wasn't called off, as considering our track record where midweek away games are concerned, 1-1 wasn't too bad.

Incidentally, the pie I had was bloody awful, as people standing around me — but not too close — in the second half will testify. (*This seems to have been backed up by Radio 5 Live's Alan Green, who was bemoaning the state of the pasties during the commentary on the Chesterfield v Wrexham cup-tie a few days later. — Ed*)

And finally, what were those two south London slags doing going all the way to Chesterfield just to taunt the Town fans about what Millwall were going to do to our town four days later? Wankers.

The Thin Controller

'We cannot see fuck all'

To say that it was a tad on the foggy side is like saying that Fred and Rosemary West had a slight fondness for landscape work in their back garden. You had more chance of seeing Kim Grant score a goal than you had of seeing a football match in

this weather. With the visibility as bad as not being able to see past the halfway line at times, it came as some surprise that the match reached a conclusion. We saw their goal perfectly all right, as it was down our end, but it was slightly ridiculous that we had to have Feuer tell us we had won a penalty, and then have him tell us again that we had scored it. This was all before half-time, and as the interval loomed the fog got worse. The ref made half-time thirty minutes long to give the fog a chance to go, and when we didn't think it could get better, it suddenly lifted — we could even see the other end! But, alas, halfway through the second half the fog came back down reducing us to only seeing half the match again — and relying on the 'oohs' and 'aahs' from the home support (wherever they were!) to let us know what was happening down the other end.

This match went to prove what a bunch of morons some of the Luton fans are. Half the crowd throughout the match kept on chanting for an orange ball. Now excuse me for being slightly pedantic — but how would an orange ball be seen better in the fog. If it had been snowing, then an orange ball would be useful, but not in fog for Christ's sake. Also, when Feuer told us that we had got a penalty, a large section of our support ran down 6 or seven concrete steps to the front of the terrace. Yeah, that really helped you lot to see Thorpe take the penalty, didn't it!

Anyway, £8 to see — sorry, be present at a game where you could have seen more if you had been watching the scores flash up on Teletext — can't be bad.

The Beatle '97

08.03.97 TOWN 0 SCUMWALL 2

*You're going bust, you're going bust,
You're going, Millwall's going bust.*

Regrettably a day to forget for reasons both on and off the pitch. Firstly down to the clown in the black, a certain chap from up north who will remain nameless (*presumably we're referring to Mr Frankland — Ed*) and secondly the brainless morons who claim to be football fans, who brought scenes to Luton that I was stupid enough to think were a thing of the past.

I have no doubt every club thinks they have the world's worst referee in charge of their game but, we seem to go a step further. I accept a few dodgy decisions here and there as part of the game, but having seen the clown in charge of this match you have to question how the hell he ever made the referees list in the first place. After booking Jules so early on, you would have expected a flood of cautions, especially the way the tackles were going in, but no. Our dear circus clown turned a blind eye to several late tackles and an occasional elbow in the face. From where I sat it was impossible to say if Jules deserved to go. It looked a 50/50 ball, but after what Lennie said afterwards, maybe not.

Before Jules departed, Thorpey should have scored instead of heading against the bar (easy for me to say!), and it was about this time that Town started to get a grip. Handbag was superb and even Paul Showler looked very useful, although I do

wish he would run at defenders more.

For a side down to ten men Luton played some of their best football of the year outplaying a very poor Millwall team. After the break it was much of the same with the woodwork being struck twice more before the circus clown defied logic by having a free kick on the edge of the area retaken, I assume because Millwall made a f*#k up of the first one. Tony Dolby obliged with a well struck although slightly deflected shot over the wall into the top corner. If ever a team didn't deserve a lead it was Millwall. Still Luton played with some style, but having no luck before God himself intervened in handing the three points to Scumwall. A break on the right saw sub Dwight have his legs taken from under him after the ball had gone — a clear foul? Not bloody likely! He waved play on, a couple of passes and Paul Hartley drove the ball past Ian Feuer. With two minutes to go there was no way back.

However, for the first time in weeks I saw a performance which gave me optimism for the promotion run-in. We may have lost, but there were circumstances beyond Luton's control. We can still do it, and dare I say it, I think we will.

Sadly, the postscript to this report concerns the tossers who follow certain clubs around the country. Luton are certainly not exempt as I have witnessed on several occasions this season, but to see the town centre crawling with dozens of police, because there happens to be a football match taking place is a very sad sight. If, for whatever reason, you feel the need to knock the hell out of the opposition's supporters would you kindly sod off and do it elsewhere. YOU ARE NOT WANTED.

Bungle

12.03.97 WRECSAM 2 TOWN 1

Our first trip to Wales since that unforgettable experience in Cardiff 3 years ago. Well, what better remedy for a team that's suffering a hangover after losing an FA Cup quarter final three days before than a home fixture against good old Luton. To be fair though, the first half was surprisingly entertaining with both teams playing some reasonably good football. Davis headed us in front midway through the first half but even before our celebrations had died down we gifted the Welshmen a penalty which was duly dispatched. Thorpe should have done better with a free header and the Hatters just about shaded the half by way of dominating the final 5 minutes during which we forced a succession of corners.

However, the second half proved disastrous. That tosser Bennett forced the ball home for Wrexham which proved to be the winner following a cross which Feuer should have come for, but didn't. Throughout the game, Oldfield and Thorpe had looked quite lively and whilst in previous games their substitutions have been understandable, on this occasion the introduction the out of touch Marshall and the lazy Grant for the pair seemed a strange decision to say the least. This feeling was echoed by the majority of the travelling support. Predictably, the game then

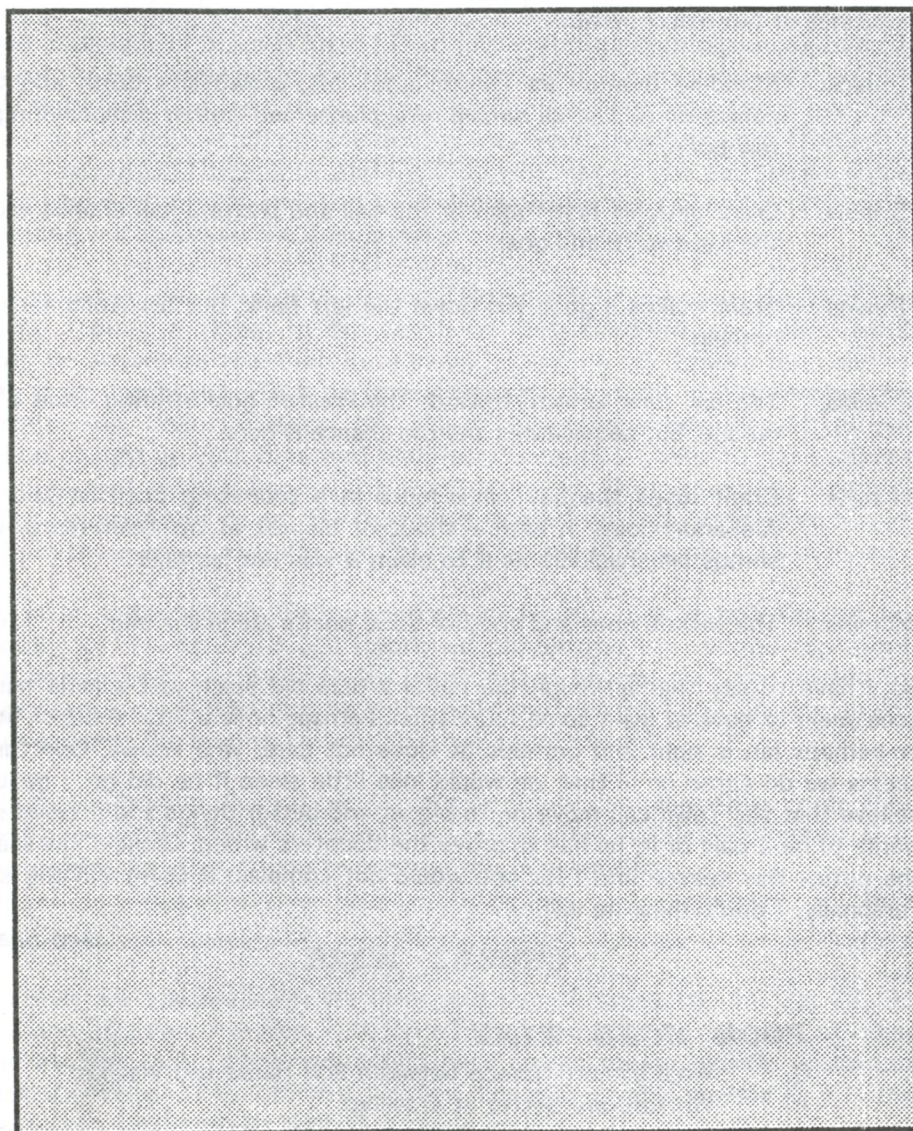
petered out with our only real threat in the final 25 minutes being when Marshall blasted over the bar when he should have hit the target.

Maybe I'm being over critical (their keeper Marriott was voted Man of the Match) but that is now only 2 points out of a possible 12, and with our next four games against promotion rivals we must gain a minimum of eight points.

Steve F.

PS: Can anybody remember the last time we won away to a team who wear red???

Highlights of the Chesterfield v Luton game:



GRANTWATCH

While reading the last issue of *Mad* I came across an article disparaging the abilities of Kim Grant, and I set out with an open mind to try and see just how accurate Ian A and his character assassination were.

So the moment I had been waiting for came late in the second half (of the Preston game) when after 70 minutes the man himself entered the fray. Here's how the remainder of the match went:

- 70 mins: Standing ovation as Thorpe goes off, crowd sits down and Grant comes on to a small ramble of applause and (rather disappointingly) a few boos.
- 75 mins: Grant gets his first touch of the ball and blasts a half chance wide of the Kenilworth end goal.
- 78 mins: Grant makes a good run down the left flank, but his cross ends with nothing.
- 81 mins: The ball runs forward towards the Preston goal offering Grant a one-on-one, but he hesitates and the chance is gone.
- 84 mins: Grant loses the ball once more in a promising position and even Alexander joins in with a shout of disgust at his team-mate. Grant shrugs his shoulders as if to claim it was not his fault.
- 90 mins: The whistle goes and another three points are in the bag.

So, I have to say that although the initial article did seem just a little harsh it does seem to have at least some foundation. Perhaps he is a little short of fitness or perhaps Ian is right and perhaps he does not care, who knows. One thing it seems we do agree on is that we would lose little sleep if he did go. I genuinely believe that the Town can move on to bigger and better things and if Grant really wants to be a part of it, he has to prove the doubters wrong. Oldfield has silenced the critics this season and I for one would not complain if Grant did the same. Personally, I don't think he will.

Jane Sherlock

POOR JOKE TIME

- Q. What's the difference between Rolf Harris and Watford?
A. Watford are better at drawing!

There's only one David Oldfield

This year's surprise star has to be "Skippy" himself, David Oldfield. The man who many used to dread coming on to the field has now become one of the team's best players. At last the boos and taunts turned to praise as the crowd chanted "There's only one David Oldfield" in response to his sixteen minute hat-trick against Preston.

Let us go back in time to the beginning of last season. Terry Westley had become manager in place of David Pleat and with four signings made over the summer we had some hope for the future. Gavin Johnson turned out to be worth even less than we had paid for Bontcho (ie. Nothing!) and Steve Davis was a cracking buy which no-one doubts was worth every penny. That left us with the pairing of Guentchev and Oldfield who were to be our "strike force". It didn't take us long to realise that these would not be the duo responsible for buying our ticket to the Premiership.

However, while the likes of Oakes (and some might even say Hughes) were poncing around looking, in the words of Elvis Costello, as if they would "rather be anywhere else than here today", Oldfield tried more than the rest of the team combined. What he lacked in skill, he made up for through raw determination. Unfortunately, his lack of first team experience at Leicester City had caught up with him, and without a decent run here he was unable to get up to full match fitness. He was dropped, then recalled, dropped, recalled, injured and so on. The boo boys carried on and Beattie even slagged him in in these columns (although for once I wrote in in someone's defence).

Now, after being given the chance towards the end of last season and beginning of this he is a much improved player and our second top scorer. When he has been out through his hamstring problems we have missed him and perhaps we will find that he is the right partner for Tony Thorpe, even if that does leave the mighty Dwight Marshall on the bench.

So, there you have it. Even those players we doubt can sometimes come good. I'll be happy to see Kim Grant prove me wrong after last month's attack that I made on him. So, Kim, if you're reading this, I'm waiting.....

Ian A.

BACK ISSUES

Back issues are still available. We have sold out of issues 10, 11, 25, 27, 35, 36, 37 and 38. Issue 1 is free, 2 to 26 will cost you 25p per copy and all others remain at 50p each. When requesting back issues please include a stamped addressed envelope with sufficient postage. Cheques payable to *Mad as a Hatter!* Please do not send cash by post as it rarely arrives.

A FURTHER WITNESS FOR THE PROSECUTION

So, the editor feels that the article debasing Kim Grant ("Come in no. 13 — your time is up", issue 39) was a touch one sided or a touch unfair does he? Has he been out to see him play of late? If anything I feel that the author was a touch lenient on the guy — I mean, a defence? Perhaps that's where he should play!

A year ago we had Thorpe on the sidelines, Taylor and often Guentchev up front and we were totally hopeless. We finished bottom and we cannot really complain. Now we have a decent side, and some young talent but we still persist with the likes of Grant. I don't know if many will speak out in his defence but I have to back the author.

We can win this title yet, but if we do very little (if any) credit can be given to Mr Grant.

You probably won't publish this, but if you do you can call the article "A further witness for the prosecution".

Nick Pace

We did publish it and we did use the title. Methinks Mr Pace should have read a little more into the editors comment at the end of Ian A's original article. No case was made by the editor in defence of Kim Grant, any more than was done by Ian A. The criticism was that the original article purported to make a defence which turned out to be a very good case for the prosecution. A bit like appearing in court on a dangerous driving charge and having your own lawyer stand up and say "M'Lud, my client drives like a raving lunatic and deserves to have the book, if not the whole library, thrown at him." You wouldn't like it, and wouldn't think it a fair trial when the prosecution decided they didn't need to say anything. The moral is that if you are trying to be fair to the player by giving both sides of the story, make a point of giving both sides, not just two different versions of the same side.

ONE IAN/TONY FEUER, THERE'S ONLY ONE.....

Regarding the 'who's Tony Feuer' palava in issue 38, it appears that (and this is from a reliable source) it is the fault of one book. In the Rothman's Directory (the football bible), apparently they've got Feuer's name down as Tony — for no particular reason. Therefore, all the newspapers see in Rothman's that his name is Tony, and that is what they print — obviously a genuine mistake.

Anyway, I don't really care about this, seeing as my favourite player is Ian Thorpe (doh!).

The Beagle '97

SHORT CUTS



One of these has awful "hair", makes crap records and supports the shit. The other one is a Spice Girl. Can you tell which is which?

Tin of beans to see the Hornets

IN another successful community goodwill gesture Watford FC admitted thousands of youngsters to last weekend's home game for the price of a can of beans.

All the youngsters who turned up to watch the Hornets draw against Blackpool got in free provided they had brought along a non-perishable food item. These were collected at the turnstiles for a

campaign being run by the homeless charity Crisis.

The food collection idea followed another free entry day for school kids against Peterborough which was so successful it almost doubled the normal home gate. Club officials decided to organise another — this time for charity.

● Sports: Page 14

And here's why W*tf*r'd keep getting such ridiculous attendances. Imagine being able to go to see the shit for as much as 9p. Seems a tad expensive, doesn't it?

Kim Grant: A Postscript

So, KFH judges that my article about Kim Grant was one-sided and unfair. Well, I have to say that I stick by every word in my original article, but I would like to restate the last paragraph of my article. Perhaps I will be proved wrong, perhaps he will find his touch, a first team place and score ten goals in the remainder of the season. Nothing would please me more than if that were to be the case — after all, we all want Luton to go up.

However, I really do not feel that the inclusion of Grant in our team helps our cause because I still don't think he gives a toss when he is out there. When he arrived I thought he would provide a great partner for Marshall and when we were in Division One he seemed a different player. Just as Scotty had his eyes on the Premiership when they should have been on the ball, Kim seems to be despondent and disillusioned with life in Division Two. If I was a first team striker in Division One one season and a reserve team striker in Division Two the next, perhaps I too would lose heart. But whatever the reasons, I still don't see the way forward with him.

I await the reverse argument to my original article with interest. The kangaroo court is suspended. For now.

Ian A.

THE RIGHT SPIRIT

Having just seen Luton lose to Millwall, I would like to say there is one plus factor to emerge from this match. That being that the fans did not end up slugging the team off or fighting each other, unlike some recent events. Examples being the trip back from Notts County, when it was obvious that two Town 'fans' had hit each other, and at Bristol Rovers where I was able to witness two supporters verbally attacking each other. This was caused by one of them having the temerity to slag off Ian Feuer (OK he was at fault for the second Bristol Rovers goal, but the week before had saved a penalty against Plymouth). What short memories some people have! And then, after a 5-1 home win against Preston, two Luton supporters in the Kenilworth Lower tier were seen to hit each other, resulting in police and stewards being called in to sort it out.

The point is, the team can only be helped by good vocal support from all fans. So, come the final weeks of the season can we all get together behind the players (all of them) as was seen today, admittedly in support of a losing cause, and cheer our side to promotion, rather than having a lot of infighting between the fans.

L.N.



More challenges as the Crewe defence holds fast. Above, David Oldfield looks for the ball in a picture that would be perfect for a Spot the Ball competition. Below, it's that man Thorpe again.



SHORT CUTS



**YOU
SAD**

B!*☆!@D

Hatters off to Harford!

MATTHEW WHITE is one Luton fan who really is as mad as a Hatter.

His friends were worried at one stage he might start a weird religious cult based on the all-embracing supremacy of Mick Harford.

Harford was the centre-forward and lynchpin of the most successful Luton side in the club's history. Around the time of their 1988 League Cup win, the impressionistic Matthew was caught in the school library trying to change every reference to God to 'Mick Harford'.

Now a mature 20, Matthew's views on the Almighty Mick haven't changed.

"He's the man. In fact he is God," says the travel agent, a regular worshipper at Kenilworth Road.

"Steve Foster was a bit of a God. But Mick was the cult figure with the fans.

"I hope we can get promotion this season, and then Mick can come back as player-manager and take us into the Premiership. He was the best player in the best team we've ever had, with people like Mal Donaghy and Ricky Hill."

Although, Matthew has never spoken to the great man, he has stood close enough to him to have felt the spirit.

"I once ran out on to the pitch as a match escort, which is a bit like a mascot except you can't stay on the pitch during the warm-up.

"I was only nine, so I wasn't able to have a conversation with him. But I did get his autograph. He had a great rapport with his fans." Or should that be followers.

Life isn't the same for Matthew now. The responsibilities of growing up mean he has to work most Saturdays at travel agents Allen Sturges Travel.

But he's still a midweek regular, and has finally found a player who deserves the devotion previously reserved for Mick Harford.

"Ceri Hughes is the best now. He's a nut-case who gets stuck in. All the crowd love him," says Matthew.

If a new sect springs up claiming to be the Church of Our Father Ceri Hughes, you will know who's responsible.

JOE BERNSTEIN

DO you know a Sad B*****! Write and tell us about him or her. Send your letters to Joe Bernstein, Mirror Football Mania Plus, 1, Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5AP. Include your daytime telephone number if possible.

From the pages of the *Daily Mirror*, the story of a true believer! Are there libraries all over the area where such vandalism has taken place?

Monday, February 17th, 1997

Mirror SPORT

**Young
Reporter**

OF THE WEEK

HATS OFF TO CHRIS



CHRIS LENNON

BEING a Luton Town supporter has its drawbacks, but 17-year-old Chris Lennon still finds plenty of reasons to renew his season ticket every year.

Chris, a pupil at Luton Sixth Form Centre, is so devoted to the Second Division team that he is a regular contributor to the club's fanzine "Mad as a Hatter".

Couldn't really let this one go, could we. News of our own Chris Lennon winning an award. And the cutting is from *The Mirror*, again.

8 Mirror SCORE

And now he has used that writing ability to become our latest Young Reporter of the Week.

"I started writing for the fanzine three years ago," explains Chris. "And that's when I decided I wanted to become a sports journalist. I'm not good enough to play, so I get my pleasure from writing."

Chris, who pens match reports for his local pub side, The Old Moat House, aims to win a place on a journalism course after passing his A-levels this summer.

Here is his report on Luton's recent 0-0 draw with Watford:

THE so-called M1 derby contained all the fire and passion that was expected in a match with both sides pushing for promotion. But sadly, goals were lacking in front of the TV cameras at Kenilworth Road.

Luton, who haven't experienced defeat at the hands of their Hertfordshire counterparts since April 1987, always looked the dominant team - but only managed to test Kevin Miller in the Watford goal on two or three occasions.

Des Linton had the chance to give the home side the lead as early as the fifth minute after capitalising on a loose ball in the Watford penalty area, but his fierce drive was palmed away by Miller.

Graham Alexander also should have put Luton ahead midway through the first half. His 60-yard run opened up the Watford defence, but the midfielder's tame shot was held easily by the goalkeeper.

Watford were restricted to hopeful efforts from outside the area as they failed to register a single shot on target in the first half, as the Hatters' back four made the perfect response to conceding six at Bolton in the FA Cup just two days before.

All eyes were on the Second Division's top scorer and Luton's surprise star player this term, Tony Thorpe, but the talented 22-year-old failed to sparkle up front.

Thorpe's best chance though came on 64 minutes when he turned his marker beautifully on the edge of the Watford penalty area and put his shot past the outstretched hand of Miller, only for the ball to hit the wrong side of the post.

DIDN'T WE HAVE A LOVELY DAY.....

Saturday February 15th gave us the opportunity of having our first daylight trip to the new home of Bristol Rovers FC, the Memorial Ground, also the home of Bristol RUFC. It also gave us the chance to have a damned good day out. This had all the makings of the perfect football experience, and little encouragement was needed. The first stage was a routine train journey to London, to be followed up with the renowned 'Big Ben' breakfast at the cafe just down the road from Paddington station. This was up to its usual standard and good value, and as all good breakfasts do, set us up for the day. At this stage there were just two of us, as different elements of our usual crowd had made different travelling arrangements. The train journey from Paddington to Bristol was relatively uneventful, save for the slightly unusual route between Reading and Bath and a rather large number of people lurking by the lineside in the Westbury area. Apparently this was due to a following kettle (a steam train to the uninitiated).

Our arrival in Bristol was unexpectedly prompt, and we were met on the platform by two less experienced rail travellers. The Norman brothers had obtained a lift as far as Cheltenham, and declined the opportunity for a spot of pre-match walking in the Welsh hills, in favour of a few beers in Bristol's pubs. With a couple of hours to kill somewhere before our arrival in Bristol, they had hopped on to the wrong train at Cheltenham, and realising their error, whiled away an hour or so on Gloucester station, before returning to their correct route. I suppose that's one way of passing the time. With our first port of call in Bristol somewhere in the region of a mile away, we decide to get a taxi, and a few minutes later we were at the Swan With Two Necks, and several quid lighter for the privilege. Note: Bristol taxis are not cheap. At the Swan our numbers increased dramatically, and we were treated to the rare sight of Dayoff refusing to drink a pint of beer. Having opted for the cheapest beer in the house (Salopian Snapdragon at 99p) it served him right. To be fair, everyone else among the assembled throng refused to drink it as well, concluding that the usual mixture of malt, hops and water did not need to be spiced with quite such a heavy influence of cloves (the taste defies description — you'll have to use your imagination).

In due course it was time to move on and our tour guides, Clark and Clark, led us to our next pint. A pleasant stroll through the St Paul's area (that's the one where they had the riots....) finally took us to the Brewhouse, the Ross home brew pub. In this bizarre establishment, some of the younger members of the group were yawning as others discussed players of the late sixties and early seventies (Mike Harrison's thighs, that sort of thing...). After a pint here we headed north, and made our way to the Cat and Wheel, a lovely alehouse leased by Mole's brewery. Our arrival coincided with a sudden decline in the range of beers available, and we were left to wonder why a pub needed so many television sets (at least eight, in two bars), while waiting for barrels to be changed.

We then moved on to the Prince of Wales, for a pint of Butcombe bitter, and after ten minutes or so, someone announced that it was time to move on to the ground, which was only ten minutes away (at least, that's what I thought someone said...). As it was only 2:30 there was clearly no reason to panic and some of us opted for a more leisurely pace. This was a mistake. We moved on and, passing the Hobgoblin, completely forgot the details of the pub crawl in issue 38, which recommended avoiding the establishment. Three of us nipped in for a quick half, which turned out to be particularly unimpressive, before continuing our walk to the ground. The walk was now beginning to turn into a trek, as the ten minutes from the PoW turned out to be a fallacy. As it was we finally arrived at the ground with the clock on the scoreboard showing 3:10. Personally, I was pretty impressed that we had missed only three minutes ten seconds of the game, and it was only after wondering at the enormous amount of action that was packed in to the next 18 seconds (!) that it finally dawned on me that I had actually missed the first 10 minutes of the match. I blame the Cornish Pasties.

The beer, predictably, had its effect, and I missed the red card that banished Bontcho from the Town team for three and a half matches. I knew something unusual had happened, from the cheer going up from both sets of supporters! As far as the rest of the match is concerned, it all seems a bit of a blur writing this several weeks later, so we'll skip over to full time, where we were able to witness what in Bristol passes for crowd control procedures. Determined to avoid a flashpoint, the stewards had lined up across the car park and were not going to allow any Town supporters to pass them and get near the home fans. On closer inspection however, the line of as many as err, five stewards, must have stretched the width of two, perhaps three cars so the exercise was altogether pointless. If that's what they do when Rovers play City, they'll struggle to find volunteers to be in that line.

The venue for the post-mortem on the match was the Annexe, which is literally an annexe to the larger Sportsman pub, but by no means the small pub you might expect. In fact the handpumps were so far behind the bar, you'd have needed binoculars to read the pumpclips. Fortunately the beers were also listed on a chalkboard, making the job much easier. As the beer was good and the natives friendly, we stayed here and got a minicab back to the station, which turned out to be considerably cheaper than the taxi earlier. An uneventful train journey back to London, followed by a swift pint in the Head of Steam at Euston, and it was back to Luton to finish off the day.

All in all another fine day out. Which only prompts one question; why do lager drinkers enjoy our real ale pub crawls?

HatterLeague 2 Update

After 27 games of the HatterLeague we're at last able to show a table with a clear leader, Mark Nelson having struck out on his own in the last couple of weeks, with results seeming to go in his favour. However, the names at the top and bottom of the table will be familiar, and it seems the same group are just swapping places from time to time. The editor is maintaining a challenge in equal 5th place with 392 points, with the game's originator back in 27th, and the compiler of facts and figures, Russell Bulkeley in 42nd with 340. Last year's winner, Karen Maxfield, seems to have gone for mid-table obscurity this season, currently lying in 70th place with 317 points.

The top and bottom teams after match 27 (Millwall (H)) are as follows:

Pos	Name	Address	Team Name	Pts.
1	Mark Nelson	Leeds	Showdown In Unicorn Car Park	407
2=	Sarah Yates	Peterborough	Sarah's Supersonic Stars	402
2=	Andrew Ormiston	Bedford	Lucky Seven	402
4	Simon Alcock	Cannock	Zero	394
120	Trevor Emery	Bedford	And, Why Not	185
121	Noel Cresswell	Milton Keynes	Red Hatter 2	160
122	Andrew Maslen	Bedford	David Pleat Smells of Cheese	143
123	Mike Hann	St Albans	Minus 3 Every Game (And Cheap)	-74

Please remember that transfers can still be made, although only up to 3rd April which is our transfer deadline day (and to send a first class stamp with any transfer request).

Code	Player	£	Pts	Code	Player	£	Pts
<u>Goalkeepers</u>							
101	Ian Feuer	0.8 m	53	103	Nathan Abbey	0.2 m	-27
102	Kelvin Davis	0.5 m	-27				
<u>Defenders</u>							
111	Steve Davis	0.7 m	83	116	Mitchell Thomas	0.5 m	41
112	Darren Patterson	0.6 m	-27	117	Ben Chenery	0.4 m	-27
113	Marvin Johnson	0.6 m	35	118	Des Linton	0.5 m	-24
114	Richard Harvey	0.5 m	-27	119	Trevor Peake	0.4 m	-27
115	Julian James	0.5 m	36	120	Aaron Skelton	0.4 m	-15
<u>Midfielders</u>							
121	Gary Waddock	0.6 m	40	125	David Oldfield	0.6 m	55
122	Tony Thorpe	0.6 m	127	127	Paul McLaren	0.4 m	6
123	Graham Alexander	0.5 m	71	128	Sean Evers	0.3 m	1
124	Ceri Hughes	0.5 m	67	129	Paul Showler	0.6 m	23

Strikers

131	Dwight Marshall	0.7 m	26	135	Stuart Douglas	0.5 m	4
132	Kim Grant	0.5 m	13	136	Jamie Woodsford	0.3 m	0
133	Bontcho Guentchev	0.5 m	7	137	Andrew Fotiadis	0.6 m	0
134	John Taylor	0.4 m	0				

Probably the only noteworthy change over the five matches covered by this issue is the return to the side of David Oldfield, and his sudden addition of 31 points to his personal total. Garry Waddock has added some 16 as well, but the defenders appear to be going backwards, and the strikers are completely static, which is rather worrying for a team going for promotion.

As the HatterLeague season only runs for a few more weeks, in issue 41 we'll be able to announce the winner, and if we can work out a way of doing it without taking up too much space, we might even bring you a comprehensive League table.

Chris Lennon, Russell Bulkeley and K.F.H.

TOP MATCH

LUTON 3, ARSENAL 2

IT WAS Arsenal boss George Graham who was left as mad as a Hatter after his side threw away the League Cup final in the closing minutes.

Winterburn had the ideal opportunity to put Arsenal 3-1 with only 10 minutes left but his penalty was saved by Dibble. Luton went up the other end and levelled through Wilson and in the closing minute, Stein hit a winner. It was Luton's first major trophy and left Arsenal as red as their shirts.

WEMBLEY, 1988

So, the 1988 Littlewoods Cup Final was preliminarily voted number 42 in *The Mirror's* top 100 games. It's hard to be neutral about this — but the final 10 minutes of that game would surely guarantee a higher place. Hundreds of us have well worn video tapes of the match and have heard Elton Welsby's words when he said that "Nothing, NOTHING, can top what we've seen here today". But where is Welsby now? He's probably wondering the same of Luton Town.

The Mirror has asked readers to vote for their favourite match, so expect the game to bomb out of the top 100 as the country's experts vote for "anything by Man Utd".

Tim Kingston

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Mad as a Hatter! is available on subscription at £5.50 for the next seven issues (overseas surface mail £6.75, air mail rates available on request) from the usual address. Cheques payable to *Mad as a Hatter!* Please do not send cash by post as it rarely arrives.

The Sharpe End

You wonder why Steve Claridge failed to set the world alight while he was at Luton? He was too busy worrying about his gambling, to judge from the contents of his recently published autobiography, *Tales From The Boot Camps*.

Mind you, according to the scruffy striker he found several kindred spirits when he came to Kenilworth Road — not least Mick Harford.

Revealing that when he joined Luton his wages rose from £35,000 at Cambridge to £95,000 a year, he says "the more I had the more I gambled." He joined the club on a tour to Sweden where they came across a racetrack staging a trotting meeting at which Claridge offered to run a book for the lads.

"When they agreed I really thought I had a good touch here. There were some good gamblers at Luton at that time. Out of fifteen lads, probably six good ones." Now who might they have been, one wonders?

There's no doubt about the identity of one of them. Mick Harford, says Claridge, duly backed the first and second home in the first race of the evening, winning himself £2,500 from the new club bookie.

"I did some serious financial damage to myself during the three months I was at Luton" confesses Steve, who decided to put £10,000 down to buy a house; "Even though Luton had given me a £35,000 signing on fee and £10,000 removal expenses I didn't have it. My solicitor had to lend me the money."

On the playing side, Steve admits that he failed to produce the goods while he was with us, and it genuinely seems to rankle with him, even now. "I remain sad at the way I let myself down at Luton," he admits, "I never want it to happen again."

Claridge roomed with Trevor Peake on tour "and it was a real shock to him". He claims that the will to win was not in evidence at Luton whereas he had come from Cambridge "where people would run through a brick wall for £250 a week." At Luton, though, "players were getting £1500 a week and asking not to play because they wanted a move."

"The other problem was that the club had got too used to losing; it didn't hurt them enough." He excuses Messrs Peake and Preece from that criticism.

Finally, of course, he was sold back to Cambridge, and of his games in a Luton shirt he says: "They totalled up to the 17 worst games I think I have played." A

letter writer to the Luton News called him a donkey; He says "It was a fair assessment."

That's Steve Claridge — flawed but painfully honest.



It is common place these days to be able to place a bet when one arrives at a football ground — the majority of Premiership clubs boast betting shop facilities as does Wembley stadium.

The first club to invite a bookmaker on to the premises was Luton Town. At the beginning of the 1987/88 season, local company Worldsport became the first bookmaker to operate inside a Football League ground.

The club secured a racecourse betting licence from the local council and Worldsport set up two shops as well as providing a courier service for Kenilworth Road's executive boxes.

The company's shops opened for business from 11 am on match day mornings and Worldsport director Steve Short commented at the time, "We commenced negotiations last year with Luton — as we are a local firm we believed we would prove suitable. As Luton exercise a tight control over their supporters with their membership policy we envisaged no crowd problems."

Punters were charged 5% deductions from their wagers — less than from a High Street betting shop and were given football betting coupons as they entered the ground through the turnstiles.

Worldsport took bets on the matches at the ground as well as other sporting events and horse racing. However, as the club's fortunes on the pitch took a turn for the worse so, presumably, did the betting turnover, and the club no longer boasts betting facilities.

Graham Sharpe

Calling all footballers

*Do you fancy yourself as a bit of a footballer? If so, you may be interested to know that we have a couple of fanzine football matches coming up. We are playing the W*tf*r'd 'zine Clap Your Hands Stamp Your Feet on Good Friday, and a team from Shrewsbury on April 19th. These matches are designed to promote friendship amongst football fans so don't volunteer if you want to commit acts of violence, but otherwise if you fancy a game, give us a ring or drop us a line.*

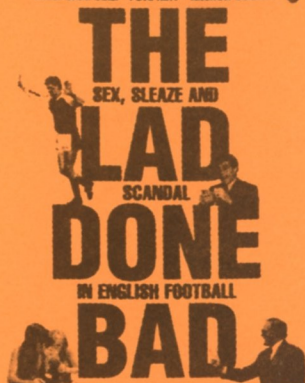
SHORT CUTS

THE WRITERS DONE GOOD

DENIS CAMPBELL • PETE MAY • ANDREW SHIELDS 0

The Lad Done Bad: Sex, Sleaze And Scandal In English Football, a comprehensive history of bad behaviour from the '70s to the '90s written by Denis Campbell, Pete May and Andrew Shields is published by Penguin in paperback on 5 December, priced £9.99.

Pete May's original article charting excess and bad behaviour among professional footballers, 'And Best Must Score', appeared in issue five of *loaded* in September '94.



• loaded

Tony Coton (then at Watford) and Mick Harford (then at Luton) were once involved in a memorable pub brawl with some lippy workmen in Hemel Hempstead. Coton remembers that after he nussed a workman who called him a cunt, Harford arrived, "flying through the air like he's going for a diving header. He's come out of the blocks faster than Linford Christie, head-butted one, and decked another three. At the end of it, five or six of them were flat out and two needed hospital treatment." Then the landlord hit Harford with a cosh. "He was coshed on the head but his knees didn't buckle." Harford asked Coton to take him to hospital. "He then told the landlord that when he came back he'd be in a fair amount of trouble. You should have seen the look on the landlord's face."

OXFORD UNIVERSITY researchers added a new word to our vocabulary last week - shopaholism.

According to their report, over 700,000 sad souls are addicted to shopping.

They spend millions buying things they can neither afford nor have any use for, many of them in an attempt to spite lovers who've spurned them.

Rock star Elton John, who's bought himself over 300,000 pairs of glasses, is singled out as someone who could be suffering from the disease. And let's face it, who could find anything more useless to buy than Watford Football Club?

Fergie has also claimed to be suffering from shopaholism. The toe sucker, not the football manager, though you have to wonder about a man who paid £7 million for Andy Cole.

With only two consecutive shopping days to

Above, a book review from *Loaded* magazine, and a particularly interesting excerpt from the same book.

On the left we have an item from *The People* (22/12/96) which is very perceptive, especially in respect of Elton's problems.