

MAD AS A HATTER!

THE LUTON TOWN FANZINE



Issue 48

Aug 98

GIVE US A DOME..... PLEASE!!



Hatters fans, in the midst of "a sea of orange" try to tell the Department for the Environment what we think of their idea of a "decision".

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THE LUTON TOWN FANZINE



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BRICKLAYERS ARMS, High Town Road, Luton.
THE CLUB SHOP, Luton Town FC, Kenilworth Road, Luton.

CONTRIBUTIONS PLEASE

Especially match reports. There are going to be another six issues of Mad! this season, with the next one to follow in as little as four weeks. We need you to help fill the space on these pages. So, if you would like to send any cuttings, articles, match reports, letters, cartoons, photos, whatever, get them in the post to us to arrive by July 24th. The address is MAAH, 38 Twigden Court, Mount Pleasant Road, Luton, LU3 2RL.

EDITORIAL

First thing to do is apologise for the late arrival of this issue of Mad, which has been beset with production difficulties — none of which are attributable to the printer — editorial holidays and illness being the main culprits. Sorry about that.



With the season having started with a win, and a spot of giant-killing in the newly renamed Worthington Cup, there could be some reason for optimism, but the defeat at Reading has brought us back down to earth. The biggest problem looks like being goal-scoring yet again, with injuries running a close second. Rumour has it that Paul Showler will be fit by Christmas — but in which year?



Moving on to more important issues, those of us listening to Three Counties Radio on Thursday 20th August were far from delighted that Len Elson of FAST was the first to break the news (and gloat) that the KohlerDome proposals had been given the thumbs down by the Government. He successfully overlooked the fact that the Inspector had refuted all of the objections raised by local residents, and by gloating so much, revealed that FAST and SAD really are just a bunch of NIMBYs. But the interim decision is that the stadium can't proceed because widening of the M1 has been deferred for reconsideration. If the plan is turned down outright, it is conceivable that the M1 widening could be back on the agenda in a year or two, but plans for a stadium would be back to square one. It would be far better to give the go-ahead to a stadium with a reduced initial capacity, and allow increases in capacity as time goes on and congestion issues are addressed or disproved.

It may not be directly relevant, but I'm sure I won't be the only one to have wondered how motorway widening was not crucial to Reading's lovely Madejski Stadium, or to new stadia at Sunderland, Bolton, Middlesbrough and Stoke (none of which have great public transport links), yet is so important here in Luton. It might be worth considering that the alternative sites mentioned for a new ground (like Ridgmont, or Milton Keynes) would surely result in many more people travelling by car and using the M1, than the Junction 10 site would. But why am I telling you this, when it is a Minister who will be making the decision. All we can do now is wait. Yet again.



Finally, some bad news. When you bought this issue, you will not have realised that you were hearing the seller's plaintive cry of "Mad as a Hatter! Only 50p", for the last time. But don't panic, we're not taking the fanzine away from you. However, it is my sad duty to announce that from issue 49, the cover price of Mad will increase to a whopping 60p. Yep, an outrageous 20% rise, which even outstrips the hike in the price of the programme. Still, it's our first increase in 8 years. I wonder what LTFC will be using as a defence of its own 12.5% increase??

BLIMEY - I'VE POLLED!

You should know the format by now. You buy the first issue of the season, you read (or skip past) the editorial and you get to this page. Same poll, same categories, same style — so we might as well get on with it.

Firstly, we managed to hold a prize draw — even though the editor did forget (again) to leave a space for name and address on the voting form (although this year I did try to remind him). However, the winning entry did contain a name and address, so a prize of some description will be winging it's way to Stuart Clarkson of Luton in the near future.

Before I go on, I'd like to take the opportunity to have a go at the joker (some might use the word "comedian" (although "stupid arse" is probably more apt)) who decided to answer every category with "Roger Wash". I'm sorry, but I have better things to do with my time than waste it pissing about with entries like this. In future, if you're going to waste 26p of your money, don't waste it sending rubbish to us, please. Anyway, rant over, on with the results.

Best Town Player David Oldfield

What a nice leaving present — with Skippy polling 40% of the vote. "For his versatility, 100% effort at all times and cracking goals," summed up what was said about him. For the third year running, Steve Davis was runner-up, with a quarter of the vote, and Rory Allen was a very close third. However, it would be fair to say that if there was a category for 'Best Town Player over the last two months of the season', Glory Allen would have stormed it. Marvin got his usual solitary vote, although this year he only managed to tie with Happy Harry.

Best Young Player Sean Evers

Sean (or "Shaun" as one correspondent called him) Evers won by a landslide, with just under 60% of the vote. "Is an ideal replacement for Waddock with pace and more attacking ability". Not wishing to be nasty, but he only needs an ounce to have more attacking ability than Waddock. But, alas, Evers is also "probably the next to be sold". Matthew Spring was way behind in second, with Kelvin Davis third. Also mentions for Liam George, Macca, Alan White and (hilariously) Happy Harry and Trevor Peake.

Best Town Performance Grimsby Town (a) 1-0

Due to our dismal home form last season, it came as no surprise that an away performance won this category. I seem to recall saying once that we never win at Grimsby. Oh well, you can't be right all the time. "Great result", "great celebrations" and "not bad fish and chips either" all led to there being "light at the end of the tunnel" in our push for survival. Second was the Easter Monday —oops, sorry — Tuesday night match against Chesterfield at home with half the number of votes the Grimsby game polled. Other games that got more than a

single mention were Walsall (a), WBA (a), and the second half performances against Northampton (h) and Grimsby (h).

Worst Town Performance October 4th, 1997.

Only polled two thirds of the vote, which makes me wonder how the other third could possibly think of another game in which we played as badly. Rather than use snatch quotes from the entries, I'm going to say a few words about that black day last October.

I've seen us play badly before, but that first half against the scum was the worst I have ever seen us perform. By 3.30 pm, I was embarrassed and almost ashamed to be wearing my Town shirt. The non-efforts of 10 players (and the wanker in the dug-out) was a disgrace to the club, the town, and the supporters (I exclude Macca from this because he was the only person to show some local derby pride, fight and passion in the first half). I don't care about injuries or anything else — there is simply no excuse for the way we played. October 4th 1997 is a date we won't forget in a hurry.

And as for playing 'Always look on the bright side of life' at the end — cheers, LTFC, talk about kicking someone when they're down. However, one good thing about the day was the fact that they were 4-0 up, celebrating their first derby victory in 10 years, had huge police protection and their coaches were directly outside the turnstiles — yet still 2,000 scummers were completely scared shitless of us. Bunch of wankers. (IS THIS SOMETHING TO BE PROUD OF? Ed)

Anyway, of the other games that received votes in this category, all of them were played at Kenny Road. Fairly accurate conclusion of our (shite) home form last year, don't you think.

All said, some of our older readers may feel that the worst Town performance ever might be December 3rd 1966, when we lost 8-1 to Lincoln City, the only one of the 92 teams below us that day.

BEST TOWN GOAL Tony Thorpe, West Brom (a)

After such a torrid season, it's hard to imagine we scored that many good goals, but this category saw 17 different nominations — including a general one for "they were all gems". Thorpe's 40 yarder at The Hawthorns came out on top with 20% of the vote, and Alexander's first against Burnley (h) was in second spot. In joint third position was Oldfield's strike against Chesterfield (h), Marshall's effort at Walsall and — obviously — Marvin's fantastic turn and strike, sorry, deflection on Valentine's Day — "Because of who it was and where it was". Half of Rory Allen's goals received nominations, along with a solitary mention for "Oldfield — can't remember who against — but it was dribble, dribble, dummy, dummy, dribble, dribble, goal." Oh yes — I'd forgotten about that one! Sadly, my stunner against the scum on Good Friday didn't even receive one vote.

Crystal Balls 6

Yes, it's back again, the column that is to the art of prediction what Terry Butcher is to ballet dancing. This year's gaze into the future has been written with the expert guidance of the acknowledged expert Kevin "Eh, look" Keegan, fresh from his highly successful punditry stint in the World Cup. Kevin exclusively predicts that the coming season will see David Kohler spend millions on new players — all funded by the sale of Marvin Johnson to Real Madrid.

August

Mohammed Al Fayed buys Barnsley FC, claiming that Danny Wilson is still their manager and that Sheffield Wednesday are actually being managed by a bunch of Scottish one-hit wonders. This year's proposed new Charity Shield "Spot the Englishman" competition is abandoned for being too difficult. Watford manager Graham Taylor is distraught after his team lose their opening match 6-0. "Striker Jason Lee not**** is", he declares confusedly to the dressing room mirror.

September 6th

Glenn Hoddle announces his latest England side. Sports minister Tony Banks commends the continued exclusion of Paul Gascoigne. "This is a shining example that there is no room in this game for overweight, loudmouthed, arrogant, oafish yobs."

September 7th

Tony Banks announces the immediate dismissal of David Mellor as head of the Football Task Force. Mohammed Al Fayed blames Fulham's position at the bottom of Division 2 on an elaborate conspiracy theory involving the Queen, MI5, Jimmy Hill and Kevin Keegan's hairdresser. Watford's Jason Lee is injured after crashing his car into next door's hedge while attempting to back into his garage.

October

David Beckham's wedding to Posh Spice is postponed as his dress is not ready in time. Rumours that the dressmaker is now on crutches are stressed to be purely coincidental. There is a major international outcry after an incident at a post-match party in Norway where singer Seal provided the entertainment until being clubbed to death by the Norwegian players.

November

Watford remain bottom of Division One, and rumours of the worsening state of Graham Taylor's mental health are confirmed as he pays £50,000 for Bontcho Guentchev. Chris Sutton is again omitted from Glenn Hoddle's latest England squad despite being Europe's leading scorer and giving his entire salary to charity. Alan Shearer, meanwhile, remains captain after Hoddle accepts his explanation that a freak gust of wind caused his elbow to remove Peter Schmeichel's teeth.

December

Peter Beardsley and Ian Dowie are sacked as Fulham's youth coaching team after parents complain of their sons waking up with nightmares. Brentford announce that all their players are available for transfer after Chairman/manager Ron Noades decides to play himself instead. "I'm up to the job, and anyway, it was too hard to pick the team because they all

looked the same to me", he says.

January

Luton extend their lead to 20 points and advance to the next round of the FA Cup after a 7-0 win over Premiership leaders Manchester United. Alex Ferguson blames the referee, the weather, the Spice Girls and Harriet Harman for the defeat. It later emerges that Kevin Keegan had put £5,000 on United to win the Cup the day before the match. Graeme Souness takes over at Barnsley.

February

Aspiring actor Eric Cantona wins an Oscar for playing the title role in a bio-pic of Bruce Lee. Continuing the trend foe footballers taking up acting, Paul Showler is criticised by Lennie Lawrence for preparing far too thoroughly for his lead role in the forthcoming remake of "The Invisible Man", while Slaven Bilic is rumoured to be in the frame for the new "Lady Chatterley's Lover". "He's a natural — there's nobody better at going down and faking", said the director, Ivor Squint.

March

The postponement of yet another film deal is announced. Stan Collymore was due to star in the latest Rocky film, but pulled out at the last minute when it was explained to him that the boxing scenes would be filmed with men, not women. 50 goal striker The Reverend Chris Sutton is still out of the latest England squad. "I'm not being vindictive", insists Glenn Hoddle. When asked for a reason for the omission, Hoddle mutters that Sutton's fingernails are too dirty. Terry Westley takes over at relegation-threatened Barnsley.

April

Barnsley fans unveil their new chant of "It's just like watching San Marino". Ron Atkinson is revealed as the new presenter of the National Lottery. A BBC spokesman explained, "This comes naturally to him. After all, he is someone who has spent his entire life talking balls".

May

Luton win Division Two by 25 points, swapping places with Watford, who finish with no points. Dennis Bergkamp wins the Premiership, being the first person ever to finish a season with more points than any of the teams, while Luton lift the FA Cup, beating Middlesbrough in the final. Paul Gascoigne ends the match in tears. It later becomes clear that his home beer cellar was raided by thieves during the final.

So, there we have it, another eventful season in store. This may be conjecture, but one thing is for certain — we are due a good match at Chesterfield this time round.

Graham Johnson

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Mad as a Hatter! is available on subscription at £6.00 for the next seven issues (overseas surface mail £7.35, air mail rates available on request) from the usual address. Cheques payable to *Mad as a Hatter!* Please do not send cash by post as it rarely arrives.

Luton Reject(ed)?

So, we're going to give David Oldfield some stick when he comes back to Kenilworth Road with Stoke, aren't we? Making sure he hears a chorus or two of 'LUTON REJECT' at the start of the game, booing his every touch of the ball (until we get bored - after about five minutes); and jumping to feet in a particularly hurt and angry manner, arms a'flailing, when he sticks a couple of goals past us.

It's almost inevitable, and a little bit sad.

We want our players to feel the same way about the club that we do, but fact is that (especially since the Bosman ruling) football players have no reason to feel loyalty towards their clubs. They play for whoever is prepared to pay them the most. Every young football player, if they're any good, will be encouraged to look at the opportunities of a career as a Journeyman - playing season by season, always on the lookout for the best new short term contract.

Not long ago I would have argued that they are doing themselves a disservice; that the traditional ex-footballers career, in a pub or shop in the bosom of the grateful community of which they loyally served during their playing days, is put at risk by their never staying at any one club very long. However, this is plainly not relevant for top footballers these days. They are simply making hay while the sun shines; looking forward, not to an alternative career but to a post-footballing life in a big house in the country or on the golf course, maybe earning pin money with a few appearances as a Sky pundit. Obviously the size of the house, the golf handicap and the TV appearance money will depend on how much they were paid during their playing days. Although the Bosman situation will undoubtedly help players in the higher echelons, the effect on players from the lower leagues is possibly less assured. I can only guess, as it seems the whole football world is guessing, at the eventual effects of the Bosman rule. I believe, with foreigners squeezing out places for English players in the Premiership, that it will have a detrimental effect on England's chances in the not too distant future - but there you go. Still, I digress.

The point is that, like fans of every other club, we really cannot expect our current crop of players to be loyal to Luton Town. If we understand this then maybe we can check the knee-jerk reaction of feeling hurt and angry when ex-Hatters return to Luton to play for their new employers.

We might also look at the way we treat our current team. It's not always that easy. One of the favourite phrases whilst Motson commentates on his beloved Liverpool is "they're used to great football here at Anfield". Unfortunately (for us) there are many fans here at Kenilworth Road who were also brought up on much better than this - surely it's no surprise that we appear impatient and disillusioned at players who, ten years ago, wouldn't have been

worthy to clean Ricky Hill's boots. I have often shouted in frustration at individual players and spend way too long during the season watching the match with my head in my hands. Around the ground the old "boo-boy" versus "get behind the lads" conflict has caused hundreds of arguments in the past few years - and has sadly helped make the Luton support something of a disharmonious bunch.

Other than trying to respect the point of view of the bloke behind or in front, we could also look at the messages - the vibes if you like - that we're sending to our players on the pitch. Take the example of Luton Town v Stoke City this season (having not examined the fixture list in any detail, I have no idea when this match is yet). Luton players will hear that the fans apparently hate their Player of the Year from the season before - knowing that they will be treated to the same abuse if and when they leave and come back. They will also know that the fans will not shirk from pointing out mistakes that they make personally during the match.

And if after all that they decide, as we want them to decide, that their lot in life is to play their hearts out for the greater good of Luton Town FC — how do we repay them? Marvin Johnson's testimonial was graced by just over 3000 fans. OK, so he's not the greatest player ever to play in orange, blue and white — but what does the attendance tell you about the loyalty of the stay away fans?

If player loyalty ever comes back in style, which given the uncertainty over the Bosman ruling (and the contractual manoeuvring to counter it) is no impossibility, then the fans have to help create an atmosphere in which the players feel wanted. If and when the new stadium is built at J10, then that will obviously boost morale tremendously. But if and when that comes about it will be almost impossible not to be swayed in the tide of euphoria. Hatters fans would be better off looking at their mindset right now..... in our seasons of discontent.

Luton Town have had terrible problems in the past couple of seasons winning at home. Undoubtedly the main cause is that the side has been continually weakened since David Kohler (he with ambition aplenty but no money) took over. But, knowing the nature of the board, the fans should really look at the way we treat Luton Town's current playing staff. We don't have to revert to Hero Worship (although this should still be seen as a duty of the Junior Hatters), but maybe it isn't a bad idea to let the players know that we're in sympathy.

Now, I'm sure that many of you consumers have been pleasantly surprised that electric appliances are now sold with plug included - and this article, utilising the pun, is no exception. Buy me book. "Kenilworth Sunset?", £8.99 at all good bookshops (in the area, hopefully) now.

Tim Kingston

Best Goal Against

Graham Anthony, Carlisle (h)

Although I predicted earlier last season that Walsall's John Hodge would win this, "that cracking free-kick by that Carlisle bloke," stole the show with over 50% of the vote. "We all clapped it so we must have been impressed." Hodge was second with 33% of the votes polled — "why does he keep doing this to us?", but "he will surely never catch another volley like that one". Only two other goals got nominated, Stallard's first at Wycombe and Alan White's cracking header for Northampton on Boxing day. Also receiving a vote was "any by 'no good at this level' Barry Hayles".

Best Opponents

Bristol Rovers

To be fair, this award should go to their reserve side, because of "having half their team suspended". The team that inspired the panto report in the Accuracy on Sunday won with just under a quarter of the vote. Second was moneybags Fulham for their 4-1 victory at Kenny Road, and one vote further behind was Grimsby, "a team who played the right way like us — a rarity in the hoof and rush league. They gave us four points, excellent fish and chips and a good night in the Leaking Boot." Also receiving a handful of votes were "ourselves", Bryan Small, and "Lennie Lawrence's 'tactics'".

Worst Opponents

Southend United

For the second year running there has been a team so poor that the scum have been denied a win in this category. This season, with 28% of the vote, I think the Shrimpers are worthy winners, "if they can't beat a keeper with one arm, they must be crap", because "they gave him no shots to save". With less than half of the votes Sarfend got, were the scum "as ever", they "hoofed and fouled their way to the championship". Also figuring were Walsall, Plymouth and "Gillingham and Brentford, or did you mean football teams?"

Good Referee

Paul Durkin/Mick Fletcher

"I really do not know why you persevere with this question, there are none", was the comment from one respondent — and I'm beginning to wonder the same thing as I struggle to sort out a winner. This year it's a joint award for Paul Durkin (Torquay (h)) and Mick Fletcher who officiated the last game of the season at home to Carlisle, as they stood locked on 2 votes apiece! However, votes for these two were way overshadowed by votes for "?", "??", "???" and even "????". My personal choice in this category is referee no. 2 in the Good Friday fanzine derby for allowing my 'controversial' goal to stand — meaning he had to take all kinds of abuse from his mates on the scum team.

Worst Referee

Mark Halsey, Brentford (a)

Another difficult category to judge, but Mr Halsey was a clear winner (with 3 votes!) for "using his common sense in the circumstances" etc — Aspinall should have walked" for that horrendous challenge on Kelvin Davis. Other comments in

this category included, "the referee at Watford last season (I'm still bitter!!)", "take your pick — they all entered into the spirit of playing shite at Kenilworth Road" and Terry Heilbron (scum (h)) "for not abandoning the match". My choice in this category is referee no. 1 on Good Friday, who officiated for 55 minutes (that is, the first half), and then dubiously played in the second half for the scummers. Was he taking the "homer" tag a bit too literally?

Best Opposing Player

Ade Akinbiyi

The former Gillingham striker ran our defence ragged at Priestfield last year (was it a fox?), and won with a quarter of the vote. Second was John Hodge and in third place was Barry "not worth the gamble" Hayles — "I'm really glad we couldn't afford him!" Also receiving votes were Kim Grant: "as crap for Millwall as he was for us, no need to mark him", Peschisolido in the Coca Cola Cup (2nd Leg) "though he was playing against Sean Evers at full back", "that girl singer before the Bristol Rovers game" and, strangely, The Cat.

Worst Opposing Player

Jason Lee

What is it with the scum and shit centre-forwards? "Devon White, where are you?" was the plea from one respondent voting for Pineapple Head. Kim Grant was joint second — "that open goal he missed at Kenilworth Road proved how crap he was" — alongside Walsall's Roger Boli and Didier Tholot — "sad, cheating, garlic-eating gits". Other players receiving votes were Andy Dibble, Tommy Mooney, Andy Hessenthaler, Bryan Small, Us, W*tf*rd, and "those Brentford thugs". An honorary vote here as well for Devon White — "we didn't play against him but he is still shite. Plying his 'skills' at Shrewsbury last I heard." There were 22 nominations in this category.

Part 2 of 'Blimey — I've Polled!' (if I ever get round to writing it) will appear in the next issue. Before I sign off, looking at the other categories, I'll give you a clue about who is destined to win 'Idiot of the Season' — his initials are LL.

Chris Lennon

TUESDAY, OR NOT TUESDAY?

Whilst we continue with the results of our poll in the next issue, you may remember that we asked you to answer yes or no to the question "Should Bank Holiday matches be played on Monday afternoons (as opposed to Tuesday evenings)?" The response to this was something of a surprise in that 95% of respondents answered YES. So, at last we have some totally unscientific proof that LTFC have got it wrong about our preferences in this respect. Whether this will have any effect on the scheduling of fixtures (i.e. York City at home this season), we rather doubt. But at least LTFC can no longer blame the fans. Perhaps instead they could look at who first initiated the idea of playing such matches on Tuesday evenings — a certain D. Pleat if memory serves.

THE PRICE OF LOVE

As one of the more dedicated Luton followers, I am proud to say that I went to every match last season. However, it is only when I looked back through my programmes that I realised just how much it cost me to follow the Town around the country. Here is a breakdown of the year, where I have been, and just how much it hit my wallet. N.B. As a main stand season ticket holder, each home match is worth £13.

August

Home: Southend United, Colchester United, Oldham Athletic.
Away: Blackpool, Colchester United, Fulham.
Total tickets: £60.00 Total travel: £27.50

September

Home: Millwall, West Brom, Wrexham.
Away: Northampton Town, AFC Bournemouth, Bristol City.
Total tickets: £85.25 Total travel: £34.50

October

Home: Scum, Plymouth Argyle, Brentford.
Away: Wigan Athletic, Carlisle United.
Total tickets: £60.00 Total travel: £28.00

November

Home: Burnley, Preston North End, Torquay United, Walsall.
Away: Wycombe Wanderers, York City.
Total tickets: £74.75 Total travel: £19.00

December

Home: Gillingham, Northampton Town, Bristol Rovers.
Away: Chesterfield, Millwall.
Total tickets: £57.00 Total travel: £16.00

January

Home: Blackpool, Brentford, Fulham, AFC Bournemouth.
Away: Southend United, Oldham Athletic, Fulham.
Total tickets: £71.00 Total travel: £25.00

February

Home: Bristol City, Wigan Athletic.
Away: Wrexham, Scum, AFC Bournemouth, Plymouth Argyle.
Total tickets: £70.50 Total travel: £42.50

March

Home: Wycombe Wanderers, Grimsby Town.
Away: Preston North End, Burnley, Walsall.
Total tickets: £57.00 Total travel: £25.50

April

Home: York City, Chesterfield.
Away: Gillingham, Bristol Rovers, Brentford.
Total tickets: £53.00 Total travel: £24.50

May

Home: Carlisle United
Total tickets: £13.00 Total travel: £0.00

The accountants and mathematicians amongst you will have noticed that this brings my total expenditure to £854. Add to that 55 programmes at an average price of £1.60 and a new Town shirt at £39.99 and you soon get much closer to the £1,000 mark. That is almost 10% of my salary! And what do I have to show for it? Well, nothing really. I did my best, and all I saw was a handful of good performances, the departure of Ian Feuer and Tony Thorpe and much misery along the way. Let's hope that the season ahead returns us to our glory days rather than continuing the plunge into obscurity.

Ian A.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

OR, HOW NOT TO WIN FRIENDS AND GET GOOD PUBLICITY

Interesting to note that it was possible to gain admission to the Coventry friendly alone for payment of a mere £10. But at the Arsenal friendly, Luton Town season ticket holders were being asked to pay the full £15 at the ticket office. Meanwhile, at the Oak Road end of the ground, safely out of sight for most Town fans who couldn't make it to both matches, Arsenal fans were allowed to get in for £5 less than a Town fan. Great Move, LTFC, another winner in the PR department!

Town's first pre-season friendly was away to Harrow Borough on Tuesday July 21st. On Wednesday 22nd, Three Counties Radio were keen to report the outcome of this match, and obviously got their information from LTFC in time to give a brief report on their morning sport bulletins from 6.35 am. Didn't they? Well, no. The match only got a mention on the 8.35 am bulletin, and this was after our local radio station had phoned the Harrow Borough chairman at home to ask him the result.

Following on from this, the club photo call for the newspapers was arranged for Friday 31st July. Was anything organised for the local radio station, so that they could do some interviews to preview the season? No. And were the "local" TV companies (Anglia TV and Look East) invited to the photocall? We'll let you guess.

I think what I'm getting at here is that publicity (which is a combination of free and paid advertising) is something that has to be worked at, and that opportunities should never be overlooked or shunned. If the price of a few postage stamps helps to promote interest and get a dozen extra customers through the turnstiles it will represent a very hefty profit on the investment. Or perhaps LTFC are increasingly keen to be seen as a small club, rather than one with any sort of ambition. In many ways, the three items highlighted here offer some suggestion of how our club views its supporters, the media, and ultimately, itself.

F. Onslow

FUTURE STARS – PART 1

Having been a regular watcher of the youth team for the past two seasons, I have decided to respond to the editor's invitation for articles on the Town's young stars. In a four part series, I will look at all the players under 21 years of age that your average first team supporter may not have seen, and assess their chances of one day becoming a first team star, starting with:

GOALKEEPERS

1 Nathan Abbey

Nathan, aged 20, made his first team debut early last season in the Coca Cola Cup home match against Colchester. He has spent the majority of the last two seasons playing reserve team football, but now, after St Feuer's departure, is officially Luton's number two goalkeeper. Nathan was sent out on loan to Woking at the end of last season to get some valuable experience, and Lennie Lawrence has high hopes for him in the future. He is tall, a capable shot-stopper and not bad in the air. Should prove a reliable deputy to Kelvin, but not yet ready for a long spell in the team.

2 Nick Webb

Nick was given his professional contract last summer, but unfortunately had to sit out much of the season due to a serious injury. Nick performed heroics in Luton's FA Youth Cup run in 1996/97, including making some great saves, and scoring a penalty in the shoot-out at Shitarage Road, as Luton triumphed over the scum in the quarter finals. Reserve team appearances should be shared between Nick and Nathan Abbey next season, but Webby's tremendous shot-stopping ability should ensure that he has a good future ahead of him at Kenilworth Road.

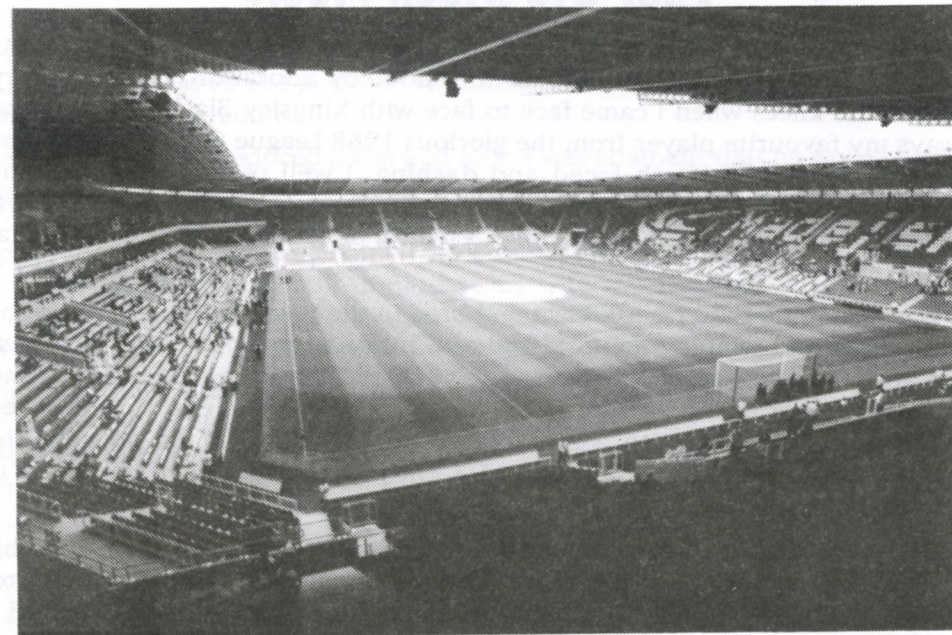
3 Daniel Tate

Another goalkeeper who was plagued by injury last season. Two successive dislocated shoulders after Christmas ruled Daniel out of action for six months, but the 17 year-old should be fit to return to the youth team this season. Daniel is a small, but very confident and agile goalkeeper, who could be given a professional contract at the end of the season.

4 Scott Ward

Stood in whilst Tate was injured last season, and helped the hatters youth team to league and Cup glory for the second successive season. Tall 'keeper who commands his area well, and is difficult to beat in a one-on-one situation. Good prospect for the future, although he may have to wait a few years to get his chance.

Patrick Johnson



Above, a view of the new Madejski (try getting a spell-checker to accept that) Stadium at Reading. You never know, one day.....

Below, Steve Davis in the thick of the attacking action at the same ground.



That Old Black Magic

I recently met one of my heroes in the flesh for the first time. I thought that I was too old and mature to succumb to schoolboy adoration, but I felt very weak at the knees when I came face to face with Kingsley Black. Kingsley was always my favourite player from the glorious 1988 League Cup winning team. He was so youthful, fresh faced and dashing. I well remember him being grilled by Gary Newbon or whoever on TV after the match and he came across as Every Mother's Dream — polite, modest and, of course, supremely gifted as a footballer.

He was a genuine Hatter hero, born and bred in the town, graduating from the youth team and winning a cup medal and international caps with effortless ease at the tender age of 19. I always felt some affiliation with him as he was in the same year as my brother at the Luton VIth Form College. How I wished I shared a classroom with a bona fide hero. I had to make do with the guitarist from the Luton punk band UK DK (Decay - geddit?) who used to write the lyrics on the back of his A level History notebook.

Kingsley was an ever present during our glory years of the late 1980's, his mazy dribbling skills and crossing ability led to Dowie and Harford etc. scoring plenty of goals. But he wasn't just a creator of goals and possessed a venomous shot which enabled him to score 26 league goals for us, including the never to be forgotten winner at the Baseball Ground that kept us up on the last day of the season in 1990. Not for nothing was he called the Jewel in Luton's Crown by the national press. Inevitably for any Luton player with a modicum of skill, he was sold amid much wailing and gnashing of teeth in September 1991 to Nottingham Forest for £1.5 million, not bad value for a player who had cost us nothing. Kingsley received no stick for going, he deserved his chance with a so called "big club" and had given the Hatters good service as well as a healthy financial profit. Admiration for Kingsley didn't wane even when he made a habit of scoring against us at Kenilworth Road while playing for Forest.

Because I stood on the terraces cheering his every move I always felt I knew him. The bond was further cemented when my sister's best friend, Fiona, started going out with Kingsley. Again I secretly yearned for Heather, my sister, to go out with him or at least one of his team-mates, although of course none compared with the brainy, twinkle toed Kingsley who never had a hair out of place. Dating a footballer would mean free tickets to games, hospitality in the Directors lounge and an insiders knowledge of the club — such as finding out exactly what Ray Harford did say to Steve Foster at half time, or precisely how mad Mick Kennedy was. Anyway, my furtive fantasies came to naught as Kingsley married Fiona and not Heather.

Over the years I got to know him vicariously. Heather, through Fiona, now

Mrs Black, would always update me with his news and was always promising to organise a meeting but never did, although we came very close on a couple of occasions. I remember very well being invited to a New Years Eve party at Kingsley's house in the posh bit of Luton, but then my sister couldn't go and therefore neither could I.

In 1991 my wife produced a son and heir, I was adamant that he would have to be called Kingsley but Mrs Craig was equally certain that he would not have such a splendid christian name. In fact she must have had second sight, for a mere 4 weeks after Cameron's (the compromise name) birth Kingsley was transferred to Forest. I still think that my wife was irrational over the choice of name, after all, Kingsley is quite normal compared to my other favourites from that era..... Chukwuemeka or Radomir!

However, after all these years I finally managed to arrange a meeting courtesy of Fiona, and on Saturday 22nd March after the exciting 2-2 draw between Luton and Grimsby I met Fiona and Kingsley outside the club's main entrance — which is a bit of a contradiction in terms because typically of Luton it is less than grand and is squeezed in under the road bridge at the end of the car park at the top of Oak Road, not exactly the marble halls of Highbury or the Edwardian elegance of Villa Park. There is an attempt at landscaping by the entrance but both the entrance and the greenery were utterly overshadowed by the bulk of our beloved Chairman's Land Rover, complete with personalised number plate DAK 2 — the modesty of the man knows no bounds! However, even expensive personalised number plates bear no relationship to the ego and vanity of the man who names an entire football stadium after himself. Incidentally, why is the New Stand still so called? Surely we could come up with a decent title and name it in memory of Joe Payne, Syd Owen or Eric Morecambe?

I felt very embarrassed standing outside the entrance surrounded by middle aged men recently released from the care in the Community scheme and young girls who read the Luton Town programme rather than *Smash Hits* all clutching autograph books. At least I had the excuse of having the aforementioned 6 year-old Cameron with me and could legitimately say the autograph and photograph were not for me but for him! I had a shock at first because Fiona emerged not from the plush opulence of the directors box (sic) but from the Oak Road end as players wives are only given tickets for the away end! So much for the glamour of football. Nor was Fiona allowed into the inner sanctum of the Joe Payne lounge, she had to stay in the car park with Cameron and I and the other hangers on. Kingsley appeared looking very smart in his Grimsby tracksuit, he was very popular with all the car park dwellers but luckily their attention was diverted to Ricky Hill and Rob Johnson who were also wandering around the car park (it wouldn't have surprised me if these two Luton legends had to pay for their tickets!)

To my shame I felt quite tongue tied and completely failed to ask him any of

the Motsonesque questions I had been storing up over the years, so I made do with passing him Cameron's blue and black ball (the one with the slow puncture) to him; getting Kingsley to sign a 1990 programme with him on the cover (v Spurs, a 0-0 draw during which, as I rather tactlessly reminded him, he had been substituted by Lars Elstrup (after whom, incidentally, I wanted to name my second son — again bitterly opposed by my wife which was just as well after his desertion of the club and embracing of the Heavenly Flower sect)), and with making Fiona take a photograph of the three of us — with Cameron piping up that the second Grimsby goal was offside as tactlessly as his father. Kingsley said he was disappointed not to get on, having been a non playing substitute on the day, but that he was very happy with the polite reception he got from the Luton supporters when warming up. He gave me a firm handshake and disappeared with Fiona, while I was left with the wistful thought that if we hadn't sold him in 1991 we would still be in the top division, and with Cameron tugging at my sleeve asking "Who is Kingsley Black?"

Murray Craig

Good Value??

February 1998. Luton Town sell Tony Thorpe to Fulham for £800,000. In justifying this, Lennie Lawrence says "Players don't go for more than a million in this Division any more, and I think Thorpey will be the last to go for such a high price."

May 1998. Gillingham sell Ade Akinbiyi to Bristol City for £1.2 million.

June 1998. Fulham sell Tony Thorpe (remember him?) to Bristol City for £1 million.

So, players don't go for more than a million any more. Eh Lennie?

K.F.H.

BACK ISSUES

Back issues once again available. We have sold out of issues 10, 11, 22, 24, and 35 to 38. Issue 1 is free, 2 to 34 will cost you 25p plus SAE per copy and all others remain at 50p plus SAE each. When requesting back issues please include a stamped addressed envelope with sufficient postage (second class is 31p for one issue). Cheques payable to *Mad as a Hatter!* Please do not send cash by post as it rarely arrives.

Get Your Kit On!

It's not often that I am tempted to rush out and buy the new Luton kit on the day they go on sale but I have to say that this season that is exactly what I did. Ever since that dreaded ill-fitting DMF hooped kit I have given new replica kits a miss. Of course the price of them has never been too appealing either, me being a bit of a skinflint....

The final straw for me — kitwise — was the appalling choice of yellow for the now defunct previous away kit. I don't know too many Luton fans who will miss seeing that abomination. Who on earth in the Luton Town Marketing department gave permission for that anyhow? Doesn't every loyal fan know that yellow (albeit a rather dirtier version) has been long the traditional colour of those lovely (*sic*) bastards Twatford! I must say I bought the replica Toffs tops (the white and the orange) of recent years because they have been so much better than the current kits and even I didn't mind paying a bit extra for a quality garment.

It was apparent from a friend's recent visit to the club shop that the people there don't have a great grasp of marketing or, indeed, insight into the fact that Luton fans are not likely to buy a kit that resembles our fiercest and least liked rivals. (Oh God, I suppose our new local rivals will be Wycombe now that the scummers are elsewhere..... how depressing.) When asked how the Yellow kit had sold the answer was "Very well". On further questioning the assistant admitted it had sold "Nowhere near as many as the orange and black striped kit", (something I am sure every fan could have told them before it was launched).

And so the geniuses at the marketing dept. have finally got their act in order by going back to the old Seventies/Eighties traditional colour of glorious, hideous orange. Lovely! I must admit that the 100% polyester finish does make it a bit abrasive when you first put it on. It's like wearing a shirt made from that bottom unfriendly tracing-paper like bog-roll. I hope the players have a more skin friendly version. The side 'Aeration' also gives the middle-aged amongst us chance to shun a society taboo and show off our excessive love handles!

And so to the new season when I and indeed all my regular football going mates will all be sporting the new tasteful orange. There is even some talk of us trying to emulate the Dutch fans by dressing completely in orange including hats and wigs but I think that the fear of looking a complete arse may win out over that one. Mind you, I think if there is some solidarity and the whole of the Kenilworth Road end dressed like that we could pull it off. How does everyone feel about that? Lets give it a go next game.....

Lastly, I am wondering if we will wear the new kit at every away game no matter how inappropriate it is, like we did with the yellow one. Who can

forget the sight of Luton and Southend both wearing almost the same yellow and blue kits last year. I bet when we play Blackpool away this season the Ref. will have similar fun and games.

As for the next home kit, how about plain white shirts, jet black shorts and plain white socks??? My 1972 bobble hat would be back in fashion. Then again.....

Andy Whiting



By KEVIN MOSELEY

GEORGE Graham was the manager who first recognised the raw talent of John Hartson and last night his protege returned to haunt him.

Just before his sacking as Arsenal manager Graham raised a few eyebrows by paying £2m for the young Luton striker.

A few years on with the frustration of walk-on parts at Highbury as stand-in for any absence of Ian Wright and Dennis Bergkamp behind him, Hartson produced his 22nd goal of the season at Upton Park.

It left Graham and his Luton side chasing the game - a pursuit made more desperate by Leeds gifting a second to Samassi Abou.

Hartson.

TEDDY SHERINGHAM'S Manchester United hell hit new depths when he was named in the worst Reds team of all time, voted by a panel of hardcore United fans. The other 10? Jim Leighton, Viv Anderson, Ian Ure, Mark Higgins, Mal Donaghy, Ralph Milne, George Graham, Danny Wallace, Jordi Cruyff and Alan Brazil.

Manchester United fans never appreciate the good things in life. How else could they include big Mal in their worst ever team.

Looks like Kevin Moseley is getting a bit carried away here. In trying to rectify his mistake about who spotted Johnny Hartson, he gets both player and manager to Kenilworth Road.

SHORT CUTS

In The Footsteps Of Alexander The Great
BBC2 9.30pm ★★ ★★

This is the story of a 20,000-mile journey in search of one of the greatest figures in history, a man whose legend has been told across the world for more than 2,000 years. Until now, no one has traced Alexander the Great's epic route from Macedonia in northern Greece to the Far East. By retracing Alexander's journey on the ground, historian Michael Wood hopes to untangle facts from legend. What we get is a fantastic travelogue and, indeed, after an arduous coastal journey, Wood discovers something new about Alexander's psyche. DS

"Greatest figures in history..."

"by retracing Alexander's journey on the ground" — see, it was even written in legend that Alexander's corners were shit.

TOWN TRAVELS

A new season is already convincingly upon us, and the travelling has already started with the delightful trips to Wycombe, where we once again saw the true meaning of terms like "All ticket match" and "sold out". The former being used to justify us buying tickets in advance, and the latter being what several Town fans were told at Kenilworth Road the day before the match. Sad to report then, that it was possible to gain entrance to the ground by paying cash on the turnstiles as late as 5 minutes before kick-off. We've also had a trip to the brand new Madejski Stadium in Reading. Nice ground, but a good place not to drive to!

On August Bank Holiday Monday (are you paying attention LTFC?) Wigan Athletic's Springfield Park is the destination for Town fans. The ground hasn't changed in the slightest, but there are plans for a new ground elsewhere in the town so there may not be many more opportunities to see a Town match here. For pubs, the Springfield Hotel, Springfield Road is very adjacent to the ground, but will get crowded, and apparently the Latics Social Club will let in non members for a mere 50p, but only before the match. The curious might like to visit the Orwell at Wigan Pier (on Wallgate), although it gets busy in the summer.

The first away match of September is at Cae Ras, better known to us as the Racecourse Ground, Wrexham. The trouble with going to this part of Wales on a Tuesday night is that on top of it being a sod of a journey, many of the pubs don't open until 7 pm — really helpful for a 7.30 kick off. The Plas Coch, near the ground, should be open and it may be possible to get into the Turf Hotel, situated outside the home end.

The final match to be covered this issue is at Blackpool on September, which I understand could be the first weekend of the Illuminations. Exciting, eh? Anyone who can't find a pub in Blackpool in the tail end of the holiday season simply deserves to be shot. Finding a decent one may be a bit more tricky, and for those who don't want to be drinking in a giant, holidaymakers rip-off joint, might like to try the Empress Hotel on Exchange Street, a Thwaites pub which is possibly the best of the bunch.

For those who want to do their planning in advance, or would like to get better directions to the grounds than I provide in this column, a couple of publications are available. The Football Fans Guide should have a new edition out about now, and is probably the most comprehensive guide of it's type, although not the first one to be seen in most bookshops. Alternatively, for information specifically on the Second Division, you could try The Hitch Hikers Guide to Division Two, produced by the Notts County fanzine *No More Pie In The Sky*, and available from Ivan Bainbridge, 39 Dunvegan Drive, Rise Park, Nottingham, NG5 5DX, for £1 plus SAE.

K.F.H.

RAVING MAD!!!

Dear "Mad",

I won't give my name or address for fear of reprisals. I feel I had to write in the vain hope that the person concerned in this letter will realise that it's him who I am talking about, and hopefully change his ways dramatically.

It all started a couple of weeks before the away game with THEM, he was asked if he would like to accompany his best mate on holiday to Malta, which would mean missing the most important game of the season. He went to Malta — he would rather drink and go on the pull than watch his beloved Luton. Now, don't get me wrong, I'm not against drinking or the fairer sex, and after some of the performances on the pitch last season I would have done the same, BUT NOT THAT GAME. There are some things in life which are sacred.

The very same person was also seen walking the High Street of a Surrey town sporting an Manchester City shirt (could have been much worse, it might have been red).

To top it all, only last week he arrived home with some new clothes, a yellow Ben Sherman and a pair of black Levi's.

What next? Buying that bald queer git's records or agreeing that the Loofa Bliff stand on Soccer AM looks good?

So, yes you know who you are, so shape up or ship out. Change your ways before it's too late. We're watching you.

A non.

Dear "Mad",

Please send me Hatters Matters for the next twelve months. I want to be among the first to know that we have signed Del Piero, Zidane and Laurie Sheffield.

Dave Suttle,

Blackheath, London.

Dear "Mad",

Now that crap season is over, big changes have to be made over the summer for that never to happen again. The way forward is to get a playmaker in the midfield and a striker that is capable of scoring 20 goals a season. Also get rid of the players who just don't give a shit about the club. I also think that the chairman should change the coaching situation. I believe the way forward is to have a general manager who does all the contracts, paperwork etc, and a coach to just coach the first team. It can work!

Also, I was very disappointed in Lennie Lawrence's attitude towards the fans this season. He is an experienced manager and he knows that if the team is not getting the results then the manager will get the stick. It's part of the game. Slagging off the team that won the Littlewoods Cup deserved all the abuse that was thrown at him. It is sad that he is offering David Oldfield a coaching job to stop him leaving to join Northampton. What has the bloke achieved? Got us relegated in 1995/96,

lost in play-offs in 1996/97, survive relegation in 1997/98 — not good enough! I think John Moore or Bruce Rioch would be ideal.

Next season will be hard with Man City, Reading and Fulham to make a real impact but I think a play-off place is alright. Hopefully we can sign Rory Allen permanently, but I won't hold my breath. Good luck to Gary Waddock — he may not be the most skilful player in the world but he had commitment and gave his best. Let's all hope for a good 1998/99 season.

Dale Williams,

Bletchley.

Dear "Mad",

Mid-July — and as another pre-season draws to a close, the outlook at Kenilworth Road has a depressing and gloomy familiarity about it.

Yet again (following a season of 'serious under-achievement') Lennie's promised end of term clear out fails to materialise, w lose three of our most experienced players for nothing (including, yet again, our Player of the Year) and so far at least, appear to have done bugger all to replace them.

Am I alone in being thoroughly bemused by our 'strategy', which has, for many years now, involved selling our best players (often on the very eve of the season) and refusing to contemplate their replacement until we are well into the season and languishing near or at the bottom? Yes, I understand the problems that we have at Kenilworth Road — the lack of cash, the impact of Bosman and, I might add, the inability of our manager to invest wisely (Davies, Gray, etc.).

Having said that, I struggle to understand how Mr Kohler and his chums expect us to stump up for season tickets when they themselves show so little in the way of faith, vision or ambition. Last season, they were very fortunate — many of us were unaware that 96/97 had been an 'over-achievement', and paid our money assuming that automatic promotion would be a formality. Unless some significant acquisitions have been made between now and August 8th, I really do fear for the worst.

OK, so James has been replaced (assuming that McGowan can stay fit and suspension free) and the optimists among us might argue that although Paddy is no longer with us (ironically leaving at a time when he had found real form and fitness) we have sufficient cover in the middle — well, Marvin anyway!! But three desperate weaknesses remain — up front we are left with two crooked has-beens and a bunch of 'promising' but as yet unproven youngsters (although this has to be the year that Foti comes good), we have no strength in midfield as cover for or a compliment to Macca (wouldn't it be nice to find a player who can win headers, shoot somewhere in the general vicinity of the goal and boss the midfield), and even if Showler manages to show his face this season we could do with a consistent and penetrating left winger.

Oh well, maybe Kohler and Co will have delivered by the time you read this — bloody well hope so!! Enjoy (endure?) the season. Keep the faith.

Nottingham Hatter

Dear "Mad",
Nothing to do with football really, but neither were most of the matches I saw last season, and a bit of culture never goes amiss:

An unlucky young lady from Luton
Eating soup, choked and died on a futon
Said her husband, called Neil,
"Man that's surreal"

Then he went back to sleep on his crouton.

If John Hegley is reading this, be warned I am highly litigious, also handy with a baseball bat, so no copying. I am however always receptive to offers of money.

K.T. Francis,
Luton.

Dear "Mad",
Just a quick thought on the World Cup. For Ince and Batty, read Waddock and McLaren. You can't play two players like that and expect to do well. Even Lawrence and Hoddle eventually realized that. I'm not surprised it was them who missed the penalties — they're not ball players are they?

One good thing came out of it all. I've had this cat for about 6 years without really giving it a name. She's got one now — Zanetti. I think David Beckham should be canonized.

Cymru am byth.
Blackbelt Jones,
Luton.

Dear "Mad",
I'm sure that many readers have spent time pondering as to the reason for W*tf*rd's freak season last year — and, judging by what happened at Portsmouth on the opening day, winning with an own goal, it looks set to continue. Well, I think I have the answer.

Anyone who has made the trek to the away end at Watford will have noticed the power station with its tall chimney stacks.

Several years ago, I worked as a cable-runner and spent a couple of months in that power station fitting the cables for the fire alarm system. On my breaks I would explore the site, and on one occasion when the chimneys were covered in ladders and scaffolding I went to the top. The view was splendid, save for one thing — you could see all of Vicarage Road.

The temptation was too much to resist, and so I did what all Luton fans would love to do — I pissed on Watford from a great height.

Now, although my prostate and bladder were stronger in those day, I never actually hit the stadium, but symbolically I achieved my target. This fiendish act was repeated several times.

Imagine my horror then, when on going to the game last season I found that the power station had been demolished — the curse had been lifted — hence the freak

season that occurred.

I've been thinking of ways to get things back to normal, and at last I've got it. Would anyone be interested in joining me in consuming a lot of beer/lager and renting a hot-air balloon?

Geoff Henman (aged 46'/.4)
Luton.

SHORT CUTS

It might only be a stage play, but rearrange the following words to make a relevant sentence: 'wankers', 'sad', 'straws', 'at' and 'clutching'.

These days, Lady Luck is not just smiling on the Watford boss, she is smothering him with kisses and inviting him back for coffee.

Brentford bombarded Watford only for Richard Johnson's glorious strike to send the Hornets back to the top of Division Two and leave the luckless Bees next to bottom.

Giant goalkeeper Michael Pollitt is sick of Watford after making his Brentford debut on loan from Notts County.

Pollitt said: "Watford are a remarkable side. I played against them when I was on loan at Oldham earlier in the season and we murdered them but lost 2-1.

"And here, we absolutely battered them but again it was the same score. They only had one shot in the second



JOHNSON..

Watford lucky? Surely not.....

What a blinder!

Much to my amazement, I found myself mentioned in a London stage play this summer! The script for *Elton John's Glasses* suggests that during the 1984 FA Cup final between Watford and Everton, Watford goalkeeper Steve Sherwood was blinded at a crucial moment by the reflection off his chairman's glasses. In the ensuing confusion I headed the ball to score a decisive goal for Everton and the game was won. I would call that poetic justice! •



Elton John, raise your glasses

takeover consortium.

□ CHAMPIONS Arsenal have checked out Norwegian international midfielder Vidar Riseth, who has impressed for Austrian club LASK Linz.

→ TOTTENHAM will listen

So, Vidar has impressed for LASK Linz, but he didn't in the World Cup, did he?

THE ONLY 'HOME GAME' OF THE SEASON

Swindon Town Reserves v Luton Town Reserves — Monday 27th April, 1998

Four and a half years since my last review of this fixture (*MAAH* issue 18), and still sighing with relief after those agonising final minutes at Brentford that had finally seen Town to safety, on Monday evening I pulled on my Hatters scarf and strolled the half a mile or so to a deserted County Ground to witness the Town reserves in action against their counterparts from Swindon.

After the two dates against W*tf*rd, this fixture has rapidly become the one that I scan the lists for first each season, as it provides the only opportunity each year for me to witness a Hatters side in action without first facing the perils of the British motorway network. To just be able to leave home half an hour before kick off without chasing about, phoning for tickets, and leaving the house for eight hours or so, is almost a joy in itself! This fixture, insignificant as it may appear, really is the only 'home game' of the season for the unofficial Luton Town FC Supporters Club (Swindon branch)!

So, what has happened to both clubs in the years since my last review? Swindon have gone up, down, down and up. Luton have just gone down. The lack of money in the coffers of both clubs seems more apparent than ever, both teams have disillusioned supporters praying for a change at the helm, and both have a lot to learn about basic PR. Swindon announced in March that the price of every seat in the ground was to go up overnight by £2.50, despite being in an appalling run of form that has seen them fall from 1st in early November to 17th as I write. Luton meanwhile sold their prize asset, and only natural goalscorer, to a fellow Division 2 side whilst in the middle of a relegation struggle that had many of us calculating which 3rd Division grounds we'd be able to cross off our list of 92 come August. At least that nightmare has passed for another season! Both clubs too are considering moving to new, out of town, stadia, although certainly the KohlerDome now seems to have its foundations built more in fantasy than reality.

Yet, despite all this general gloom, the loyal supporters of all struggling Nationwide clubs still travel the length of the country every week hoping for those elusive victories that make it all seem worthwhile. With this in mind, I knew that on that Monday night, whatever the score, I'd get far more pleasure from watching the Hatters reserves chasing about an empty stadium, than I ever would sitting comfortably in my own front room, having Manchester United spoon-fed to me yet again, by a Sky Sports channel that neglects to tell you that the huge chasm that has developed in British football over recent seasons is largely of their own making.

And so onto the game itself. A quick glance at the teamsheet showed that six embers of both sides had experienced life in the first team at some stage of the season, so a reasonable standard could be expected. I was particularly keen to see how Andrew Fotiadis and Liam George both played, as they will no doubt have a more prominent role to play in first team affairs next season. The match began evenly, before the Hatters seized the initiative on nine minutes when Marvin Johnson fired in from close range after good work from George down the Luton left. After a couple of scares at the back, Terry Sweeney came close to extending the lead on the half hour with a long range effort, and then moments later Fotiadis saw his delicate chip sail just over. Just before the break, George deservedly put Luton two goals clear after Fotiadis and Sweeney had both seen their close range efforts blocked by the Swindon keeper Steve Mildenhall.

The second half saw a resurgent Swindon side begin to dominate proceedings, and it was no

surprise when their French midfielder Phillipe Cuervo pulled a goal back on the hour after shrugging off Marvin's challenge. With twenty minutes left, the Hatters were reduced to ten men when Chris Willmott, who had previously excelled at the back, was dismissed for a professional foul on Swindon striker Chris Hay. Steve Finney fired the free kick just over Nathan Abbey's goal, and then moments later Hay hit the post as the home side began to make their extra man count in the slippery conditions. With eight minutes left, Gary Elkins fired Swindon level with a long range effort that totally bemused Abbey in the Town goal. Swindon were clearly now the more likely winners, so Luton reshuffled, with Clifford Akurang brought on up front to help Fotiadis, who had been playing as a lone front man since the dismissal of Willmott. It proved to be an inspired move. With two minutes left, Swindon were also reduced to ten men when Adam Willis was dismissed for persistent infringement, and then moments later Luton seized a shock lead when Akurang prodded home at the far post after an intricate corner routine and a cross by Sweeney. There was still time for Hay to miss a glorious opportunity to make it three all, before Akurang claimed his second in stoppage time, firing home the rebound after Fotiadis had seen his effort well blocked by Mildenhall.

After the disappointment and frustration that all Hatters have felt this season, it was a pleasure to see a performance from a Town side without having to worry about the threat of relegation, or chasing back to the car to find out how all the strugglers have fared, or to discover that W*tf*rd have won again. I calculate that the 21 first team games I have attended so far this season have cost me around £600 or, put another way, £150 a win. On nights like this, however, when you can see the next generation of Town stars emerging, and witness the real pleasure that they gained from snatching a last gasp win, somehow it all seems worthwhile.

I walked home glad that I'd left Sky and Manchester United behind for the evening, and delighted that I'd seen Luton's young side complete a successful nights work. After all, I couldn't possibly have missed the only home game of the season, could I?

Hatters team: Abbey, Birch, Thornhill, Davies, Willmott, Johnson, Lough, Sweeney, George, Fotiadis, Showler. Subs: McKoy, Akurang, Howe.

Scorers: Johnson (9 mins) 0-1, George (39 mins) 0-2, Cuervo (60 mins) 1-2, Elkins (82 mins) 2-2, Akurang (89 mins) 2-3, Akurang (90 mins) 2-4.

Sent-off: Willmott (Luton) 70 mins, Willis (Swindon) 88 mins.

Will Sherwood, Swindon Hatter

The text files

Seen on teletext a few months ago:

"Plymouth have been fined £6000 and warned to their future conduct by the Football Association after admitting operating a no-win lottery"

Hmm, so much for Mick Jones' team selections last season, but will the FA take action on Argyle's dodgy fundraising activities as well?

K.F.H.

SCRIBESCORNER

In association with Stella Artois (and lots of it!)

So, did you hear me on 3CR two Saturdays ago? Excellent stuff! Although I must be the only person to say the phrase 'Chiltern Radio' on the station. Sorry Croftie, I didn't mean to — it just sort of slipped out.



Nice to see three Luton old boys in France over the summer — namely Rot Wegerle, Juergen Sommer and Vidar Riseth (oh how right you were to sell him so cheaply Lennie). However, will you PLEASE CHECK YOUR FACTS (basic rule of journalism) *Accuracy on Sunday* — our hapless Bulgar Bontcho Guentchev was not playing in the World Cup. Guentchev and Ginchev — who WAS in the Bulgarian squad — are not the same player. Next time, at least try and get it right AoS.



While on the subject of the World Cup, thanks Beckham.



The big question of the issue is: was Lennie only interested in signing a Scottish striker from Rangers because his first name was quite similar to 'Allen'?



Not wishing to be downcast at the start of a new season, but with players leaving, no new signings (except McGowan, and now Bacque), a player coach appointed from within and Lawrence still at the helm, what ambitions does this club have for the coming campaign?



"Mitchell will be 85% player and 15% coach." I'm sorry Mr Lawrence, but when has Mitchell ever been 85% player?



Questions to ask Mr Lawrence: 1. If 2nd Division players don't go for more than we received for Thorpe, then how come Fulham managed to get £200,000 extra for him when they sold him four months later?

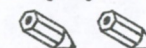


I hope Liam George doesn't have too successful a season — I don't think I can take any more 'By George - He's done it' headlines in the local press (after 'Bacque future' — I hope you're listening Dave). The line has been exhausted already — and before the season even started. No, I'm not being serious really — good luck Liam.

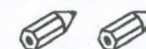


Rumour has it the LTFC end-of-season video for last year is going to be produced with Tin Tin Out's last release — 'Here's Where The Story Ends' — as the soundtrack:

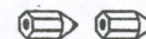
"It's a little souvenir,
of a terrible year,
that makes my eyes feel sore....."



Sadly, my footballing success with Mad didn't rub off onto the college 5-a-side team. The Harlow Globetrotters - our pre-entry journalists group team - had a great record: drew 2, lost 4, won 0 (impressive, don't you think?). After conceding 29 goals in our first game (we did score 23 in reply), we eventually claimed a moral victory in our penultimate game — even though we did concede a tragic equaliser with 5 seconds left on the clock.



So, I see Oldham have switched our Easter Fixture with them to Good Friday. Well, thanks very much — do they not know that Luton already play a game every Good Friday? When are we supposed to play our traditional fanzine derby match now?



It's great being back in Luton living at home again — I had begun to forget what a proper meal during the week was! All I have to do now is get a job on a paper and I'll be sorted. So, if there's any newspaper editors reading this who have a reporter's vacancy.....



Finally, in answer to that burning question regarding issue 47 — no, I (unfortunately) wasn't.

Chris Lennon

GRIMSVILLE

Is Bristol (Rovers) grim? The pubs are grim, the ground is a bloody joke and grim. Bristol Parkway station is the pits, and grim. Luton's attack, midfield and defence were grim (the sheep-shagger's tackle on James was also grim). The pitch has more bumps than there are speed humps in the whole of flaming England — in summary the pitch is grim as well. All in all they should make the Memorial Ground part of Wales, it's that grim. So, is Bristol Rovers grim?

YES!!

Highbury Hatter

European champion Liam George seen in action at Reading. Congratulations to Liam for his triumphant summer, particularly for scoring the winning penalty against Germany in a penalty shoot-out.



CAN YOU MANAGE?

With the World Cup over, thoughts have turned to the new season and the unexpected appointment, announced during the summer, of a new Chief Operating Officer at Luton Town. I managed to track the new Luton supremo down at his plush new office suite in Harpenden (so that's where the money from the Thorpe sale went) and asked him how he saw the new season panning out.

An interview with Laurence Lennison by Declan McCabe

Me: Welcome to Luton, Mr Lennison.

LL: This is Harpenden. Oh, I see, you mean Luton Town. Ha, ha, good one. Please, call me Laurence. I'm a great believer in communicating with the fans as an equal, Derek. None of this talking down to you. Please, ask your little questions.

Me: Er, right. Were you surprised to get the job?

LL: No, my uncle.... er, the Chairman told me he was impressed by my track record. He feels I have the experience needed to run this wonderful little club in the next millennium.

Me: Yet most of your career has been spent in the lower leagues, hasn't it?

LL: That's right, Donald. My, you fanzine chappies do carry out some research after all.

Me: So, how does this help you lead Luton?

LL: Perhaps we're going to the lower leagues.

Me: WHAT?

LL: Calm yourself, Desmond, that was just my little joke. I thought you fanzine people liked a little humour. No, unc.... David told me that not everyone gets the breaks and starts managing at Middlesbrough or Liverpool. Some of us get stuck with the minnows.

Me: Like Haywood Saprissa?

LL: Er, yes.

Me: Relegated the season you were in charge.

LL: We had a severe injury crisis.

Me: Or Watford Park Rangers, who went out of business when you got them relegated?

LL: As with most things in Watford, they were on their last legs when I took over.

Me: And West Greenford, relegated when you were in charge for the last three months of the season?

LL: I was appointed too late to save them.

Me: They were top, six points clear with games in hand when you took over.

LL: Well, you've certainly done your homework, Daniel. Ha, ha, ha, that's what I admire about you fanzine writers. You always go for the throat. I think that's marvellous.

Me: And Saint Giles City.....?

LL: Look, I'm a busy man. Can we change the subject? I was part of the England set-up at the World Cup this year.

Me: You were?

LL: Aha, something about e that you didn't know, Dean.

Me: What were your responsibilities?

LL: Aggression Repression Consultant. I drilled it into the lads that if some dirty foreigner smacks into you and sends you sprawling face down, don't lash out blindly and kick him.

Me: Right, so if only that pillock Beck.....

LL: Count to three first, I said to them.

Me: Then what?

LL: Well, hopefully by then the lad will have calmed down or his assailant has moved away.

Me: Moving on, any new signings this summer?

LL: Oh lots. United are after Yorke.....

Me: I meant at Luton.

LL: Ah well, money's a bit tight. I mean, it's not as if we're likely to get a million quid for any of the current squad, so we are looking to the established pros like Phil Gray, Dwight Marshall and Graham Alexander, players the fans can really get behind, to show the youngsters how to do it.

Me: So a play-off place is out of the question?

LL: Well, Dwaine, football's a funny old game, as someone once said, and it's not over until the fat lady sings.

Me: Sorry?

LL: That's OK, Dayle.

Me: So we can look forward to an exciting season?

LL: I think there will be plenty of goals at Kenilworth Road this season, Dave. I can hardly wait.

Me: Yes, but will Luton be scoring most of them?

LL: Oh, look at the time. See yourself out please, Dirk. Thank you. Bye.

Declan McCabe

Special Offer?

Once more I am baffled by an LTFC idea/policy/decision. Having received the mailshot detailing the 2 for 1 £15 ticket for the 'prestige' friendlies against Arsenal and Coventry, I proceeded to telephone the Ticket Office for what I thought would be a simple clarification.

My query was that I could only attend one of the games due to work commitments, and to check that I could gain admission. the price — £7.50, perhaps £10. NO! £15 was the answer — "The ticket applies to both games." I'm sorry, but £15 for one pre-season friendly is a total travesty. How many other fans are in the same position as me and declined the offer? Can LTFC really afford all the potential lost revenue — in this day and age? Obviously so!

For me, I'll have to satisfy myself with the game at Harrow Borough on July 21st (10 minutes walk from home) until the real action begins — Oxford beware!

On the subject of money, I hope the consequences of not stumping enough money to give David Oldfield a deal he could accept are not as costly as when David Preece left, ie. a relegation season..... Think on!

The Harrow Hatter

PS: How on earth did Vidar make France '98?

SHORT CUTS

Now, please pray silence for a major understatement.

By BOB HAYES
Watford 1 Luton 1

MARVIN JOHNSON is no Alan Shearer.
But, just now, he would

POLICING

Watford is no Brixton, but it does have its problems. Jenny Cuffe reports on a special police unit that is genuinely disgusted

Scouring out the scum

No comment required.

Lambeth-born Harrison started his career at Watford and a return to familiar surroundings could decide the battle for his signature in the Kenilworth Road club's favour.

On Gerry Harrison, who we tried to sign from Burnley in the summer. If he began his career at the scum, how can LTFC be classed as familiar surroundings??

GRAHAM TAYLOR has got Watford on the march again and his followers believe he can lead them all the way back to the Premiership Promised Land.

What? BACK to the Premiership promised land? When were they ever in it in the first place?

RAY WILKINS is backing £800,000 new boy Tony Thorpe to revive Fulham's promotion push.

Thorpe, 24, has completed his move from Luton and makes his debut at Blackpool tomorrow.

Coach Wilkins said: "Tony will get us where we are aiming. He could shine in the First Division."

Brentford winger **LEE HARVEY**, 31, has been forced to retire because of a knee injury.

"Shine in the First Division".
Maybe, but not with Fulham.

A BREAK FROM THE NORM

Every summer I realise what a sad person I am. After a couple of weeks of the close season I begin missing Luton Town. I look back longingly at the past season and rush to buy the *Luton News* for any news of the Hatters. I suffer withdrawal symptoms. It just goes to show what a shallow life I've got! Or is it that however much I despise what's happening at the club, I'm destined for a life of following it?

If you're all going to Ely, clap your hands?

ⓄⓄⓄⓄⓄⓄⓄⓄ

Am I the only one who is disappointed that the Scunthorpe friendly was cancelled? I was looking forward to making my first visit to Glanford Park!

ⓄⓄⓄⓄⓄⓄⓄⓄ

Vidar Riseth, who was such a waste of space with the Hatters, was a World Cup star with Norway. At least one paper linked him with a £3.5 million move to Arsenal.

What next? Gavin Johnson joining Barcelona for a world record £30 million, or Johnny Vilstrup securing a multi million pound sponsorship deal with Danepak!

ⓄⓄⓄⓄⓄⓄⓄⓄ

The fixture computer has been reasonably kind to us this year with only 2 midweek away matches — Wrexham and Man City — meaning I'll miss my Tuesday night at Deepdale!

But there's a gap in the fixture list now that 'they' are not on it. I can't get excited about "local derbies" against Northampton or Wycombe. Can you?

ⓄⓄⓄⓄⓄⓄⓄⓄ

How can you see us doing this season? I'm optimistic but have the feeling that mid-table and mediocrity will be apt words. The league is easily the strongest of the 3 years we have been in it, with the likes of Manchester City, Stoke and Fulham.

Our squad is weaker after losing Patterson, Oldfield and Waddock. At the time of writing only Gavin McGowan, who hardly set the world alight during his loans, has signed.

I've still got no confidence in Lawrence and he should go if we're not in the top six by Christmas.

I think we're going to have to get used to this lower league fun.

Norm

The William Hill HatterLeague 4

The third HatterLeague season, 1997/98, had 78 managers vying for the title, the runners-up prizes and the wooden spoon. So, once again, these 78 — and anyone else who fancies being a part of the premier fanzine fantasy football competition — are invited to try and win season number four.

Roll of honour:

1995/96	Karen Maxfield
1996/97	Simon Alcock
1997/98	Dave Pearson
1998/99	?????

Fancy joining this list? If the answer is yes, then read on.

You can't get rid of us easily, can you. We've returned (again) with some different features and a few more changes to the basic format. Once again, (and seeing as they are our sponsors) the HatterLeague prizes are courtesy of William Hill — by the way of betting vouchers to the value of £50 for the first prize, £25 second and £15 third prize.

We've changed slightly how the prizes are to be awarded. The first and second prizes will go to the top 2 teams, but the third prize will be contested by managers finishing in the next four places (3rd to 6th) in a play-off tournament. Details of this will follow in future HatterLeague Updates (once we've figured it out).

While on the subject of prizes — if anyone can name a football fanzine that offers better prizes than our own competition does, then we'd love to know. However, we think you'd be hard pushed to find one — and remember, you could become a millionaire by winning the HatterLeague (*unlikely, but not altogether impossible*).

Obviously, the aim of the game is to finish top of the league, and the way to do this is to gain the most points. To help you gather points this season, an extra player has been allowed in your team — giving you six to choose — and you will also have a choice of formation, unlike last year.

The manager of the issue bonus stays, but the points system is once again slightly different:

Goals:	+3 points for a goal scored by a striker
	+4 points for a goal scored by a midfielder
	+5 points for a goal scored by a defender
	+10 points for a goal scored by a goalkeeper
	+5 point bonus to any player scoring a hat-trick
	+1 additional points if the team scored against were in the automatic promotion places (ie. top two) at the time of the match

Assists:	Awarded to the last Town player to touch the ball before the
----------	--

goalscorer — and only if he had direct involvement in setting up the goal.

+1 point if it is a striker

+2 points if it is a midfielder

+3 points if it is a defender or goalkeeper

Defence: Awarded to goalkeepers or defenders
+5 points for a clean sheet (playing whole match)
+3 points for a clean sheet (playing 30 minutes or more but not the whole match)
+2 points for a clean sheet (playing less than 30 minutes)
-1 point for every goal conceded while on the field
-2 additional points if the team scoring the goal was in the relegation zone (bottom 4) at the time of the match

Performance: +5 points for Town Man of the Match (selected by Dave Flett of the Luton News)

Discipline: -1 point for receiving a booking
-4 points for being sent-off

Appearances: -1 point for each defender or goalkeeper who does not play
+1 point for a player playing 45 minutes or more
+1 extra point for a player (excluding goalkeepers) who plays the full 90 minutes

Managers +10 points for the team awarded Manager of the Issue, each issue

So, as you can see, a slightly more technical points system this year. Just to make it crystal clear:

If Manchester City were top of the table when we played them, and Phil Gray scored against them, he would get 3 points for a striker's goal, and another point because the team he scored against were in a promotion place. In the same way, if Kelvin Davis lets in a goal against Macclesfield, who were fourth from bottom, Kelvin would lose 1 point for the goal and a further 2 because of where Macclesfield were in the league — making -3 points.

For the assists, direct involvement is classed as a cross, or flick-on etc. If we capitalised on a back-pass and scored from it (*this is a Fantasy league*) the last Town player to touch the ball before the ball was passed back would not be credited with the assist because he didn't have direct involvement with the goal.

The Manager of the Issue, like last year, is the HatterLeague manager who has gained the most points per issue. If there is a tie a countback system comes

into play and if that cannot separate the tied teams then we leave it to the computer to randomly choose the winner. The points deadline for the award will be two weeks before the issue of *Mad* is due out.

With William Hill now backing the HatterLeague, the money available in the players fund is a whopping £4 million. Six players have to be purchased — but you have a choice in which formation to play. You must pick 1 goalkeeper, 2 defenders, 1 midfielder and 1 striker, but your sixth player can be either a midfielder or a striker.

The HatterSix players available are:

<u>Code</u>	<u>Player</u>	<u>£</u>	<u>Code</u>	<u>Player</u>	<u>£</u>
<u>Goalkeepers</u>					
301	Kelvin Davis	0.7 m	302	Nathan Abbey	0.3 m
<u>Defenders</u>					
311	Gavin McGowan	0.5 m	314	Marvin Johnson	0.6 m
312	Julian James	0.4 m	315	Steve Davis	0.8 m
313	Mitchell Thomas	0.6 m	316	Alan White	0.6 m
<u>Midfielders</u>					
321	Sean Evers	0.6 m	324	Paul McLaren	0.6 m
322	Matthew Spring	0.5 m	325	Paul Showler	0.5 m
323	Graham Alexander	0.7 m	326	Simon Davies	0.4 m
<u>Strikers</u>					
331	Phil Gray	0.5 m	334	Andrew Fotiadis	0.4 m
332	Stuart Douglas	0.4 m	335	Liam George	0.5 m
333	Herve Bacque	0.7 m	336	Dwight Marshall	0.5 m

HATTERLEAGUE TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

- 1 All entries must be sent in on the managers form included in this issue. We will also accept photocopies, or handwritten forms in the same layout.
- 2 One loose 26p (first class) stamp per form must be included with your completed application form, to cover the cost of your confirmation.
- 3 Only one entry per person. There is no limit to the number of applications per household.
- 4 Non inclusion or value of players will not be discussed, although we have tried to include all Town players who might figure throughout the season.
- 5 Transfers of players are allowed through the HatterSwap transfer market. You will receive a transfer form through the post and you can use your HatterSwap at anytime until the transfer deadline of March 26, 1999.
- 6 Team selections must include one goalkeeper, two defenders, one midfielder, and one striker, and a sixth player who may be a midfielder or striker. Your total team value must not exceed £4 million. Teams that do not meet the selection criteria will not be accepted
- 7 Players scores and a managers update will appear in each issue of *Mad* as a *Hatter!*
- 8 Only Nationwide League Division Two matches count toward the HatterLeague.
- 9 All statistics for the compilation of points will be taken from the *Luton News*.
- 10 Team names MUST NOT exceed 35 characters in length, and any deemed offensive will not be accepted.
- 11 Entries must be sent to the address stated and should be received by 18th September 1998. The game will start on 19th September 1998 and end on 17th April 1999.
- 12 Letters of confirmation will be sent as soon as possible after receipt of entry.

- 13 Incomplete, illegible or late applications will not be accepted. We can take no responsibility for late entries. Proof of postage is not proof of receipt.
- 14 In the event that the manager of the issue is decided by computer (if there is a tie), our decision is final and no complaints regarding the selection process will be investigated.
- 15 The HatterLeague 4 Champion 1998/99 will be the manager with highest number of points at the end of the season. The winner will receive a £50 William Hill betting voucher, and runner-up and play-off winner will receive prizes to be decided at a later date. In the event of a tie, a count-back system will operate to decide the winner. The editor's decision is absolutely final.
- 16 The winner will be notified in writing, and results published in the last issue of the 1998/99 season.
- 17 Complaints about the HatterLeague (excluding those regarding term 15) will be investigated, but we shall not be obliged to enter into any correspondence. In any event, the Editor's decision is final.
- 18 We reserve the right to refuse participation or disqualify any entry which fails to comply with the rules, or to cancel the competition at any time in the event of circumstances arising beyond our control.
- 19 No individual will be excluded from entering, but the Editor, sales staff and others directly involved in *Mad as a Hatter!* or administration of the game, and staff of William Hill and their families will not be able to claim the prize in the event of winning the game (although may be awarded the Manager of the Issue bonus). In that event the prize will be awarded to the next placed manager in the HatterLeague. If the winner of any prize is under 18 years of age, an alternative will be offered.
- 20 "HatterLeague", "HatterSix", and "HatterSwap", are copyrighted to *Mad as a Hatter!* and the originator of the game, and may not be reproduced without prior permission. (*Got it right at last!!*)

HATTERLEAGUE 4 ENTRY FORM

Manager..... Age.....

Address.....

Team Name.....

Pos	Code	Player	Price
GK			
D			
D			
M			
M/S			
S			
Total Value			

Please enclose one 26p stamp per entry form and send completed entry to HatterLeague 3, 38 Twigden Court, Mount Pleasant Road, Luton, LU3 2RL.

The Sharpe End

As I've mentioned before, my day job involves trying to offer odds for some of the strangest eventualities punters can think of.

The request from a gentleman in Athens was a real cracker — "I would like to know whether I could place a bet concerning the corpse site of Alexander the Great (323 BC)" wrote George Christeas.

I wrote back, "I'm afraid my knowledge of Alexander the Great is insufficient to offer you the odds you have requested. However, I have inside information that the corpse of one Alexander the Less than Great (1997-8) can be observed at Kenilworth Road on alternate Saturdays throughout the English football season."



What IS mid-table mediocrity? Can any Luton town fan remember this phenomenon, which is apparently the lot of so many teams.

There must be Hatters supporters who, having followed the club for a decade, have never endured a season during which there was no tingle of fear about the prospect of the drop, or (much more rarely) that flush of excitement at the possibility of promotion.

I believe that the final home game of the 1997/98 season against Carlisle, and the final home league game against Stockport the previous season, were the only truly meaningless home game that Luton Town had played for at least ten years. Can any anorak, sorry, better informed fan than I, tell me which was the last non-vital game we played prior to these two?

It is true that the majority of our tension packed games tend to involve battling against relegation, but you have to admit that there is never a shortage of talking points to discuss with fellow football enthusiasts.

And, if you pressed me on it, I would much prefer things to continue in this vein, because mid-table mediocrity equals boredom supreme, and that's not for the likes of us — what would we have to get upset about then?

Get on now — William Hill are quoting Luton at 20/1 to win the Second Division in season 1998/99. Okay, so we struggled to avoid the drop and Manchester City are now in the Division, but I suspect they may be false favourites as they are in for something of a culture shock early on in the season plus in away games their big fan-base won't be much of an advantage as only so many of them will even be able to get in to the much smaller grounds they will be visiting. And every team they face will be really up for the match, it will be like a vital Cup game for most of their opponents.

I can't fancy Fulham at 4/1 second favourites either, and if there is a decent bet other than us, then perhaps Gillingham at 25/1 might be the value.



You may or may not have heard the Luton fan who rang in to the Danny Baker - Danny Kelly Talk Radio show to reveal his mother had taped over his prized video of the Town v Arsenal Littlewoods Cup Final — with an edition of Eldorado!

The same programme also revealed that former Town star John Hartson had been seen romping around wearing a bra and inviting all and sundry to suck his nipples.

The same Baker show also carried a report from another hatters fan claiming that he had once spotted none other than the legendary Bontcho Guentchev on the escalator at King's Cross tube station still wearing his Luton kit shortly after plying in a match at Crystal Palace!



Keith Barber was Luton Town keeper for eight years, being part of the side promoted from Division Two to Division One in 1973/74.

He is now long retired and working as a stalls handler on racecourses, loading the runners into the stalls before the start of races — including the Derby, at which he was recently in action for the eighth time.

Barber, signed by Alec Stock, commented recently, "Horses are like players. Take a player who has all the talent that God gave and doesn't put it in. There are horses like that."

Graham Sharpe

SHORT CUTS

NOTES.

No such careful planning on the Wednesday bench. Late in the game Atkinson decided to send on Scott Oakes for Barrett. Oakes removed his tracksuit top to discover that he had omitted to put on his shirt before taking his place on the bench. His fuming manager decided to send on Jim Magilton instead. "I reckoned if he wasn't focused enough to put his shirt on, he didn't deserve to play," the manager said with a sigh. "It's been a long day."

Chelsea: Kharine; Granville. Leboeuf (P. Hignace 22)

Something along the lines of "once a prat, always....". Good to see that Scott is keeping as focused as ever.

The Hornets are flying high at the top of the Second Division while Hatters linger near the bottom.

That makes for an even better derby match and we've got a pair of big match tickets

Interesting to see what the Herald thinks it takes to make "an even better derby match".

Hardman Kohler — sent off for the first time in 16 years as a pro — had to go for a brutal 38th-

Is that David they're talking about, or the dog?

Surely a night in a Hertfordshire hotel would have been a better option

BEATING THE AWAYDAY BLUES

A further idea of what to do while the Town are on their travels, and you're not.....

Number 3: Hockey

I first became aware of the merits of hockey as a spectator sport in 1984 when the Great Britain team won a bronze medal at the Los Angeles Olympics, but they surpassed this by winning the gold medal 4 years later in Seoul and players like Sean Kerly and Ian Taylor became household names. I remember the victory in the final with great affection as it took place on the morning of my wedding and I was able to watch while getting all toggled up.

Kenilworth Road then enjoyed a brief spell as the Hockey Association headquarters, courtesy of our plastic pitch, so Luton hosted various cup finals and England internationals. All weather pitches revolutionised hockey in the UK as the game was traditionally played on grass and what with the 'Great British weather' of rain, mud, frost and snow the pitches were in terrible condition between November and February. Now, with the plastic pitches the surface is always true and aids passing and movement.

Living in St Albans has resulted in me supporting the local team who are predictably called St Albans Hockey Club. Other teams are a bit more adventurous with names a la Scottish football teams and we have Hawks, Trojans, Barford Tigers, Harleston Magpies, Firebrands and Indian Gymkhana. St Albans play at Clarence Park, which is quite a sporting complex as St Albans City are based within the Victorian Park as well as the cricket club, and Hertfordshire CCC play some of their Minor Counties Championship fixtures there too.

Spectating facilities are somewhat primitive, in fact non-existent, they have to stand around the touchline with no stand, terrace or shelter of any sort. This wasn't always the case as the pitch used to be in front of the splendid Victorian pavilion which offered all of the foregoing, but when the plastic pitch was laid the pitch had to be realigned away from the cricketing facilities. Anyway, the lack of spectator facilities makes entry very cheap (in fact, free) although the programme costs a modest £1.00. It is also very good for children, low cost and plenty of space for them to play if bored by the game. The pavilion has a bar in it and food is available. Just across the park is Verdi's Cafe which serves the best cappuccinos this side of Bari (or Bedford).

Hockey is a bit like Rugby Union in that it has a lot of complicated rules which are always being tampered with to improve the game. However, it is basically very simple involving 11 a side trying to put a very hard ball slightly larger than a cricket ball into a goal defended by a keeper who looks like something out of "Rollerball". A lot of goals are scored from dead ball situations, in particular the Penalty Corner where the ball is shot across the

BRIAN STEIN made a truly remarkable journey from a Cape Town ghetto to Wembley Cup final glory. But the Luton legend faced

"D" around the net to the waiting line of forwards who try to pierce the 4 defenders and keeper on the line. A recent innovation has therefore been the role of a specialist Penalty Corner marksman who comes on only when the penalties are awarded and then returns to the bench, a bit like the goalkicker in American Football.

St Albans play in the National Hockey League, First Division which is in effect the second division as there is a Premier Division. The First Division has 22 teams, while the Premier has 12. There are also various cup competitions and a short indoor season between December and January when the outdoor sides have a winter break.

As a spectator sport it can be highly watchable as it is often played at great pace, and the ball and stick control is pretty amazing. One major criticism used to be the lack of goalmouth action but the offside laws have been amended which has resulted in higher scoring games and more excitement. The other fault is the size of the ball can make the game difficult to follow.

The game has not caught on as a spectator sport and does not attract large crowds. At St Albans games are watched by 100 to 150 supporters, the games at Luton used to be watched by a couple of thousand. It is much more popular on the continent in places like Germany and Holland and is almost as popular as cricket in India and Pakistan where it attracts massive crowds.

Murray Craig

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

No. 1: John Barnes (Watford 1981-87)

Plumbing & Heating

<p>JOHN BARNES DRIPPING TAPS re-washed £8.00. DRIPPING OVERFLOW stopped £13.00. Poorly FLUSHING TOILETS rectified £18.00. IMMERSION HEATERS renewed £35.00. OUTSIDE TAPS installed £35.00 HOT WATER CYLINDERS renewed from £150 Tel: Mobile 0860 912870 24 hour service NO CALL OUT FEE</p>
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Should prove useful for cleaning up all the shit to be found at Vicarage Road!

BOOK REVIEWS

Gambling on Goals — A century of Football Betting by Graham Sharpe.

pub. Mainstream, £15.99

I'd be lying if I said that I'm not a betting man. I do know how to fill out a betting slip, and I am not a total stranger to the bookies. But it is safe to say that the bookies are not growing rich on account of my betting activities — and neither am I. However, what I don't know about gambling would fill a book, so it was decent of Graham to write it. Don't take that to mean that this is just an instruction manual for the beginner, though. It's far more than that.

What Graham has written is a history of gambling on football, albeit somewhat from the bookies perspective although he does challenge the football authorities on their attitude to football betting. It would appear that gambling on the beautiful game has been going on as long as the game itself, and it's development is explained and followed thoroughly. Having done that, Graham has amassed loads of tales of incompetent, lucky and downright stupid gamblers, and has included a very thorough explanation of the mysteries of spread betting, which I didn't understand before — and still don't, as it is so damn complex. Suffice to say that unless spread betting can be done with penny stakes, you and I had better not get involved as it is a recipe for losing a fortune. But, if you are tempted, read this first.

Graham's book is not purely a promotion for the gambling industry, as it serves just as well as a warning. It is well worth a look for anyone who is fascinated by the inextricable links between football and gambling.

Kenilworth Sunset? A Luton Town Supporters Journal by Tim Kingston

pub. The Book Castle, £8.99

The second offering from a *Mad* columnist to be reviewed this issue is another book in the Nick Hornby genre, but the first of its kind to concern itself with the Hatters. No life story here, but the tale of one season, inevitably ending in disappointment (1996/97). However, this is not a diary either, with frequent flashbacks to some of the great and not so great matches of Tim's Luton supporting past. What also gives the book an edge, is that it is not full of match reports, as Tim is a genuinely average fan (no insult intended) who doesn't attend every match, home and away.

As the first book on the Town that can actually be read in the conventional sense, this is well worth paying for, and deserves to outsell Kristina Howells' effort by some distance. Of course, I may be biased, as I get a mention as early as page 6. But 200 plus pages does mean that you are not going to be fed up with this book after 10 minutes.

This book will be available from all good local bookshops, and the likes of Sportspages in London and Manchester. If you have difficulty finding it, contact The Book Castle, 12 Church Street, Dunstable, Beds, LU5 4RU. Telephone 01582 605670. If ordering by post, you will probably need to add around £2 for post & packing.

**Ever wondered how the Hertfordshire old bill cope with
their duties every other Saturday?**

