

MAD AS A HATTER!

THE LUTON TOWN FANZINE



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TURNING POINT



It's not often that the turning point of a match and a club record are caught on camera at the same time. Trevor Peake is about to become the Town's oldest ever player, against Wrexham, whilst the fourth official indicates how many goals Town are about to concede.

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THE LUTON TOWN FANZINE

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EDITORIAL

Strange, isn't it, how so many fans have recently called for Lennie Lawrence to leave the club, and yet were outraged at the demotion that led to Wayne Turner leaving. Did those calling for Lennie's head really believe that Wayne Turner would be staying when a replacement was appointed? We should realise that when we call for a manager to leave, it puts the whole of the coaching staff under threat, as most managers prefer to bring their own staff in when they change clubs.

Not that these comments should be construed as support for Lennie. The first half of this season has been an enormous disappointment, and we are still waiting to see a significant improvement. Recent results suggest that the rot has been stopped, but we will need a sustained run of improved results to get out of trouble, and a major winning run to get within reach of the play-off positions (which is still possible, if unlikely). By the time the next issue of *Mad* is in your hands we will probably have a better idea whether John Moore is influencing the way the first team are playing. Who knows, by then we might even have seen Paul Showler playing!!

There is no doubt that we have suffered extraordinarily badly with injuries so far, but this cannot be an excuse. We have suffered equally from bad decisions which have resulted in players like Richard Harvey remaining at the club, and preventing new players being brought in because of the wage bill. Buying Small would not necessarily be the answer to all of our problems, but he was a better alternative at left back than tricky Dicky and gave competition for at least one place in the side, and God knows we need it — but in more than one position.

Changing the subject, we still await an announcement on the Public Inquiry into the KohlerDome proposals. Last we heard, there won't be anything before January 1998, but this is dragging on interminably now, and it's a certainty that we will still be at good old (emphasis on old) Kenilworth Road when we see in the new millenium, regardless of whether that is in January 2000 or 2001 (just slipped that in for the pedants). Perhaps it's time to start having a go at our local MPs about this.

Finally, it's the season of goodwill and abysmal attendances as the weather gets worse and the shops are a better attraction than the team (yes, I know that started in August). So, I'll finish off by wishing everybody a very merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous 1998. Particularly to the eleven men wearing Luton Town shirts who have such an effect on the rest of us. Remember lads, if you rake in the win bonuses, you'll make us all very happy, and yourselves prosperous. That'll do for me.

Mellow to Yellow

Luton Town 0 Watford 4

It doesn't make pleasant reading even now does it? I'm sure a lot of you read it with features instinctively changing to the sort of face you might usually reserve for witnessing a nasty accident. You might feel disgusted and aggrieved that the Luton Town fanzine could print such filth. Sorry. I didn't enjoy writing it either.

But the fact remains that, horrible though it was, we took a right beating at the hands of the team we know as 'the scum'.

It took them ten years to do it; a fact which, perversely, made it all the worse. During those ten years (and for a long time before it), Luton Town always prevailed against Watford. We were better than they were. Better. Stronger. Faster. We were much more than their 'bogey' team. We were the team in white, who heroically endeavoured to play the beautiful game the way the Good Lord meant it to be played. They were the blood, coal and custard coloured cloggers and hoofers, spewed forth by Beelzebub to destroy the game. A good versus evil struggle in which the good guys would almost always prevail.

That same feeling of Luton's, almost spiritual, superiority over Watford also revelled at the opportunity to play the game as the underdog. And so, on the Friday night before the match, we talked up the chances of a much depleted Town side taking on and (as the beer did it's work) beating the resurgent 'Orns. Reality hit back hard on the Saturday - and there were Town fans who simply couldn't take it.

There was a time, and it wasn't too far into the game, when I realised that - for all the shouting and bravado and anti-Watford sentiment - the Luton team were getting torn apart on the pitch. It was all going wrong like.... like, nothing I'd seen in a derby match before. Even so, from where I sat, the disaster scene was pretty calm. Some old bloke was busy telling my mate (good bloke, can turn into an over emotional gimp at such times) to calm down whilst, at the back of the stand (where I'd gone to get out of the way), I held a conversation with a bloke who looked to be suffering from shell shock. It wasn't that we were getting thrashed and outclassed, we'd seen that before, it was because it was..... by them.

Perhaps it was because my mind was in another time and place that I missed the crap overreaction from other Luton fans.

The Watford fans in the Oak Road were strangely subdued. They were, it seems, more worried about their safety than crowing at beating their fiercest rivals. If we were beating them 4-0 away, we'd be making tons of noise. But, despicably, a small but significant amount of Luton Town fans didn't have the good grace to let the Watford fans enjoy their rare victory against us.

Someone had the Watford Observer down the pub the Saturday after the match. There were plenty of nasty little 'attack' stories about the hassle Watford fans had getting back to their cars. There was also a columnist who wondered why Luton fans seemed unable to take the defeat. He suggested that Luton fans see far more importance in the fixture than their Watford counterparts. He might be right. I don't know. What surely is true is that Watford fans have learned to accept defeat against their rivals.

I believe that the incidents are a result of that rarity. When, fifteen years ago or whatever, Luton and Watford results were more evenly spread, I can't remember similar anger at a single result. For the most part we were allowed to enjoy victories heartily, or skulk back home when we lost.

Even if, like the vast majority of those reading this, you'd had nothing to do with any incidents on that horrible, horrible day we can all look into our own individual attitude toward Watford.

I hate Watford - but am trying to 'grow up' a bit about it. It's about time. Indeed, since they beat us the other month, I've made the following moves to mellow to yellow. Please read on:-

- 1) **The LTFC yellow kit.** I'd made an effort to avoid cheering on my team in yellow. It wasn't too hard - I'm not as loyal as I was a few years ago, and I managed to avoid the away games in which they wore it. That was until Carlisle the other week - where I made a conscious effort not to let the colour scheme upset me.
- 2) **Mug.** Have you seen that 'Colours of Luton' mug they've got on sale at the club shop? Having had my club crest mug damaged, in a chip and run kitchen accident at work, I bought one. I wouldn't have done so before, because of the yellow kit on it. My only fear is that, from a distance, it might look like another club's mug on me desk.....
- 3) **Betting.** I sometimes put a selection bet on, just for another opportunity to lose a quid or two on a Saturday. Faith in the Hatters has often been the cause of the loss - but it's always been common practice to back it up with a bet that Watford lose (traditionally a somewhat safer bet). But they're winning all the time this season aren't they? So, this Saturday,

one of my selections was Watford to win at home. Which they did. The Swine. Charlton also beat Ipswich and Celtic won. It was Arsenal failing to win at Derby who let me down.

- 4) I've decided that, if Luton aren't playing, I'll go to Watford and cheer on the Hornets.

So, there are just a few steps I've taken to curb my own hatred a little — alright, I'm sorry, I didn't really MEAN point 4 at all..... it was just a joke, albeit in very bad taste. Even so, that a long way aside; there are ways to ensure that the attitude towards supporting LTFC remains that, first and foremost, you're a Luton Town supporter and, a long way back in comparison, you're not keen on Watford. Getting that balance right will enable you to wholeheartedly enjoy future victories against the old enemy without regarding defeat by the same team as akin to one of that Nostradamus' more ghastly predictions.

And just a quick note, on a not totally unrelated subject, to make note of the most startling article in issue 42 (*Freedom of Speech*, page 9) of Mad! The article, on the subject of contempt felt between Town fans, made a good point before turning, kamikaze-like, back at the fans and slagging off just about every group of people who have ever claimed allegiance to Luton Town FC.

He's right though, there is a problem, and maybe something of the Watford problem is that some supporters feel happier in the role of Watford haters than Luton Town supporters (the unrepresentative amount of away 'support' that the Town get at Vicarage Road games would seem to back up this theory). Perhaps those of us who still care could call on the services of a group therapist at half time one afternoon - and we could all learn to get on with one another again.

Tim Kingston

SHORT CUTS

Geri walked into a bar with a pig tied to a piece of string.

"Where the hell did you pick up that filthy thing?" asked the landlord.

"Won it in a raffle," said the pig.

IN WHAT SMASH HITS	
Worst Single -	Spice Up Your Life
Worst Group -	Spice Girls
Worst Dressed Person -	Ginger Spice
	Geri Halliwell
Least Fanciable Female -	Ginger Spice
Worst TV Programme -	Emmerdale

And Scum Spice wins Worst Dressed Person at the Smash Hits Poll Winners Party. It was the Watford shirt that clinched it.

TV, or not TV?

Do we want TV technology to be soccer's new referee to settle some of those difficult decisions? No thanks, says Brian Swain, ageing hack, Town nut, and former local Sunday soccer referee.

WEMBLEY, 1966: Geoff Hurst scores for England, in off the bar..... or did he? Too right he did, and the record books will prove it for ever.

ADAMS PARK. WYCOMBE, 1997: Tony Thorpe, too quick for the linesman's eye, is flagged offside as he collects a pass and shoots into the net. No goal..... or was it? The video replay proves it should have been but the linesman got it wrong in a split-second decision in which he had to judge a hair's breadth. But his decision stands, and I agree with that. Even Lennie Lawrence, whose living is vitally linked to results, accepted the decision with disappointment but good grace, as any sportsman should.

I would hate to see football give up the notion of absolute power resting with the referee and his assistants, poor though some of them are who come to Kenilworth Road. We have to accept that the ref is always right even when he's wrong, and I think it would be a mistake if the game encouraged technology to undermine that principle.

It's a major reason why football should think very hard about the growing clamour to use TV cameras to put right the occasional wrongs in games. Human fallibility, of players, managers, coaches and referees, is part of the wonderful variety that makes sport so compelling.

In football, rapid movement is a vital ingredient. Cricket has taken to the "third umpire" sitting in front of a TV screen, so soccer could do the same is an argument used by those who want technology to play a bigger part. Perhaps so; but cricket has regular interruptions built into it, timed by overs, not stopwatches. When run-out appeals are made, the ball is usually dead.

But I still have grave doubts about TV usurping the umpires' powers. And even if you can justify it at Lord's, what about the Luton Midweek Cricket League games where I used to stand and sometimes suffer on public parks? It's a highly competitive league, with promotion and relegation, and results matter. So does the umpires finger, and the lack of video coverage ensures that the old traditions and standards are maintained. Sure, you get a little dissent and backchat when a decision goes against a player. But they all still know that the umpire's verdict is final, and sometimes over one match, and certainly over a season, the luck balances out. And if an umpire consistently

The anti-Spice jokes have begun: this one courtesy of *The Mirror*.

gets things wrong, through incompetence, his appointment diary dries up.

The same goes for football referees, and as with cricket, the introduction of TV decisions would cause an unwelcome problem. There would be some laws of the game for the elite, and not for the rest of us. As with incompetent umpires, poor referees are invariably found out, with or without TV checks on their decisions.

I have had the pleasure of refereeing Sunday league basement matches on pitch Q at Lothair Road, where December rain arrives in horizontal bucketloads. The last thing those lads want is to stop play to look at an action replay every time there is a difficult decision to be made by the ref. Nor does the man in black. Much better to stand up and be counted; be honest, be fair and be impartial, and there is still a huge majority that accepts with good grace the occasional and inevitable error. As a ref, I knew when I had a bad game, and never needed a TV camera to prove it. But if football embraces the philosophy of using video as an extra arbitrator in professional matches, it will do a disservice to the game at a wider level, down among the real grass-roots. I can see it now at Stopsley, yelling "Play on", as you see a defender clear off the line. And the centre forwards floozie screams, "Stop the game, my camcorder shows the ball crossed the line."

No thanks, I would rather put up with the occasional mistake, with or without a Russian linesman!

Brian Swain

MANAGING TO APOLOGISE

Just a short article to apologise for sticking up for Lennie Lawrence in the last issue. At that point our team had just gone five games without defeat and things looked to be improving. But when Lawrence was quoted as saying "We must have over-achieved last season", my stomach turned. We now have a manager in charge who thinks we are a mid-table Division 2 side. He must surely leave immediately.

Again, I apologise for the extreme distress I must have caused many people.

S.T.

Lennie Lawrence: All talk?

I'm sure that everybody remembers roughly the quote by Lennie Lawrence after we were officially relegated from Division One against Barnsley - "The fans won't see this group of players together again, if I have anything to do with it". OK then Lennie, so what's happened since then? Pretty well bugger all on the first team front. The only players to have left the Town are Kim Grant, Botchup Guentchev, Gavin Johnson, Vidar Riseth — all reserve or fringe players, and a few teenagers, and Ceri Hughes, and I'm sure the latter didn't come into the equation when Lennie said the above. Here are some reasons why I, for one, have run out of patience with Lennie.

1. We were all so very disappointed (me included) when the Town failed to gain promotion, but injuries this season apart, do you really think we could have done any better in Division 1 this time around? What's changed since we went down? I'll tell you — all that's happened is that Tony Thorpe has been converted to a striker. That's it. We still have the same atrocious defence and the same crap midfield - now minus Hughes. Only the following players would be adequate in a Division 1 outfit — Ian Feuer, Steve Davis. Tony Thorpe, Hopefully Phil Gray, and maybe Graham Alexander. Fair enough, Lennie brought in Simon Davies to replace Hughes and that hasn't worked out — I hesitate to blame Lennie for that.

2. Why are we still persisting with Oldfield, Waddock, Johnson and Thomas? Yeah yeah, I know Oldfield works his socks off — but it's not enough. He's too slow, and after all these years still cannot even time his jump right for a header — invariably on his descent by the time the ball arrives, and doesn't score often enough. Waddock looks increasingly out of it and is surely too old now. Johnson and Thomas may as well be dealt with in the same short sentence. They're shit. Mitchell's been injured, but Marvin's record this season speaks for itself. Alan White was dropped after the Town had gone unbeaten in four games, conceding only one goal, Johnson was brought back (the only reason I can possibly offer for this was to prepare for life without Steve Davis as his suspension was imminent) — then the Town concede seven goals in the next three games — 5 of them at home. Can anyone reading this honestly say they don't feel nervous when Mitchell, Marvin, or Julian James are in possession at the edge of our penalty area?

3. We have all tried to be patient (except on October 4th) whilst everybody was injured, as Lennie asked us. Well, all the players are back now so why aren't we performing? The current team doesn't seem to have any more heart than David Pleat's teams (mind you, the personnel hasn't changed much). Is Lennie any better at motivating players? On recent 'performances', I would say no.

4. Why did we buy Phil Gray? Whilst I appreciate we were buying a good player at the time, I, and some other members of the editorial team, were concerned that he was too similar to Thorpey; ie. short, tricky and possessing a large ego — I bet they don't get on off the pitch. Why didn't Lennie go for a tall target man? There must be a potential Mick Harford out there somewhere. Watching two midgets chasing a long high ball is pitiful.

5. The teams Lennie's picked and some of his substitutions have seemed strange to me. The Johnson for White change mentioned above was a good example. So was substituting Brian Small against Preston, and bringing on Simon Davies — as left back????

6. Lennie's image to non-Luton fans pisses me off. I am fed up with:
a) Friends and work colleagues saying things like "I like that Lennie Lawrence — he's a good manager." AARRGGHH! Does everybody spot the David Pleat deja vu here. These people just don't know, do they? This is all because they are both so good in front of the TV cameras — they both talk a good game. In Lennie's case, his image is still living off his Charlton Athletic 'Houdini' days.
b) Have you noticed how (as with bloody Pleat) every tabloid match report you get lines like "Lennie Lawrence's men etc etc etc"? He always gets a mention. Look at other match reports — does any other Division 2 manager get mentioned all the time like that?

All the above said, I do want to like Lennie Lawrence. I want to believe he can still turn the Town's fortunes around, but hearing him slag the team's performance off after each defeat, then appear to do nothing about it, I don't think he's capable.

Changing the manager apart, there is only one way I can see for Luton Town to get out of their current predicament. Release the aforementioned donkeys when their contracts expire. Don't keep them on with stupid week-to-week contracts, just get rid of them. Sell Tony Thorpe for 2 million quid (now that we have a direct replacement in Phil Gray), and spend the money on a new left back, a new right back, a whole new midfield, and a new tall striker. Not quite enough money for all that, but you get the idea! Alternatively, let's all sit back and put up with watching our crappy team play other crappy teams for the next millennium.

The Thin Controller

AN INTERLUDE, OR THE END?

Although there is a month left, 1997 has really turned out to be an Annus Horribilus for me. I guess that I just became too attached to Luton Town FC. At this stage I must make the comparison between football and women, two themes that seem to have run parallel throughout my life. To help you to understand this bizarre relationship I must take you back to 1985.....

I was ten years old. I hated girls, because they whispered and wanted to play kiss chase. I don't know why, but at that age I seemed to have a problem with girls actually wanting to kiss me. In fact there was only one thing I hated more than girls, and that was football. Couldn't see the point of it, I'd much rather climb trees and ride my bike. Then, all of a sudden, BANG, puberty began to slap me around the face (and several other body parts). My opinions on girls and football began to change.

I can now skip forward to November 1986, and my father took me to my first ever game. This is where I should say that I fell in love with Luton Town, and realised that they would be my team for the rest of my life. However, the only feeling I had after that game was one of indifference. In fact I preferred Everton, their opposition that day, because they wore blue. At the age of twelve I wasn't ready to get married to either a girl or a football team. You may be reading this and thinking Luton and Everton, you adulterous bastard. I would reply by comparing this to my friend Spowie. When he was this age he supported Luton, Brighton, Manchester United AND Aberdeen. In football terms, this makes him a highly promiscuous individual, and in comparison makes me a prude.

I had to wait another couple of years, until 1988, for my first ever kiss. I remember the feeling afterwards clearly, my heart was pumping and my legs went weak at the knees. Looking back this was a remarkably similar feeling to the one I had a few months later, after my second Luton game — the Littlewoods Cup Final. Reaching the top of a tree or doing a huge wheelie on my bike had never given me the amazing feeling that Luton's victory and my first kiss did. April 1988 was when I realised that football and girls were a bit more special to me than anything else. I could never get enough of either of these things after this.

I was fifteen when I first did it, you know, went the whole way with a girl. I remember the nervous apprehension that we would get caught doing something naughty, yet the excitement, the rush, was enormous. At the time I was at an all-boys school with an antiquated rule about Saturday morning lessons. Because of this my parents would never let me go roller-skating on a Friday night with the other kids who lived near me. It was a miracle that I ever met a girl, let alone slept with one. Saturday morning lessons also caused another problem with another huge event — losing my Luton away

virginity. Finishing school at 1.30 caused enough problems with home games, never mind away ones. Then, all of a sudden, there was a game I just couldn't miss. Derby away, Luton needing to win to stay up. The similarity between the events of this day, and those when I lost my other virginity don't stop here.

The nervous apprehension was present when we sneaked out during a break between lessons. Yet here I was, waiting at Bedford station knowing that I was about to do it, I was going to be a real man, a real supporter. The terraces were hot and sweaty as our bodies were all packed close together. When the teams ran out of the tunnel, I knew it was going to happen here and now, there was no turning back. At first it all went so well, I removed her bra in one movement, Breacker 1-0; her jeans came off easier than I ever could have imagined, Black 2-0. there we were staring victory in the face and then it all started to go horribly wrong. First the fumbling with the condom, Derby pulled one back; I almost ruined it by kneeling on her ankle, Derby equalised. We changed ends (in the football that is). Forty-five minutes of thrusting movement later (OK, wishful thinking on my part but twelve seconds doesn't really allow the comparison to be made, does it?) then the climax, Black yes, yes, yes, YESSSSSS!! When we got back to Luton I was expecting street carnivals, but it was all very subdued, a bit like the feeling of depression that set in after that other climax.

After this I saw Luton Town, and naked females, nowhere near as often as I would have liked to. Then came University in Liverpool, a chance to meet new girls and new teams. I tried a few things that I hadn't before, but standing on the Kop never did it for me. I also attempted to rekindle my relationship with Everton, but again nothing. During my last few months at university, Luton and my love-life were in steep decline, plunging towards the second division. I was beginning to lose faith, here I was at the age of twenty with no serious girl-friend and Luton facing the likes of Rotherham. I decided enough was enough, packed my bags and headed off to America.

During my three months there everything began to look brighter, I met the girl of my dreams and Luton looked as though they might win more than one game in a row. When I returned in September 1996, I started going to every single game, home and away. I was beginning to fall in love. Back in 1986 I wasn't ready to get married to either a girl or a football team, now I was ready for both. I flew back to America for a few days before Christmas, I clearly remember waking up on December 14th — phoning home to find Luton had beaten Crewe 6-0 and then enjoying the best sex that I had ever had. I returned four days later thinking that I couldn't be any happier, then we beat Millwall away to go top.

I should have guessed that things weren't quite as cosy as I thought when we stuttered so badly on the way to our 2-1 win over Gillingham. We struggled

on, though unconvincingly, yet here we were at the end of March winning 2-0 away at Burnley and things looked secure. The following Monday I booked my flight out to America for May 7th, leaving a few days to celebrate our triumph over Stockport on the last day of the season. I was ready to move abroad, knowing that I could leave Luton back where they belong, in the first division. I don't know why, but then I had second thoughts. What if we mess up? What if we have to go through the play-offs? I changed my flight to the end of May just in case.

To my dying day I will never forgive myself. I tempted fate by changing my flight. If I had left it alone, we would never have had to go through the play-offs. My mistake meant that Luton were doomed not to win their remaining games. I can see the headlines as they would have read.....

Luton complete remarkable comeback to beat Bristol City 3-2.

Hatters sneak late winner against Wycombe.

Town survive second half onslaught to win at Walsall.

Luton beat Bury and Stockport to clinch Title.

Each of these games are now nightmares that will remain with me forever, as they were all my fault. We would have won those games if I had just flown away.

In case you were wondering, things didn't work out for me in America. I almost made, but all of the time I was out there one date just stuck in my mind — 4th October 1997, Watford at home. I had moved in with my girlfriend and, due to friends' long distance match reports, I was surviving my Luton withdrawal symptoms better than I thought I would. I had everything I could ask for: a great coaching job, a beautiful house on the mountainside overlooking Phoenix, temperatures in the high nineties, regular sex without having to go looking for it in a nightclub and yet, THAT date was just there, staring me in the face.

Unfinished business was one way of looking at it. Watford were riding high and we'd been their bogey side for so long, yet last season we failed to kill them off. I did my bit with something that I call my "tattoo". When some people fall in love they have their partners name engraved on their skin, you know "I love Jane" on their upper arm, or "Mum and Dad" on their knuckles. I was far too soft to endure that kind of pain, and also I had a better idea. One drunken night over Easter, six of us finally got the bottle to do something we had discussed for weeks. Near where I live in Flitwick, there is a bridge over the M1 that for some ridiculous reason was built to link a field with some woods. It's completely secluded and was just asking to be abused.

Now, I'm a fairly upstanding member of the community. I may dodge train fares occasionally, and I've been known to pay student rates when I should be full adult, but nothing serious. I would never dream of graffit-ing on someone else's property, but yet here was this lonely old bridge which

seemed to reach out and speak to me. It said "I am your canvas, enlighten all of those who pass under me with your knowledge". There was only one thing for it, the concise, yet deep and meaningful phrase "LUTON SHIT ON WATFORD" in four foot high lettering. The national press seemed to ignore this masterpiece, instead focussing on the other side of the bridge where the immortal words "SPOWIE'S GOT A HUGE COCK" were written, but that's another story.

So, October 1st and I had an enormous row with my girlfriend where a few home truths came out. There was only one thing for it, time to return to my true love. There were no spaces left on the flight home, so I used a sick excuse about a relative being ill (not only did it work, but my brilliant Paula Yates in mourning impersonation got me upgraded to First class), and it was all set. Long goodbyes aren't my style, so I left whilst my girlfriend was at work, leaving her a note saying: "Sorry. I tried my best, but even the sight of you on all fours wearing nothing but my 'Bedford Trucks' Luton top, with your ass sticking in the air is not enough. Besides, Phil Gray's back and there's only two days to Watford. PS: Have a nice day."

It all seemed to be OK, nothing seems to help ease the pain of a break-up better than a Luton win. Plus, my return would surely be enough to change the Town's fortunes, and help them towards a famous victory. Half an hour into the game, 4-0 down, and I was sitting there, thinking "Now what the f*ck have you gone and done". If you've managed to get this far without falling asleep, you'll be pleased to here we are now at the end of my sorry tale. It's the end of November and I've never been so low. I'm unemployed, single, and we're second bottom. Worst of all though is that I've just agreed a separation period with Luton. Preston at home was the final straw. I listed the continued selection of Marvin Johnson and Julian James as the reasons for my separation, but it goes deeper than that.

I'm an out of work football coach, being forced to fork out a third of my unemployment benefit to watch the most unprofessional trash I've ever seen. As you can probably tell, I've made some stupid decisions over the past 12 months. However, I've got a feeling that my decision to stop watching Luton is one of my better ones. Again, it's similar to the break-up from my girlfriend. I'll always love both of them, but you can only swim against the tide for so long. Now it's time to walk away. Probably!

Thanks for your time.

Quasar

DREAM—NIGHTMARE ON

- 7th Feb 1998 Luton now 19th and out of relegation zone, Watford still top.
- 14th Feb 1998 THE match is postponed because of a frozen pitch and is rearranged for 10th March.
- 7th Mar 1998 Luton climb the table to a giddy 15th, Watford still top.
- 10th Mar 1998 THE match is postponed because of fog and is rearranged for 7th April.
- 4th Apr 1998 Luton up to 12th, Watford still top.
- 7th Apr 1998 THE match is postponed because Watford's entire squad is called up for international duty and is rearranged for 30th April.
- 25th Apr 1998 Luton up to 9th, Watford still top.
- 30th Apr 1998 THE match goes ahead but is abandoned after 75 minutes due to floodlight failure with Watford leading 6-0. Football League called in to arrange new date.
- 1st May 1998 The Football League allow the match to be played after the final Saturday as the result is unlikely to affect promotion or relegation. Rearranged for 5th May.
- 2nd May 1998 Final Saturday — Luton still 9th, Watford still top.
- Watford need to score one goal to secure the championship and Luton need to win and score at least 4 goals to go into the play-offs.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Watford	45	27	11	7	85	40	92
xxxxxx	46	30	2	14	85	41	92
xxxxxx	46	28	8	10	85	43	92
xxxxxx	46	20	12	14	82	65	72
xxxxxx	46	18	16	12	78	67	70
Fulham	46	18	14	14	67	56	68
xxxxxx	46	20	7	19	57	45	67
xxxxxx	46	17	15	14	80	78	66
Luton Town	45	17	14	14	63	55	65

- 5th May 1998 THE match goes ahead. In the first half, as expected, Watford lay siege to the Luton goal but cannot find a way through. In fact, Luton take a surprise lead in the 44th minute when a Watford back pass takes a wicked deflection past Alec Chamberlain.
- At half time both teams are getting their usual pep talks, but not far away in the referees room the men in black are coming out of the trance that has affected them at every Luton game

for the last five years.

During the second half Watford have 3 players sent-off for various offences, including one for a foul throw. Luton eventually win 4-0 after being given 3 extremely dubious penalties.

Luton finish the season in 6th place with Watford 3rd (24 points ahead of Luton). Kevin Keegan goes ballistic as Fulham finish outside the play-off places.

The evil spell has been broken, order has been restored, the church bells ring out. Luton thrash Watford in both legs of the play-off semi-final (denying them even a consolation visit to Wembley) and go on to win the final.

The evil sorcerer Taylor and his followers are banished from the land and everyone lives happily ever after.

Derbyshire

FACing hell!!

"Number 12 - Torquay" and from that moment I knew Graham Kelly's next words would be "will play Number 19 - Watford". Bloody typical.

There are, however, two ways of looking at this:

1. We've missed out on a chance of early revenge (and at home, as well) against the scum.
2. Torquay have done us a favour, and have saved us the humiliation of being stuffed at home by the scum twice in 9 weeks.

As much as I would have loved to have played Watford in the Cup, on present form I side with the latter and Torquay's victory over us was a blessing in disguise.

Roll on Valentine's Day.

The Beat

FREE SPEECH

In issue 43, *Mad as a Hatter!* carried an article by Kelvin Dunn entitled "Freedom of Speech", which was written in response to a similarly titled article in issue 42. In the second of the two articles the author made comments about the writer of the first, which have caused offence to that individual. The editor apologises unreservedly to "the Cat in the Luton hat" for allowing those comments to be published, and for causing offence by doing so.

What kind of manager....

- Substitutes his captain four games in a row?
- Comes up with excuses before we've even lost matches?
- Keeps blaming shit performances on injuries — even though only Marv/Thomas are the (regular) players missing? (And with White/Small playing do we miss them?)
- Only uses the injury excuse — it's wearing a bit thin now?
- Would even consider loaning out Feuer?
- Blames his assistant, rather than himself?
- Knowingly buys and injured/unfit player for £400,000, and then keeps on complaining that he's unfit?
- Is the only person who thought we deserved something out of the Torquay match?
- Thinks that losing 3-0 at Bristol and 4-0 against Watford is all right because we kept a clean sheet for the last 60 minutes of each match?
- Needs a steward/police escort off the pitch every home match?
- Replaces a player (who's having a good match) with an old has-been at 2-2 — a decision that sees us letting in three goals within 15 minutes?
- Keeps on preaching to us that he's the most experienced man in getting teams out of relegation battles — but so far this season has not shown us anything of this so called experience?
- Will think that one away win (York) will solve everything?

What kind of manager would do all that?

The Beat

YELLOW BRICK ROAD — RETURN FROM OZ

In contradiction to what was printed last issue (43), Snow White cannot be the most beautiful girl in the world. It is possible though (subject to your own personal preference) for Snow White to be the beautifullest girl in the world, or indeed the most beautiful girl in the world — but our language system prevents her from being the most beautifullest girl in the world.

Just thought I'd clear that up.

The Beat

• Pedant!

THREE FOR THE CHOP

Due to our appalling season and a long term desire to actually contribute to this fanzine, I shall name three players who I think shouldn't be playing in a Luton shirt.

1. Phil Gray

OK, I was pleasantly surprised we had got him, but I was also confused, We need a creative midfield player to create chances, not another forward. So far the biggest waste of money since Bontcho's signing on fee.

2. Gary Waddock

One season too many for our captain. Probably best free transfer we have ever got but, like the end of last season, the opposition midfield and McLaren are showing him up for his age and lack of ability. It seems Lawrence is coming around to the notion of not playing Waddock as our captin has been subbed in all the last four games. Waddock's career should now be limited to coming on for the last fifteen/twenty minutes if we ever happen to be winning a game and want to close the doors.

3. Marvin Johnson

Three clean sheets in four games before he came back. Then eight goals conceded in three games he played in. Do I have to spell it out? He's awful. Everyone seems to love him like an old, one eyed teddy bear left over from their childhood. You know you should chuck him out but you haven't got the heart to do it.

Watching him cope with big punts upfield, falling over the top of opposing strikers when heading, miskicking, stumbling, losng control of the ball; all these he does on a regular basis but the worst of them all is playing the ON-SIDE trap. How many goals have been conceded with Marvin orchestrating this wonderful incentive for opposing forwards.

He's so bad that he gets a testimonial dinner rather than a match because you have to have fans laughing with him, not at him.

Those are my three for the chop but as Lawrence seems to disagree, he might as well go. If I was in charge of LTFC, Lawrence would have been out for saying that we over-achieved last year! So, by staying in this division we are over achieving. At least he has realised Turner was useless. He couldn't stop talking crap, most of it incomprehensible to me and I'm only 15-20ft from the dugout.

Martin Blake

The teXt Files

Seen on ITV teletext page 175, under the heading "In my dreams", on Thursday 4th September. They had apparently asked a selection of MP's what their football fantasies are. Here are a couple of them with local relevance:

Kelvin Hopkins, Luton North. "Luton playing in the Premiership at the 'KohlerDome' and winning against Man Utd would be my football fantasy."

Claire Ward, Watford. "My football fantasy is for the FA to change its rules to allow men and women to play adult football together. "I'd become the first player-manager of a promotion winning Watford team."

Good to see that our local MP supports the team, and has his feet on the ground with a fantasy that could become reality. But (*oops, not supposed to start a sentence with but, are we — Ed*) you have to feel sorry for Claire Ward. As if being a W*tf*rd supporter wasn't bad enough, she actually thinks they could, one day, win promotion!

K.F.H.

JUST A REMINDER



Forgotten what it's like to see the Town score a winning goal? You will have if you don't go to away games. This is what happens. Alan White celebrates at Carlisle.

SHORT CUTS

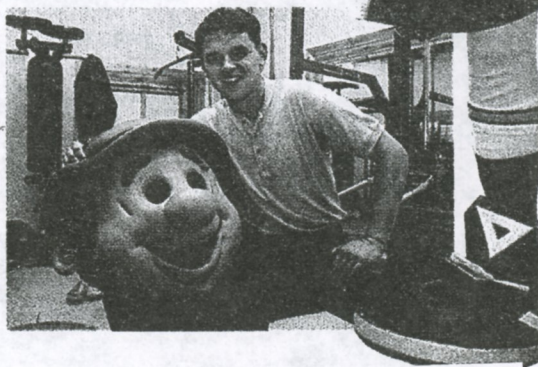
LUTON TOWN
Simon
Vaughan is
Harry The
Hatter

WHILE most mascots run out in front of cheering fans, lorry driver Simon Vaughan admits it's not the best time to be dressed up as Luton Town's Harry The Hatter in Division Two.

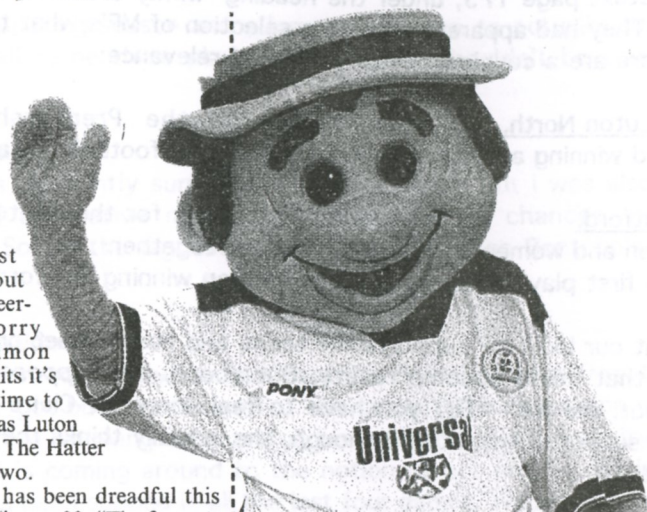
"Our form has been dreadful this season," said Simon, 28. "The fans are a miserable bunch and they don't sing nearly as much as they used to. I can't blame them!"

Simon took over from his wife Karen, 25, at the start of last season. "Karen became pregnant, so she couldn't carry on. She's 5ft 4in and I'm 6ft 2in so the fans couldn't help noticing.

"I wear the same costume but the smaller you are the fatter it makes



Ever wondered who the clown with the silly grin is? So, some of Simon's friends don't know about this? We'll see about that.



you look. When I started, some fans spread the rumour that it was our old manager David Pleat inside the costume!"

Although Simon has seen many good players such as John Hartson leave Luton for bigger teams, there's no way he'd walk out on the club.

"I'm a Luton fan. I don't want a transfer," he said. "My only disappointment is when we got knocked out of the promotion play-offs last season.

"I would have gone to Wembley and it would have been fantastic to wear the Harry suit there."

Simon says that some of his friends don't know of his role as Harry. "You can imagine the mickey-taking I get from my mates who do know," he said. "But a lot of my friends are sad blokes who support big clubs.

"They think I'm sad enough supporting Luton in the first place, so God knows what they'll think when they find out I'm Harry!"

Simon says Harry - named after Luton's nickname, The Hatters - gets a mixed reaction from their players.

"Some of the younger ones have kicked balls at me trying to knock my Harry head off!" he said.

PICTURES: BRIAN WILLIAMSON, PHIL CARPENTER AND NORTH NEWS

LUTON TOWN are involved in one of the strangest sponsorship deals of the season. Printing company Regal Litho are sponsoring the kit of Kos, the Alastian-border collie cross owned by David Kohler, the Luton chairman. Last year they sponsored striker Kim Grant.

Alan Corkhill, managing director of Regal Litho, says: "Kim wasn't the most popular person in the club so this year I thought I would go for the most popular living creature in the club, which is apparently the dog."

Kos's kit includes shirts and socks and Corkhill says: "I want to see him playing in it, and next year at the sponsorship night I want my chosen player to present me with a shirt." Manager Lennie Lawrence could certainly do worse than play the mutt, judging by Luton's form this season.

A spokesman for the club said: "He's a lovely dog and he is here every week. He gets along with everybody."

IT'S a dog's life at Luton Town — usual story: losing team, crowd unrest, etc — but Coz Kohler is happier than most. Coz is the alsatian-border collie cross owned by David Kohler, the Luton chairman, and has recently secured himself personal sponsorship. The deal was done by Alan Corkhill, the managing director of a local printing firm, and includes Coz's photograph, proudly wearing a Luton shirt, in the matchday programme.

Corkhill used to support Kim Grant, the former Luton striker, who is now with Millwall. "Unfortunately, Kim wasn't one of the most popular players," he said, "so this time, I thought I'd go for the most likeable living creature at the club, which apparently is Coz." Corkhill reckons that his canine friend could help out Luton's ailing defence — "he'd bring an extra pair of legs" — or add bite to the midfield.

Two items from *The Daily Telegraph* (left and below), Monday 10 November, which could both be designed to make our club a laughing stock. The sponsorship item was repeated in *The Times* (above) two days later, by which time they'd thought up a headline about Kennel-worth Road.

TOP 10

Oldest players in League football

	Apps	Age
1: Trevor Peake (Luton)	628	40 years 9 months
2: Steve Ogrizovic (Coventry)	596	40yrs 59 days
3: Nigel Spink (Millwall)	388	39yrs 94 days
4: Neville Southall (Everton)	623	39yrs 55 days
5: John Aldridge (Tranmere)	663	39yrs 53 days
6: Gordon Cowans (Burnley)	686	39yrs 14 days
7: Steve White (Cardiff)	630	38yrs 312 days
8: Dave Beasant (Notts Forest)	604	38yrs 235 days
9: Tony Ford (Mansfield)	777	38yrs 180 days
10: Glenn Cockerill (Brentford)	692	38yrs 77 days

Qualification: At least part of one League game this season

Compiled by JACK ROLLIN

Taylor urges fans: 'Stop Scum chants'

GRAHAM Taylor rebuked Watford supporters who chant out on the subject of "beating The Scum four-nil".

"Just one little thing. While I appreciate it was 10 years since we beat Luton, I see no reason whatever why we are chanting about beating The Scum 4-0. Whether we beat them or not, I don't feel anyone should be described as Scum," said Taylor.

"It does not reflect us in a very good light. I cannot see the sense in all that. Luton do have to come here in February but there is no surprise there is feeling at these games which is not all that pleasant.

"I know it is all a small minority and I respect and I appreciate the support of the team, but I have to say I cannot see the value, or any point in it. Certainly the players don't.

"The things we are trying to do - and we won't always be successful as is always the case - is remind people that Watford has these values and standards. So, to have 30 or 40 chanting we beat the scum 4-0, what does it do for us?

Why does Graham Turnip want them to shut up? Perhaps because he knows it will be embarrassing come February 14th?

He gave us the balance on the left. He is at Luton on a one-month loan."

Team: Feuer, James, Small, Waddock, Davis, White, Allen, McLaren, Oldfield, Thorpe, Alexander. Subs not used: Davies, Fotiadis, Thomas.

Attendance: 3,636.

Man of the Match: McLaren.

Team line-ups for the York match from the *Accuracy on Sunday* (left) and *The Mirror* (right). Compare and contrast the ratings for Paul McLaren.

Think about it

FROM the *Leamington Spa Courier*: "Kenilworth Road will be transformed into a muse-type development."

Edited by
David Rennie

This was a match in which Luton's youngsters finally came of age.

Nineteen-year-old Spring bamboozled the defence with a dazzling display of skill, vision and guts reminiscent of Ricky Hill at his very best.

Novice goalkeeper Kelvin Davis

The *Accuracy on Sunday* strikes again. Luton youngsters come of age. Yup, Matthew Spring ages two years in ninety minutes.

not sharpen them." But the glaring fact is this side, albeit an injury-ravaged one, would struggle to grind out a result in the Vauxhall Conference.

The AoS again, but maybe getting something right this time.....

Referee: P S Danson (Leicester) 6.

YORK	(0) 1
LUTON	(1) 2
Cresswell (87)	Alexander (13)
Att: 3,636	Thorpe (72)
YORK: Warrington 6, Murty 6, Atkinson 5, Bushell 6, Reed 5, BARRAS 8, Poulton 7, Tinkler 5, Bull 6 (Cresswell 7,71), Rowe 7, Stephenson 7, Subs not used: Himsforth, Greening.	
Bookings: Bushell, Tinkler.	
LUTON: Feuer 7, James 7, Small 7, Waddock 7, Davis 8, White 7, Allen 7, McLaren 6, Oldfield 8, Thorpe 7, ALEXANDER 9, Subs not used: Davies, Fotiadis, Thomas.	
Referee: D Pugh (Wirral) 7.	

RAVING MAD!!!

Dear "Mad",

I was browsing through your very good fanzine the morning after we were soundly beaten at home by Manchester United, sorry, Preston North End. After I had finished Brian Swain's account of his travels up to Liverpool for the snowed off match, I started to pull the carpet up in one of our spare bedrooms. Underneath the carpet the floor was covered in copies of ten year old Daily Mails, and one of the copies had this appropriate article:

Daily Mail, Thursday, January 15, 1987

Liverpool left with 6,000 pies

BY COLIN WOOD

LUTON were stranded at Heathrow last night and left Liverpool with 6,000 meat pies on their hands.

The FA Cup third round replay between the two clubs, due to be staged at Anfield, was finally called off by the FA at 5.15 p.m., just over two hours before the scheduled kick-off.

Luton had chartered two jets to try to beat the freeze but Liverpool did not think they had made enough effort and will claim at least £10,000 compensation.

Chief executive Peter

Robinson said: 'Why didn't Luton leave the day before the game? We have incurred costs of at least £10,000 and expect Luton to pay up. The police bill is £5,000, the undersoil heating has been on since Sunday at £400 per day and we have 6,000 pies and 6,000 sausage rolls to throw away.'

Luton spokesman Colin Moore said: 'The FA are content we did all we could. We have incurred extra costs and think they should all be charged on the match when it is eventually played.'

DIVISION I

EVERTON	(2) 2	SHEFF WED	(0) 1
Steven 15 (pen),			33,011
Watson 30			
MAN CITY	(0) 0	LIVERPOOL	(0) 1
		Rush 72	35,336

PANEL RESULTS: Aston Villa v Wimbledon 1; Charlton v Nottm Forest 2; Chelsea v Oxford 1; Leicester v Norwich 1; Newcastle v Tottenham 3; Southampton v Luton 1½; Watford v QPR 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Arsenal	24	9	3	0	22	4	6	3	3	19	9	51
Everton	25	9	3	1	30	8	6	2	4	19	12	50
Liverpool	25	7	3	2	24	9	6	3	4	19	15	45
Nottm F	24	7	5	0	25	9	4	1	7	21	23	39
Luton	24	8	3	1	15	6	3	3	6	11	17	39
Norwich	24	7	4	1	19	13	3	5	4	14	20	39
Tottenham	24	5	3	4	17	13	6	2	4	11	16	38
Coventry	23	8	2	2	18	10	2	4	5	8	14	36
Wimbledon	24	6	2	4	17	13	5	0	7	16	19	35
West Ham	24	6	2	4	24	20	3	5	4	13	21	34
Watford	24	7	3	2	24	10	2	3	7	16	21	33
Sheff Wed	25	6	5	1	25	13	2	4	7	13	27	33
Man Utd	24	6	2	4	22	13	1	6	5	9	15	29
Oxford	24	6	4	2	21	14	1	4	7	7	24	29
Q.P.R.	24	5	3	4	17	15	2	3	7	7	16	27
Man City	25	6	3	4	18	14	0	5	7	6	21	26
Stamptown	23	5	2	4	20	17	2	2	8	17	29	25
Chelsea	24	3	3	6	13	22	3	4	5	15	21	25
Charlton	24	3	4	5	15	15	3	2	7	10	20	24
Leicester	24	4	5	3	22	16	2	1	9	9	27	24
Aston Villa	24	5	3	4	16	18	1	3	8	14	32	24
Newcastle	24	4	2	6	17	20	1	4	7	8	22	21

PLAYING TODAY - Arsenal v Coventry (2.35)

Also attached is a copy of the league table from the Mail on Sunday on January 18th 1987. Here you will notice that Luton were sitting very pretty in the First Division, which would now obviously be the Premiership. Those were the happy days of playing good teams and winning. I'll stop now before I depress myself with nostalgia.

Gavin Hayhurst — Hemel Hatter
Hemel Hempstead.

PS: Is it coincidence that we have let in a few goals since the useless Marvin has been back, or what?

Dear "Mad",
What do you mean that the crossword is "not of the same standard as the Times"? An outrage! When has the Times ever had such interesting answers as

Jimmy Ryan, Graham Alexander etc. I'm thinking of doing a Marvin special next time. You wouldn't find that in the Times.

Four home defeats in a row. Bugger.

Oh, and you might like to tell your correspondent Kelvin Dunn that it is perfectly correct to begin a sentence with "but" — see "The Complete Plain Words" by Sir Ernest Gowers. (Junior Clark is right — you are a pompous bastard, Clark).

Clark

Bristol.

Dear "Mad",

I had more fun with the crossword in issue 43 than I usually do (I never understand cryptic clues, but I got these). Actually, it was more fun doing the crossword than watching yesterday's shambles (v Walsall). No doubt Hodge missed Spider — but still managed to get away from Gladstone and score. I've rated Hodge since he was at Exeter (my second team) and he's yet to let me down — rats!

Still, things can only get better. If we can win at Carlisle we can win at York. Yes, we can. Believe me.....

Come back Bontcho. Perhaps not.

Steve Whitehead,

Wingrave, Bucks.

Dear "Mad",

I met Lennie Lawrence on the 15.59 East Coast train from York to London on Sunday. Boy, if ever there was a man who wasn't into talking football, it was him.

He was polite though, and I accept it was probably his day off. Thing is, I've got loads of family in York so I am always going to be on a funny train to, or from, that fixture. Perhaps next time he should write to me, telling me what train he is getting, so I can catch the next one!!

Phil Darton,

North London.

Dear "Mad",

Is Kristina Howells' new book "A Hatter goes mad!" available on mail order?

R.J. Lister,

Herne Bay, Kent.

Yes. It can be ordered from The Book Castle, 12 Church Street, Dunstable, Beds, LU5 4RU, (01582) 605670, for £7.99 plus £1.40 post and packing.

Dear "Mad",

For all you people who complain about living in a town like Luton, stop for a minute and count yourself lucky that you don't have to live in Harlow (Essex). It

is a shithole — fact. There's nothing to do, nowhere to go (bloody Chicago's is over 21s!) and beer is too expensive (£2.15 - Carlsberg Export/ £1.77 - Tetleys).

It doesn't help matters having to go to a college full of West Ham and Spurs fans either (at least Tottenham are as shite as us at the moment, so they're not gloating). There's even a Bury fan who was impressed by their performance at Kenny Road last season!

However, imagine my surprise when I was walking through the town the other week and in front of me I saw a man go into Motor World wearing a LTFC coat (one with the orange Pony logo at the back). I would have gone and spoken to him but was in a state of shock. Altogether now: "Two (Luton) fans in Harlow, there's only....."

Finally, a new shop has just opened in the town called The Football Shop. Superbly, the colours of the sign outside are orange, blue and white — yet they don't sell any LTFC stuff. What's going on there — what kind of a football shop is that!

Yours in exile,

Chris Lennon.

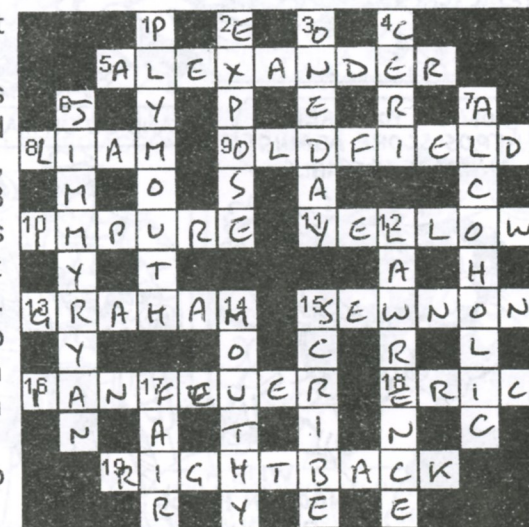
PS: As a claim to fame, did you know (well, obviously, no you didn't) that I have to walk past Glenn Hoddle's old school every morning. Not a lot of people knew that(ZZZZZZzzzz)

HATTERWORD

The answers to the crossword, set by Frenchie, in issue 43.

As you may recall we offered this as a prize crossword, and received 7 correct entries. After a draw, from the traditional Wembley '88 straw boater, the winner was David Fleckney, of Great Houghton, in Northamptonshire. David can look forward to receiving an item from the Luton Town leisure wear collection as a reward for his endeavours.

Our thanks to everybody who entered this competition.



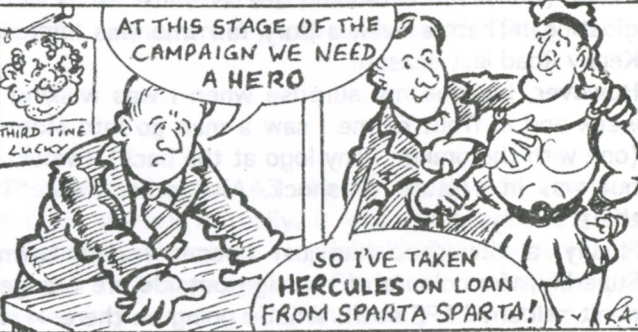
Bobbin Dino in: IT'S ALL GREEK TO ME!

1 SAY, I SAY, I SAY:
WHAT'S A GRECIAN
URN?



--A LOT
LESS THAN
PHIL GRAY!

SO MUCH FOR HUMOUR, NOW FOR TRAGEDY: LUTON
HAS ALWAYS BEEN SYNONYMOUS WITH VAUXHALL,
BUT IS IT TO BE CONFERENCE AS WELL AS MOTORS?



AT THIS STAGE OF THE
CAMPAIGN WE NEED
A HERO

SO I'VE TAKEN
HERCULES ON LOAN
FROM SPARTA SPARTA!

HERC'S LATEST LABOUR -
TRAINING WIV THE TAWN!

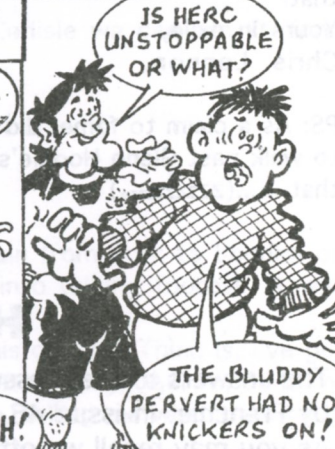


GO ON SON,
SHOOT!

THE KEEPER COULD NOT
BELIEVE WHAT HE SAW



HOW'S THAT
FOR SIZE?

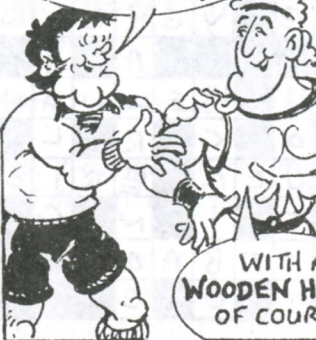


IS HERC
UNSTOPPABLE
OR WHAT?

THE BLUDDY
PERVERT HAD NO
KNICKERS ON!

ARRRGH!

HOW DO YOU GREEK
HEROS SCORE AGAINST
AN IMPENETRABLE
DEFENCE?



WITH A
WOODEN HORSE
OF COURSE!

AND SO ON MATCH DAY



OFF-THE HORSE
HAS NOT GOT THE
REGULATION
STUD

HUH?
SINCE WHEN DID A
WOODEN HORSE NEED
TO HAVE A MARE AND
STALLION??!

MEANWHILE THE CHAIRMAN WAS
REHEARSING FOR PANTOMIME

FI, FO, FUM AND FOAM!
IN COMEST KOHADES,
DEMON KING OF THE
UNDER DOME!



CERBERUS
WILL BE SUPERB
FOR HEADING IN
THE CROSSES



WHATEVER
HAPPENED TO
KOS?



HE WENT ON A
FREE TRANSFER
TO BARKING!

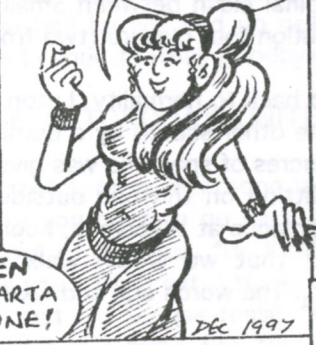
NOW FOR THE IMPORTANT PART
OF A PROFESSIONAL'S CAREER



I FEEL IN NEED
OF SOMETHING
TO SHAG

HOW WOULD YOU
LIKE TO BE MY
TROY BOY?

HELEN
OF SPARTA
FOR ONE!



MMM, ARE THOSE THE
GOLDEN APPLES OF THE
HESPERIDES OR ARE
YOU JUST PLEASED TO
SEE ME? *



* THIS OLD JOKE IS ABOUT
DUE FOR A TESTIMONIAL

DEC 1997

AND SO IT IS, AS LEGEND
COPULATES WITH MYTH *

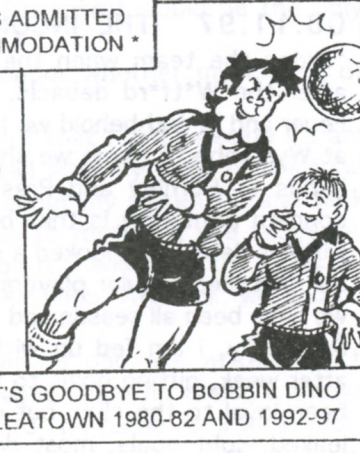


SO DO YOU THINK WE
OVER ACHIEVED
LAST SEASON?

** AND YOUR ARTIST IS ADMITTED
TO SHELTERED ACCOMMODATION *



THAT'S ALL
FOLKS!



** IT'S GOODBYE TO BOBBIN DINO
OF LEATOWN 1980-82 AND 1992-97

RAY A.

UPS AND DOWNS.....

But mainly downs, I'm afraid, dear readers. It's not going to help the sort of results we've been getting, but you must have feelings about games as you're watching them, so why not put them into a match report? Send any reports to the usual address, preferably fairly soon after the match in question.

04.11.97 TOWN 2 BURNLEY 3

Well, here we go..... the clash between the two highest scorers in ~Division 2 last season who are now..... the two lowest scorers in Div 2 this term! Oh, how times change: It's a funny old game and all the rest!

Having made a mercy dash back from Barcelona to arrive at Kenny midway through the first half, I took my seat just as the players were cantering back to the centre spot to kick off after some customary crap defending by Marvin. Alas, some false optimism ensues when Alexander scores twice in quick succession: the first a cracking shot from a free kick routine, and the second a bizarre goal direct from a free kick with the Claret's keeper Beresford hopelessly out of position. Shock, horror — two Luton goals from free kicks! The half then ended with a fracas after an original clash between Small and Creaney. Incredibly, the stupid ref proceeded to caution four players (two from each team), none of whom were Small or Creaney!

So, the second half..... and back to normality. Luton gifted Burnley two goals; one from a Luton corner and the other scored by a Burnley player who must have had the plague, judging by the acres of space he was given.

What a prat I feel now. Sitting on the bus outside Adams Park, following that storming second half performance at Wycombe, I confidently bellowed on a mobile phone to our absent Jez that we would walk all four of our forthcoming consecutive home games..... The words egg and face spring to mind! Oh shit!

Steve F.

08.11.97 THE INCOMPETENTS 1 PRESTON 3

"Judge the team when the injured players return." So said Lennie Lawrence after the W*tf*rd debacle. Well, four weeks on, all have returned except Ian Feuer and lo and behold we have managed to put together a stirring run of a draw at Wycombe (a game we should have won) and two dismal home defeats at the hands of Burnley and Preston — neither of whom played terribly well. The concern right now is that before the Wycombe game, having gone five games without defeat, we looked a side capable of making the play-offs, without some of our so-called regular players. Now we find ourselves as close to full strength as we have been all season and playing like a side going nowhere except down.

Personally, I am fed up with watching Marvin and Jules clowning around week after week, gifting goals to the opposition with alarming frequency. Yes, they've been loyal to the club, but enough is enough. Since Marvin returned Luton have leaked eight goals, most down to poor defending — today being the perfect

example. Preston were far from being a good side but once again Town did what they have become so good at in recent seasons, making the opposition look a hell of a lot better than they really are. The goal from Lormor was down to poor marking and the second was, to be honest, a f***ing disgrace. What the hell was Kelvin doing? It was his ball all the way. Preston must wish they play Luton every week because, let's face it, where else are they going to play against such crap defending?

The second half was, at best, dire between two clueless sides. That said, I have no complaints about the result. Preston's third merely confirmed how bad we really are. The only bright spots (yes, there were some) were the superb performances of Alan White and Andrew Fotiadis. What I wouldn't give to have a few more quality players like those in the side. Anyway, all I can say is that the time to rebuild is now. It's time to start saying goodbye to some of the more familiar faces of recent years and to build for the future. God knows, if this carries on we will have the best ground in the Conference. We can joke about it now, but with results like this it could well become reality sooner than we think.

J.S.

PS. In a week that has seen the departure of S.O.G. from Sheffield Tuesday it makes you wonder where the hell he will end up next. God help this club if he returns, we might as well kiss League football goodbye!

15.11.97 BLIND DATE 0 TORQUAY UNITED 1

Clots creamed.....

Why start this report on a fateful, rainy afternoon in Bedfordshire, when to get the full measure of my misery you have to go back to the Friday night? It was then that I got a phone call out of the blue. "Hi, I'm Sue. A friend of mine, Jane, thinks I ought to get to know you." Oh great, I think, a blind date minus the crap, glib, one liners served up by that old Scouse fossil. "Er, how will I know who you are?" (we had arranged to meet in a pub). She told me she would be wearing a large red coat. I told her she would recognise me because I would be the only bloke in the pub wearing a Luton Town football shirt.

Of course, she never turned up, leaving me to ponder whether my choice of football shirt had anything to do with it.

Anyway, Saturday comes along and I am so pissed off that I can't decide if I am going to attend Luton's 'big' cup game or not. I call into my local pub around midday. Er..... Kerry's on today, so I can talk to her about my rotten life and seek her opinion on how I should spend my Saturday. "Go to football", she suggests, "don't let your bad mood win over." Right then, sod it, I will beat the blues by seeing the Happy Hatters turn over the clotted cream mob. After all, we had no trouble beating them last year, did we?!

A quick and very honourable mention here to Kerry's dad. He writes match reports for his local newspaper on a Nationwide league team he doesn't always bother turning up to watch. What he does is listen to the game on a local radio station and then speaks to a mate who does go to the game so he can write the

match report. Now that's what I call style!

Anyway, so there I am at 3 o'clock in my £8.40 seat waiting for Luton to see off another inferior 3rd Division team (after all we had already slaughtered poor old Colchester 2-1 over 2 legs in the Who Gives a Toss Cup). Phil Gray's not playing up front and Lennie's threat of big changes after the Burnley/Preston flops is great as far as it goes. Trouble is who do you replace them with. As we get underway with the usual huff and puff from the Kangaroo kid and Waddock passes sideways a lot, Torquay's players look on unable to quite believe that this game is likely to stretch their footballing abilities any more than a friendly with Exeter's youth team.

Nothing much happens in a boring 0-0 first 45 minutes and as the wurzels in the Oak Road end chant "You're supposed to be at home," I can't help but reflect that that is where I should be — at home! (*You weren't the only one — Ed*)

Nothing changes in the second half — it looks like 0-0 and a replay, and I am hoping the players are going to enjoy trudging down to Devon for the rematch, because I certainly won't be. However, our Graham (Alexander) obviously doesn't fancy the trip west. As one of their lot goes haring into the box I scream at him not to make a tackle. He can't hear me. Neither can he realise, as a professional footballer, that any kind of tackle in that situation will probably result in a penalty, so he tries one and the penalty results. 1-0 to Torquay. Luton rally, but no player at the moment has the flair and skill in the opposition's area to score the goal that will prolong the agony down in Devon.

A section of H block chant "You're not fit to wear the shirt." It's cruel and depresses me even more, but now it's 3 home defeats out of 3 — and we haven't played anyone decent yet.

A footnote for Mr Kohler: we loved the gesture of handing out free Town souvenirs at Carlisle but we would now like to see you get out the club cheque book and hand us out some hope for the future.

Phil Darton — Highbury Hatter

22.11.97 THE NEARLY MEN 0 WALSALL 1

If all we have heard concerning the upheavals at the club are true (and who am I to doubt them?), then it appears that Wayne Turner has been made the scapegoat for the chaos on the pitch. Correct me if I am wrong, but surely it is the manager who carries the can for the team if things go wrong. Wayne, if nothing else, was a club man through and through and it is yet another sad chapter in the fall and fall of the club. I'm sorry to say that some of Lennie's excuses in recent weeks have been less than acceptable. This is the lowest ebb I have seen the club in the twenty years I have followed them, but I can't help but think that the worst is yet to come. I hope I am wrong but as far as things on the pitch go, it is clear that something drastic has to be done..... and NOW! Next year or next season simply isn't good enough. Relegation is now a distinct possibility and with smaller crowds and less income the side could be unrecognisable next season. Some may say that is no bad thing, especially with some of the clowns who wear the Town shirt now.

As with previous games, some of Luton's football was pretty but ten passes making ten yards progress isn't good enough. Town also seem to lack the penetration they had last season, hence fewer chances being created and inevitably even fewer goals being scored. This was very much a game of two halves. The first, where Luton had plenty of possession and played well but failed to create enough chances. The talk at half time was that the lack of a goal could be costly, and so it proved. That said, the goal, when it came, was one of the goals of the season. Quite what the defence were doing at the time is open to debate but the sooner Steve Davis gets back the better. What is the most frustrating and unacceptable fact about the last four games is that we have lost to four very poor teams.

We can only hope that the new set up works a hell of a lot better, or the possibility of Third Division football at Kenilworth Road will arrive sooner than we think.

J.S.

29.11.97 YORK CITY 1 TOWN 2

As one of those people much despised by contributors to *Mad* who, due to geography and other commitments, only rarely manage to get to home games (four so far this season), I thought I'd put pen to paper following my eighth away game of the season, especially as it was the first time that I had seen the Town win since Peterborough (away of course) in April.

It was great seeing Luton close to full strength at last and looking like a team. I wonder what John Moore had said to them given the greatly increased commitment shown during the game! With Feuer on top form, Davis back, Jules, Alexander (and Simon Davies) all back in their correct positions, and White looking the barfain of the season the defence looked as strong as they have done for a long time despite being up against a very dangerous York forward line, especially in the second half. PLEASE Lennie, find the money to buy Small (cue old joke), and resist the temptation to bring the walking disasters Marvin and Mitchell back. With Chris Allen on the wing and Oldfield up front, the whole shape of the team was transformed, and with Thorpe even forgetting himself a couple of times, running and closing down defenders (and being rewarded with cheers instead of the recent boos) before trying to escape over the fence and into the crowd after his goal.

We'll probably lose to Gillingham now (and no, I can't get to that game but I will try to get to another home game soon, and I will be at Chesterfield!).

Finally, York are another club who include the visiting support in the programme (they took 144 to Bristol City) — why won't Luton? And is there any way of finding out the official figures? Or am I the only sad person really interested in them.

John Solomon (Cannock, Staffs)

After the terrible home matches, this was a welcome relief for fans and players — and how it showed on the pitch. In the seats we felt good the moment we saw

Wendy Toms running one of the lines (no, not that type of 'good'), as we had never lost when she had previously officiated. With on-loan Chris Allen making his debut, giving the players another attacking option, the Town showed some nice touches throughout, in particular the well-worked goal which saw us ahead at half time.

In the second half, York started to come back into it, as the Town started to slip back into old habits — ie. clearing the ball out of defence straight to an opposing player, increasing the pressure. Then, out of the blue, the ever-improving Macca released Thorpy with a long high ball, and the recipient slotted the ball past the keeper to give us some breathing space. After that, York heads dropped, the Town began to control the game, and could have gone four up through breaks by Alexander and Thorpe. Then, out of the blue (*again?*), with three minutes left, York pulled a goal back with a simple header, and suddenly the Town were totally under the cosh. After five minutes of us Town fans screaming at him, the ref finally blew for time, and the run of defeats was over.

Finally, PC Palmer: how come you were outside before the game donning uniform, yet later spotted inside the wearing plain clothes???? Maybe something to do with the fact that the away support appeared entirely devoid of the loony element that had begun to drift back last season. No work for Mr Palmer to do anymore?

Objét

02.12.97 TOWN 2 GILLINGHAM 2

Hold the applause until we play a whole match

With the success at York, had the Town turned the corner? Tonight we found out. This was my first home match since Preston, and after ten minutes it was clear that nothing had changed. Gillingham looked by far the more competent team, so it came as some surprise to the Town fans when we scored, especially as Stevo scored with a header when surrounded by defenders that looked like basketball players. It came as no surprise, however, when Gillingham equalised only thirty seconds later — that is something Town teams have managed to do for years, and is inexcusable. From that moment, the Town found some consistency — the same level of incompetence for the rest of the half.

Shortly after half time, Gillingham deservedly went further ahead, and were it not for Feuer, could have gone 4-1 up, as the Town's offside trap failed to work at all — possibly something to do with Thomas replacing the concussed White at Half time. Fotiadis replaced the ever-tiring Waddock — to cheers — and the Town livened up a bit, but still looked nothing like scoring. Then we scored, thanks to a tap by Thorpy that trickled through Fatty Stannard's legs. Totally undeserved. All of a sudden, the players and fans smelled victory, the Gillingham players and fans shit themselves, but after a succession of unconverted crosses, the score remained 2-2. Then began the real entertainment, when Oldfield was brought down, got to his feet, and was shoved down again. What ensued just looked a mosh from the Kenny end, but it did appear that Feuer was lucky to remain on the pitch. With the electric scoreboard showing "90" any sensible ref would have ended the game at this point, so this ref — who had already upset both sets of players and

fans with poor decisions — played on after flailing a few cards about. Two minutes later, the game was over, with more drama to unfold at the players tunnel, which again I couldn't see — it looked interesting though.

Soap box time. It is here that I make an attempt to make the few hundred people who applauded the team off at the end see the error of their ways, or am I wasting my time? Just because we looked better for the last ten minutes does not mean we got anything like value for our money. What about minutes 1 to 78 — it was no better than the previous four home games was it? If the Town can play with the determination they did when it was 2-2, then why didn't they before? Save your applause until the team play well for a whole game. If you can honestly say that overall you enjoyed the game, then you still haven't suffered enough, and clearly need psychiatric help. (Gets down from soap box)

The Thin Controller

BOOK REVIEW

'THE DEFINITIVE LUTON TOWN FC'

by Steve Bailey, Brian Ellis and Alan Shury.

£7.99, publishers details below.

What is going on? The last book with LTFC as its main subject was published in 1988, and then, all of a sudden, their on two coming out in the space of a few weeks — and just in time for Christmas! This latest to the collection is very much a coffee table book, to be delved into in those moments when you ponder whether Paul or Ron Futchter was the first to make his first team debut.

The book contains full team line-ups for every Football League match the club have ever played, along with similar information for cup ties, and league tables for every season. There's also a listing of all the players to have represented LTFC with a summary of their careers, although my one criticism here is that where players returned to the club for a second spell (Brian Stein, David Oldfield) the two spells should have been shown separately. For the sheer weight of information, this book is well worth its cover price, apart from the quantity of dubious facts and figures that it contains (for example, why don't LTFC claim their Southern Professional Floodlit Cup victory of 1956/57 among the club honours? It must be worthwhile as Watford (4-3 at home) were the second round victims).

Overall, an excellent book, and many of us will be thanking the co-authors for the work they put into this.

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DOWN AND OUT (FOR THE TIME BEING)

Kevin Sheedy's disputed free kick nestling into the bottom corner over 12 years ago. Dennis Wise's smug grin after scoring at White Hart Lane almost ten years ago. 30,000 Luton fans at Wembley, not yet 4 years ago. Anyone with a brain will register these almost seemingly yesterday moments in LTFC's history, noticing one thing in common. FA Cup semi-finals. We have appeared in more semi-finals in this time than Arsenal, would you believe, and yet yesterday, a more surreal experience occurred. We were dumped, out of the greatest cup competition in the world, by Torquay United. The men from the seaside. Was it really only three years ago when Oakesy scored 3 against West Ham, or Andy Cole, the best striker in England at the time, could not score in 180 minutes against us. But the day after the disaster I've just seen the draw and it could've been W*tf*rd at home in the second round. Thankfully, we've escaped another, potentially, imminent defeat at the hands of our local rivals. 1st round exit, eh?

It brings us on to the burning question of the management team. Now, as you read this, around Christmas time, either Lennie has turned things around and so have the team, or he's gone and someone else is at the helm. A couple of points here. A lot of people would say that Mr Lawrence has no idea, tactically or otherwise, about the game. The argument here is, we're wrong. All of us. Whoever we want in the side, or positions we see players in, are there for a reason. Anybody in football at a professional level, simply knows much more about the game than us. Now, I admit, I think it's time for him to go, but let's remember, he still knows substantially more about the sport than we'll ever know.

Wayne Turner. When we were going so well last season and beating teams easily, I didn't hear one person saying that Turner, the coach, had anything to do with it. So, why, when we're playing shit and looking so poor, is everyone saying that the coach is not up to the job? Keep remembering where we were last season. You can't knock anyone in life if you haven't praised them, that's a fact.

Finally, if Lennie has departed, and it'll only be if he's pushed as he often makes clear, who will do a better job? They will have the same squad and the same financial scenario to play around with. Pleaty? Could he come back and do to Luton what the Turnip is gradually doing with Watford? Maybe, but maybe not. He's too much like Lennie Lawrence though. Talks a good game, but you can't imagine him throwing the cups around at half time. The name of Mick Harford is being bandied around increasingly. For sure, he'd be a great motivator (the one important thing Lawrence lacks), but if things aren't going well will we barrack him? That would not be fair after his service to the club.

Let's just say that he'd be very popular with a successful side — just like the current manager.

I'm sure readers here will disagree and say that Lawrence, and the players, still have no idea about the game, but until I start earning the sums of money they do, and the responsibility that goes with their jobs (footballers - responsibility?!! Ed), then I'm happy to shut up and watch the game. Football is full of ups and downs, it's what makes it so great, and if you can't take the downs but then call Tony Thorpe brilliant the month later because we've won eight matches from ten, then really you're not interested in the sport.

After all, you could support Manchester City. Now there is a club in a crisis.
The Kempston stud

BEAR FACTS

Although the situation in the injury crisis has improved, I was distressed to find it taking a sinister new twist recently.

On my arrival in York for the Town's stop off to pick up three points, I was sickened when my 8 year-old niece, Hannah, showed me the extent of the horrific injuries suffered by her 'I'm a Hatters Bear' teddy bear. His left leg had been completely ripped off — which kind of puts Phil Gray's injury (whatever it is) into perspective.

Apparently, the severe damage had occurred when the bear was stuffed into her pocket while attending school in York. (Note to Tony Thorpe's girlfriend (if he has one) — please, for all our sakes, don't stuff him in your pocket when you take him out.) She had to get the stricken bear a pencil to use as a crutch and, being resourceful, she and a friend then took him around their school collecting money for "Teddy in Need Day".

Then it was back to the treatment table in a desperate bid to get Ted fit for our visit to Bootham Crescent. He was patched up using elastic bands and sellotape, and luckily made it for the match, and was involved in the intricate build up play for our clinching second goal.

Clive Goodyear commented, "Well, there's no point in Mr Kohler of Domeland investing in good quality sellotape if we are to put it to effective use".

I am pleased to report that the bear survived the match, but major surgery may now be required.

Phil Darton

FOUR MATCHES AND FOUR DEFEATS LATER....

At the start of November and on the back of a five match unbeaten run, I was confident of at least seven points from nine and an easy FA Cup match from four home matches in a row.

However, four matches and four defeats later, I am completely disillusioned, saddened and astounded at the fast demise of this club. If the current set-up stays (and I'm not only talking about the manager) then the promotion favourites are going nowhere but Division Three. Mr Lawrence, what is the point of heaping the blame on Turner? You seem hell-bent on using the injury card to the full for our shite performances this year (OK, it was valid in September, but not now), so why are you getting rid of your right-hand man? To find the cause of the problem, look a little closer to home (ie. Turner's gone, so why don't you piss off as well).

Performances like the one against Walsall just aren't good enough, Mr Lawrence. OK, we were the better team for the first hour or so but that was only because Walsall were utter shite.

However, it took the winner of this season's 'Best Goal Against' category in the *Mad* poll to take the three points. A superb volley by John Hodge which gave Feuer about as much chance as Tottenham have of staying in the Premiership this year.

As soon as teams go ahead against us we might as well stop playing there and then because we all know we've got fuck all chance of getting back into it. Basically, we don't have a clue.

To top things off, and if Kohler/Lawrence haven't pissed on us enough already, we are greeted by a torrential downpour for the journey back to the car. Parts of Maple, Dunstable and Leagrave Roads resembled the deep end at Bath Road as we swam back to the car. And they say that it never rains but it pours.

It's a good job that Carlisle have a UFO-freak of a chairman picking their side (hang on, should I be writing this — it might give Kohler an idea), because otherwise we'd be propping up the division and have the scummers at the other end of the table laugh at us even more than they are at the moment.

I know it disagrees with the editors viewpoint (*really? Do I get a say in this? Ed*), but I'm going to sign off with something that needs to be heard loud and clear until it actually happens:

"We want Lawrence out, say we want Lawrence out."

The Beat

HATTERS SHATTERED

An article that started as a double match report, but got away.

Two home games against fellow strugglers, should have brought Luton a guaranteed four points, if not a full monty of six. A big fat zero with such poor performances in both second halves has cast the Town back into the depths of the division. Plenty of possession but little direction, can basically sum up this nightmare of a week. After recently playing so well, actually winning games, and climbing out of the dreaded drop zone, what has gone wrong?

The Burnley game started damp and misty, and soon got worse as the mean defence began to leek once again. Two beautiful free kick goals from Alexander before the break could still not secure the points. With the change of ends a revitalised Burnley, full of ideas and looking like a well drilled team, dominated and then destroyed Luton. So much of our passing just went from side to side without any real purpose. Giving Burnley, and then Preston on Saturday, plenty of time to get numbers behind the ball and defend in depth. It was noticeable our three goals came from dead ball situations, all other attacks were smothered by both teams defending in numbers.

In the old days when the Town were lacking ideas, David Preece would grab the team by the scruff of the neck and, by example, motivate all round. With his departure Ceri Hughes took on this lead role, and could always be guaranteed to bring new heart to team and supporters alike. But a void of vision now occupies midfield. Individually good players, but no fire or leadership. Waddock can handle passing to right and left, but has great difficulty going or passing forward with any accuracy. I thought McLaren may be the man for the job, the work rate and determination is high but direction, particularly when shooting, is way off the mark. A stale midfield is creating a stale team.

What does Lawrence do? He buys Simon Davies from Manchester United who, after a few games disappears to the dugout. United sold him, and others like him, because he is not quite a Beckham, Butt or Scholes, not because he is rubbish. He has to adapt to playing a lower standard of football, and a standard that is unfortunately falling, and he cannot do this from the bench.

Another buy was Phil Gray. Why? Nice chap, works hard, good team man and seems to fit in well, but he is a small striker. With Thorpe, Marshall, Douglas and the new kid on the block, Liam George, this area of the team is fully filled. Skippy and Fotiadis can act as the big target man, so, even with injuries, we are not in short supply of forwards.

One really good buy has been Alan White, the only man who kept his head in the back row against Preston. So, after four games when the Town conceded only one goal and picked up 10 points (post Watford), his pairing with Steve Davies going well, he was dropped to make way for Marvin. Madness, sheer bloody madness.

It cannot just be coincidence that with the return of Marvin, the goal flood gates open, defeat follows defeat, and dismay is all around. Two gallant fight backs brought a point at Wycombe, but for this and the Burnley game the defence would have been stronger with White instead of the returning Johnson. So Alan White just sat these two games out from the bench. Good tactics, Lennie.

Burnley and Preston both used the long high ball to their striking pairs to good effect in the second halves of the two games. Such an easy and common tactic, but the Luton defence just fell to pieces. Let's hope the big man Feuer is back in place soon.

Luton's only long ball tactic is to Skippy on the left wing, unfortunately everybody in the league knows this ploy. The end result has Davy boy going so wide he could be occupying one of the many empty executive boxes. The heads of Premier and Nationwide managers are already falling, and Lennie must now be in one of the hot seats. I hate to say this about the man but he came to us as the cheap option, and it shows. With the talent available he should be producing a better product. At this rate I will see Luton play league football at Cheltenham next season, so that will save me hours of driving for one game.

Normski — Cheltenhamshire

PS. Newsflash: Town in second round of FA Cup..... Cheltenham Town, that is..... mmmm.

CONTRIBUTIONS PLEASE

Well, there are another three issues to come this season. Your contributions are always welcomed, and we look forward to receiving your cuttings, articles, match reports, letters, drawings, photos, money etc, etc. We can accept contributions on disk, but would ask that you send a hard copy, and details of the format in which the item was prepared (and filename). Such items should be sent to the above address. The deadline for issue 45 will be January 17th, and it will be on sale January 31st.



Town buy Small? They didn't sign Bryan, above, and couldn't really claim to be doing so when they signed Phil Gray, below. Of course, we're not likely to see either of them in action over Christmas!



MEMORIES RESERVED

A tale from two sad individuals who used one of their remaining annual leave days to go and see Luton reserves play Wimbledon reserves at Plough Lane.

Entry to the Plough Lane ground is through the old stand. On entering you see plaques on the wall from 1978 and 1986 with members of the Wimbledon FC staff inscribed on them, such as Alan Cork, Dave Bassett, Wally Downes and Phil Driver (remember him? Ex LTFC!!), along with various other folklore heroes in the rise of Wimbledon FC from the Southern League to the Premier Division.

You walk up the stairs and enter a lounge bar in the stand where the "turnstile operators" are — two men sitting at a table collecting £2 from non-season ticket holders. Their crowd count is a pen and a bit of paper — customers counted by the stick man method!

The match featured early goals in the 11th and 25th minutes, matched by one goal mouth effort in the first half from Luton, who featured a reasonably strong reserve side with Feuer in goal and injury stand-ins Evers, Harvey, Spring and Doherty in the starting line-up. Amongst others playing were Simon Davies and recuperating Fotiadis, and Douglas, who had an appearance as substitute. Although Town had a better 2nd half the final score was a 2-0 defeat.

Wimbledon reserves have Mick Harford as their manager — he was on the subs bench, but didn't play, and they look as though they have some good lads coming through once again.

The ground hasn't changed with the terracing, fences and floodlights all in situ around a good looking pitch. The only side that is used is the main stand, which was host to about 200 Wimbledon fans and five Luton faithful.

After the match, we paused on the way out of the ground to look at a large painting of the 1988 FA Cup winning team (including Clive Goodyear with a healthy crop of hair). Not surprisingly, nostalgia takes over and we remember 1988 — what a year, plastic pitches and Plough Lane, Luton Town and Wimbledon both cup winners. Nearly ten years on, Wimbledon are still in the top flight and still ruffling the big boy's feathers — whilst Luton Town are struggling in the relegation zone two divisions lower. What a contrast in fortunes.

D.R./N.G.

*Q. What is the difference between a W*tf*rd fan and a yoghurt?*

A. A yoghurt has a living culture.

Great Expectations

9th February 1994

Scott Oakes races down the left wing, cuts inside, shoots, Mike Hooper blocks it, Des Linton arrives and sets up Oakes to score Luton's second goal against mighty (?) Newcastle.

Dreams of a Wembley final are rife, especially after hi hat-trick against West ham. However, lanky git, Tony 'only playing 'cos Stein's injured' Cascarino sets up 2 gift goals for Gavin Peacock and the dream ends. Oh well, if Oakes plays like this next year we could be going up....

Season 94-95

Oakes' performances are somewhat more disappointing than expected, and we exit the FA Cup in some style at The Dell. A few fans begin to get frustrated....

Season 95-96

With Hell Tel at the helm, things get off to a very bad start and most of the abuse is directed at Oakes. Now I appreciate that at that time Oakes was playing the worst football of his career, but having half of the Kenny End slagging you off is not really going to inspire you to perform like you should be in the England team. Relegation follows and Oakes follows David Pleat to Sheffield Wednesday for 75p.

Most readers by now will be thinking what a stupid twat I am and what the point of this article is. The point is Tony Thorpe 96-97. Scores goals for fun as Luton narrowly miss out in the play offs, and is named Best Town Player in the poll, which must say something about the lad.

September 2, 1997.

Town 0 Millwall 2, and some 'fans' seem to deem it necessary to slag off the Thorpester everytime he misses the goal or a pass goes astray. WHY???

I doubt if Ronaldo could score everytime he had a shot or get every pass just right. OK, it looks as if sometimes Thorpe can't be bothered, but if people are going to slag him off when he has a shot that hits the post, then in a couple of years he will be a reserve team regular for bloody Southampton or some other team. So, let's give the lads a bit of encouragement rather than slag them off every time they make a mistake, and maybe Luton could start living up to the 8-1 favourites tag.

Beaker

DID YOU KNOW?

Since 1920, when both clubs joined the Football League, W*tf*rd have finished higher in the league than Luton Town only 17 times. Which just goes to prove that, as we all knew, Luton Town are the better team.

TOWN TRAVELS

The first excursion we have is the trip to Millwall, on Sunday 28th December. First thing to mention is that train journeys to the New Den may not be too easy. Due to major engineering work, it is possible that trains will be replaced by buses between Leagrave and St Albans, but it is not certain that this will happen so check with Luton railway station for full details. The consolation for a potentially lengthy journey is that entry to the New Den is priced at a very reasonable £10, and it is a 3 o'clock kick-off. Anyone looking for a few drops of the amber nectar before the game will be leaving that bit earlier to ensure time is available at the London end of the journey, presumably visiting old favourites in the area. For those drinking in the London Bridge area, there are four trains an hour between London Bridge and South Bermondsey.

Next match up is the trip to Southend United on January 3rd. We don't have any information yet on tickets for the match, but it is likely to be pay on the gate. The nearest station to the ground is Prittlewell, on the Liverpool Street to Southen route. A couple of pubs near to the station are usually open to away fans, but are not very inspiring. Better bets are likely to be found at Rochford, where the OLD SHIP, the NEW SHIP and the GOLDEN LION are all featured in the Good Beer Guide. A touch further away, the COACH & HORSES at Billericay is also in the GBG. And all the pubs are supposed to be close to the respective railway stations.

Weather permitting, our next away game will be at Oldham. At least we can't be relegated as we were on our last visit. This is a trip which can happily coincide with a central Manchester lunchtime session, but if you're a first-timer at Boundary Park, be aware that it is a long walk from the nearest railway station (Oldham Werneth). Of course, with Boundary Park being the highest league ground in the country, it could be bitterly cold in mid January.

Next up will be the border crossing to Wrexham on February 7th, and the dilapidated Racecourse Ground. Wrexham General railway station is only a few minutes walk from the ground, but all the best pubs are off towards the town centre in the opposite direction. Worth a try could be the HORSE & JOCKEY, Yorke Street (Tetley), or the NAG'S HEAD, Mount Street (Banks's, Marston's), but we can't be certain that they will be "away fan friendly".

And then it's St Valentine's Day.....

Incidentally, in the last issue we did mention cheaper train fares to Chesterfield. We did say "enquire at the station for details", and meant Luton railway station. We can therefore accept no responsibility for the fact that the Luton Town FC ticket office, or National Rail Enquiries knew absolutely nothing of these offers.

THE GRASS IS ALWAYS GREENER

Does anyone really believe Lennie Lawrence wants the Town to be in the situation we are in at the moment? When he got the job do you think his plan was to get within a gnat's cock of promotion one season, then go so far down the league the next that you need a guide to find us.

Perhaps Lennie is a sexual deviant who gets off on being abused *en masse* in public, the stewards who surround him on his way back to the tunnel are in fact hiding his erect member, and he barely makes it back to the changing room before relieving his tension in a hand shuffling explosion. "Ooh, 2-1 up and we lost 3-2, yes I've done it again. Wayne, pass me the Deep Heat." Or perhaps not.

The impression Lennie gives is that he is a genuine honest man, who doesn't take any shit. The problem is that he comes across like a second hand car dealer from Hackney — "Honest Len's Used Cars". "I've got a lovely defender on offer at the moment, guv, only 17 owners, never done a hard days work in it's life, will take fuel all day long but won't give F.A. miles to the gallon back."

I think that is why Lennie is suited to a job like Luton. You have to duck and dive to get half decent players for next to nothing, and Lennie's record of doing that in the lower divisions is second to none. Let's not kid ourselves, as much as I love every blade of grass on our hallowed turf, the idiot who walks around in the twatty Luton costume before kick off, my seat that hasn't been cleaned for ten years and is set at an angle more suited to someone with no legs going down a slide, and the fit bird who sells me my Golden Gamble ticket, I really can't see Dalglish walking out on Newcastle because he wants to build a championship side on a more realistic budget, instead of pissing millions of pounds of someone else's money up the wall and, in effect, buying the league title, and coming to manage Luton. Let's be honest, Kenilworth Road is an absolute shite hole in an awful location. It's a bit bigger than Kohler's conservatory and it's got as much character as a morgue. Come on, wake up, they're not exactly queuing up to have a crack at managing the Town, are they? I mean, would you?

We should appreciate people like Lennie and Wayne Turner for what they are, even if they are just using Luton for a stepping stone to further their careers. If that's the case, then so be it, get your glory, take us up the divisions on a dinner money budget. It's not like we're not used to people doing it (Judas), but Luton have done as much themselves. Selling players who cost fuck all for a hefty profit is just part of playing along with the

football bandwagon. We know the crack, but just try to think that however shite we are playing we are all gonna be here next Saturday anyway, so save the energy you use telling Lennie how much his mum enjoyed it the other night, and get behind the players for 90 minutes once a week. After all, Lennie can tell them to do what he likes, but once those eleven lads are out on the pitch it's up to them to turn it on and do what they've been told. It's not Lennie's fault that Thorpey missed from six yards, Kelvin's got lead in his boots or Marvin didn't hoof that into row Z.

We all think we know better, could shoot better or could run faster than the person actually doing it, but given the chance we all know we are talking out of our 'Watfords', really.

Give Lennie the benefit of the doubt for the Christmas turn at least, no good will come of slagging the boys off every week anyway. Keep the faith, stay loyal, and come February 14th things may not be as bad as they seem now.

Adrian Proper

SHORT CUTS

My soccer star son KO'd me

BY ALUN REES

A SOCCER star was yesterday accused by his father of punching him in the face and knocking out 12 of his teeth.

Paternal instincts

The father-son relationship can be a fragile one at the best of times (just ask Kronos and Zeus) and so it proved for John Hughes, the 51-year-old father of the Wimbledon defender, Ceri.

The Welsh international has been accused of knocking out 12 of his father's teeth in a

We've had quite a few cuttings of this story sent in to us, and the one below is from the rather unlikely source of The Scotsman. We've resisted the temptation to print a couple of pages of these and limit it to what you see here.

village pub. Ceri was said to have lost his temper over a bet during a game of pool.

His father, who is landlord of the pub, was knocked unconscious when he gave his son a ticking off.

John said: "It was just one punch but I was on the floor with my teeth hanging out and blood all over the place. I still can't believe my own son hit me like that."

Hughes is now barred from the Gelligaled pub in Tonypandy, South Wales.

Wimbledon club manager Joe Kinnear has also been told of the incident.

Mr Hughes, who lost two teeth on the spot, and ten more later in hospital, where X-rays showed a fracture to his chin and dental damage, said: "I was so proud of Ceri playing in the Premiership."

"He is quite friendly with Ryan Giggs and even brought him here for a drink. But it has all gone to his head just lately."

And to his father's as well, it seems.

Still, could be just what the Hatters need at the moment — a bit of aggression!

RAVING MAD!!! — SUPPLEMENT

An open letter sent to MAAH, Lennie Lawrence and David Kohler, on November 17th 1997.

There seems to be a never ending stream of experts trying to analyse what has gone wrong over the last 6 to 7 years, and, whether you like it or not, here is my theory. I believe there have been two major turning points in the past which have contributed to our current poor situation:-

- 1 We have never adequately replaced Steve Foster. He was a player who lead by example, he was the manager on the pitch, he had some influence over team selection and most importantly was never afraid to give public bollockings to those players not pulling their weight. We need someone on the pitch who will inspire the others when things start to go wrong.
- 2 The reintroduction of David Pleat never worked. I have great admiration for the way he turned the club around during his first spell, but during his second spell he just tinkered with the club and seemed to accept relegation as inevitable.

Problem — Captain

We need a manager on the pitch, a strong person who can see what is going wrong and rectify it. In the last 30 years, in my humble opinion, we have had 3 first class captains in Steve Foster, Terry Branston and Brian Horton (Danny Wilson was nearly there, at least he gave 110%). Trevor Peake, Steve Davis and Gary Waddock may be very nice people but with all due respect to them they are not in the same league.

Resolution — Captain

No idea, this is possibly the hardest position to fill. I don't see any of the current players with that sort of presence; they are all much too quiet for a start. Alan White is an outside possibility (no, he's not too young — look at Tony Adams - captain at 20 was it?), he seems to give 100% but, I guess we would need to get rid of most of the senior professionals for him to be respected as captain. Possibly someone from outside, doesn't need to be a fantastic player but must know how to lead and motivate. No idea really, but, this MUST be resolved.

Problem — Defence

This is a problem going back to the start of David Pleat's second reign. We have tended to gloss over our defensive failings if the attack is scoring, but nothing has changed over the years. The only difference between last season and this is our scoring record. I feel that every time the opposition attacks

they are likely to score. How many times last season did we throw away points because our defence was on walkabout or getting in each other's way? It isn't that the players are bad, it's their complete lack of organisation. There are many worse teams around who are at least organised enough to cover for each other. This either means they are ignoring orders from their coaches in which case they should be dropped, or they aren't good enough in which case they should be dropped, or they haven't been coached adequately in which case the coaches need to ask themselves a few questions.

Resolution — Defence

Proper coaching. If the players ignore orders, drop them. If you think back to the day David Pleat left to go to Spurs, ask yourself what sort of team did we have then. It was a team that could score goals fairly easily but with a cavalier defence that tended to leak goals with even greater ease. At the end of the next season and with the same players (except with no regular left back) our defence was like Fort Knox, we finished in our highest ever league position and the foundations had been laid for our Wembley visits. Who laid those foundations? He is still at the club — get John Moore to sort out the defence.

Problem — Isolated Attack

Our attacks break down too easily. We never seem to sustain attacking pressure on a team. It seems to take seconds to turn our hard fought shot or cross into full scale defensive panic. The midfield players at the club, as individuals, seem to be very skilled but seem to lack tactical awareness. When we are attacking we should also be aware of the quick counter attack and look to fill in the gaps left by defenders going forward. When defending the players should be making themselves available for attacking possibilities.

Resolution — Isolated Attack

No idea again. The midfield should be more tactically aware. They should communicate better and cover for players who have been dragged out of position. If we are not going to play with someone in the hole behind the attack (a la Brian Stein) then individual midfield players should take responsibility to do that job when required so that sustained pressure can be applied.

What do Luton supporters really want? We want to see a motivated, committed, organised team on the park who work as a unit, work for each other and work for us. I am not asking for the manager's or coaches head (yet), what I am asking is that they do their job and get the team to perform as they should.

What is the difference between us and most of the other teams in this division? We field a team of 11 individuals, they just field teams. Our players, man for man, are amongst the best in the division, but as a team.....

This situation needs sorting out now before it's too late. Forget the false dawn of the mini run, be honest, we could have lost all those games if Kelvin hadn't performed heroics or the opposition hadn't been so inept. Management, coaches and players, you all know what your jobs are, get out there and do them, earn those wages.

I feel a little bit better for that!

Derbyshire

PPS: Having said all that, most clubs fortunes go in cycles and the prospects for our club do not only depend on the players and the coaches. They also depend on the Government. If the KohlerDome gets the go ahead then our future looks good (sorry, nearly said the ex-MP word) otherwise we are dead.

PPS: I would like to buck the trend and back David Kohler and wish him all the best in getting the new ground built. He has put a lot of time and effort into the project and is the first chairman who has taken us anywhere near to getting a new ground. the club's future existence depends on it, and if he secures the future of the club I for on don't care if he makes a "few bob" out of it. Good luck David Kohler.

PPPS: I would like to finish on a positive note, again it seems we have a batch of talented youngsters coming through. Let's hope they are not put off appearing in the 1st team.

SHORT CUTS

FIND the missing links to connect the first word to the last, using the clues given on the left of the grid. The first word combined with the second gives the answer to the first clue. The second and third words combine to give the answer to the second clue, and so on.

LINKWORD

Head of the commission that investigated Kennedy's assassination	EARL
Actor best known for playing Alf Garnett	WARREN
Former Luton and Spurs defender	MITCHELL
Founder of a famous London cricket ground	THOMAS
Aristocrat who went missing in 1974	LORD
	LUCAN

Here's a nice little piece from one of the dailies. Not often you find the word 'famous' linked with the name Mitchell Thomas, is it?

William HILL HatterLeague

Update 2

We're back with the second update of the season. And after recent results, it all looks a bit grim for most of our managers. It looks like the best bet over the last few weeks would have been not to have a defence (a bit like the first team!), or at least to have had Steve Davis and Alan White (as soon as he was available) in your side, as these were the only ones not to have negative points in the period under review. In midfield Graham Alexander's brace of goals against Burnley and Paul McLaren's man of the match performance against York have elevated their positions to the top of the list, alongside the top-rated and top-priced Tony Thorpe. For this issue there are no new players available, as Brian Small has returned to Bolton and Chris Allen's signing is unlikely to be permanent. Additionally, we have not yet included Matthew Spring, as he is still not likely to be a regular in the side. So, here are the players points for the season (up to and including game 13, Gillingham at home):

<u>Code</u>	<u>Player</u>	<u>£</u>	<u>Pts</u>	<u>Code</u>	<u>Player</u>	<u>£</u>	<u>Pts</u>
<u>Goalkeepers</u>							
201	Ian Feuer	0.9 m	-12	203	Nathan Abbey	0.3 m	-13
202	Kelvin Davis	0.3 m	0				
<u>Defenders</u>							
211	Gavin McGowan	0.4 m	-18	215	Darren Patterson	0.6 m	-13
212	Julian James	0.4 m	11	216	Mitchell Thomas	0.4 m	-12
213	Marvin Johnson	0.5 m	-13	217	Richard Harvey	0.3 m	-14
214	Steve Davis	0.8 m	9	218	Alan White	0.5 m	5
<u>Midfielders</u>							
221	Graham Alexander	0.7 m	32	224	Sean Evers	0.3 m	2
222	Gary Waddock	0.6 m	11	225	Simon Davies	0.4 m	5
223	Paul McLaren	0.5 m	35	226	Paul Showler	0.5 m	0
<u>Strikers</u>							
231	Tony Thorpe	1.0 m	33	235	Stuart Douglas	0.5 m	1
232	David Oldfield	0.7 m	23	236	Liam George	0.2 m	1
233	Dwight Marshall	0.5 m	0	237	Kim Grant	0.2 m	0
234	Andrew Fotiadis	0.8 m	1	238	Phil Gray	0.8 m	0

In the overall scheme of things, team positions have changed little at the top and bottom ends of the table. The Manager of the Issue this time is Dave Pearson, who thereby secured top position, having won the award on 'random selection by computer' from David Trillwood (both managers have the same team — do they know something?). Also in the running for the award, but eliminated on countback, was Steve Lindsay. Hilary Williams and Mrs J.

Wurst, equal 2nd last issue have had a terrific run of results (not!), both adding precisely nothing to their scores over 6 games! Overall, with such dismal performances it's difficult to know who to pick out from the mid-table morass, so I won't bother. Instead, here are the top of the table positions.

<u>Pos</u>	<u>Team Name</u>	<u>Manager</u>	<u>Pts</u>
1	DERBYSHIRE 1968	Dave Pearson	70
2	THAMESLINK HATTERS	David Trillwood	65
3	VANISHING POINTS	Bobby Payne	63
4	LUTON 3 ARSENAL 2	Steve Lindsay	60
5	SCUM SPICE - DER, HOLIDAY TO TURKEY!	Terry Lennon	59
6=	HILARY'S HATTERS	Hilary Williams	53
6=	HE SCORES A GOAL, BUT NOT FOR US	Mrs J Wurst	53

Of the teams taking part, 48 have positive points totals, 29 have negative totals and Gav Allbones team, "THE MEN IN BLACK", have zero! The mathematicians amongst you will have noticed that this adds up to 78 teams, which is bad news for Maxine Whiting, who has remained bottom of the table and dropped one place to 78th, following the discovery of a mislaid entry. But, as editor, I am in no position to crow about this, struggling in 77th — the good news being I now know who is in my team, and Gavin McGowan has got to go! I'll have Alan White instead, please Russell. Anyway, the bottom end of the table looks like this:

74	ROGER BROWN'S CLOWNS	Roger Brown	-24
75	ALAN'S MAD HATTERS	Alan O'Dell	-26
76	THE ONLY WAY IS UP FC 97	Patrick Sammon	-27
77	INSIDE INFORMATION	Keith Hayward	-30
78	HARRY HASLAM LEGS ELEVEN	Maxine Whiting	-41

Following up our appeal in the last issue for Martin Blake to send a name for his team, we'll ask again, and this time add Tim Grose (the mislaid entry) who also didn't have a team name.

Remember that your HatterSwap is available, and all you have to do to make the one change available to you is drop us a line (at the usual address) with details of which players you want in and out, and remember to mention your HatterCode number. So far, only 8 managers have used this facility (9 if you count the editors plea above), although with the spending limits so tight, many of you probably can't work out how to improve your side — now you know how Lennie Lawrence feels, perhaps. That's all for now.

KFH/RB

The Sharpe End

Just as the draw was being made for the FA Cup first round, I was reading *Left Foot in the Grave?*, the latest book by former Charlton player and Torquay player-coach, Garry Nelson.

Of course, we were drawn away at Torquay in the 1996/97 FA Cup, beating them 0-1, so I was interested to see what Nelson would have to say about the game in his book, written in diary format.

Sadly it turns out to be none too complimentary.

The game is dealt with under the Saturday 16th November (1996) entry. Discussing the game itself, Nelson records early Torquay pressure: "Ian Feuer had to make three stunning saves to prevent us grabbing the psychological advantage with a lead that would have been no more than we deserved."

But Ceri Hughes scored five minutes before half-time: "A neat bringing of the ball down on the edge of the area, a training ground strike. Goal."

He concludes at the end of the game: "Essentially a level of craft above us, they killed the game off, working the ball into corners, winning free kicks, denying us possession. Over the 90 minutes Luton's (self) possession made them worthy winners."

However, "there was to be a sour aftertaste to the day", recalls Nelson, who took his family to a McDonalds after the game where, "abruptly, a bunch of Luton supporters were looming over our table in 'in your face' mode. 'One nil to the Luton Town' they sang with raucous unoriginality and mindless repetition."

"'Have to say you deserved it, lads' I said knowing that their crow crowed they'd proceed to withdraw. Wrong."

"'One nil to the Luton Town.'"

"I pointed out that having been there in person I was aware of the game's result. Like talking to.... Luton supporters. It was we who moved — to the establishment's upstairs floor. Unbelievably the louts followed us up to renew their one note serenade."

Nelson finally persuades them to leave, but ends up musing: "With supporters like that who needs enemies?"

Well done, chaps, another blow to the reputation.

★★★★★★★★

Continuing the literary theme, a new *Guide to Football Grounds* by John Ladd, published by Dial House, takes the usual route as suggested by its name. An uninspired layout and cover and no photographs make it look somewhat pricey at £8.99.

The Luton entry pays Mad some sort of back handed compliment: "Appears to be improving with age."

Discussing ground facilities and grub, the author declares "the pies are very stodgy. The tea comes in paper cups which fold in on themselves given the slightest pressure. One other very irritating habit is that if you ask for a chocolate bar and a cup of tea they tend to carry them in one hand which means you are faced with a mass of melted chocolate beneath the wrapper."

The entry signs off with a sarcastic comment about a body building centre in Luton which, claims the author, features a door sign advising, "Please push hard as the door is stiff!"

On a rating system out of 100, Kenilworth Road scores a respectable 69, beating the likes of Elland Road (68), Hull (60), Grimsby (43), Fulham (66), and West Ham (65). But THEY get 90, which seems to beat everyone other than Cambridge United who, bizarrely, top the rankings with 93.

One other small criticism, the book is unable to get the Luton Town first team strip colours right — a minor detail in which they confuse yellow with orange — but if it is worth doing at all, it's worth doing well, I'd have thought.

★★★★★★★★

Remember Andy Jukes — a young full back who was with Luton until a couple of seasons back? Well, he was forced out of the game with a back injury, but bounced back after a year to sign on for Isthmian League side Bedford Town.

I know this thanks to another book, *The Ultimate Guide to Non League Players* by Steve Whitney (£9.99) which makes for fascinating browsing and features plenty of Town alumni — like Brian Stein, who became player-manager of Baldock Town, defender Gary Simpson, who joined Aylesbury United, and Mike Small, who is tracked from Luton to Holland, Belgium, Greece — and Baldock!

Graham Sharpe

WSC

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Contributors include: Harry Pearson, Nick Hornby, Simon Kuper, Dave Hill and crooning legend Tony Christie, or his namesake. Foreword is by Roddy Doyle.

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