

MAD AS A HATTER!

THE LUTON TOWN FANZINE



Issue 53

Mar '99

HE'S A NUTTER!



It's possible that this was what Herve was saying about our esteemed manager just before his departure for pastures new (that's Herve's departure, not Lennie's, more's the pity), but the language barrier prevents us being certain!

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EDITORIAL

A few weeks ago I had an editorial already written for this issue. And then, in a manner of speaking, all hell broke loose and proved why writing an editorial should not be done too soon. In the space of days we became a club without a Chairman and without any immediate prospect of having a half decent ground. Anyone who can disagree with that must have a very blinkered view.

The circumstances which led to David Kohler's resignation being tendered were, to put it bluntly, the actions of a very sick mind. Having announced his departure, we call on him to hasten the process and allow the club to have a brighter future than appears likely under his control, especially now that he appears to have fallen out with the rest of the board of directors. We all know from past experience that David Kohler is a stubborn character, and it is regrettable that the latest indications are that he is not in so much of a hurry to leave as first appeared to be the case.

The announcement (in the programme for the Stoke game) that a new planning application for the smaller scale KohlerDome is to be submitted in the next few weeks is hardly the action of a man keen to sever his links with the club. The phrase "there is no going back" is clearly not part of David Kohler's vocabulary.

If there is a determination to be involved with the club in the longer term, assuming that the club can survive long enough, then let's have some cast iron assurances about what the club is getting out of this stadium.

Of course, those with a tendency towards the conspiracy theory might feel that Lennie Lawrence is part of the master plan. He seems to have been given free rein to assist the club in hurtling towards the oblivion of Division 3, and is starting to make Terry Westley look like a good manager. It is obvious to all that the players have a minimum of confidence in their own abilities at present, and LL is blatantly incapable of doing a thing about it. In terms of overstaying a welcome, he now looks like the customer steadfastly refusing to leave the pub in the hope of a lock-in.

Confidence amongst the players is matched by that amongst the supporters, but that is no excuse for the abysmal behaviour that was seen during the Stoke match. The arguments that are raging in the Kenilworth Road stands would make Bosnia (a few years ago) resemble a holiday resort. The lowest behaviour was among those willing Graham Alexander to miss a penalty. Regardless of differing opinions we are supposed to be on the same side, but when it gets to that level you have to wonder.....

Perhaps for the next couple of matches we could try something different, like encouraging the team, during the match and leaving LL alone until full time. It can be done — those who didn't spend 90 minutes of the Stoke match hurling abuse might have noticed that the Stoke fans made quite a good job of it. Presumably those same people are oblivious to the fact that their actions are having a longer term effect, in putting more and more people off coming to Kenilworth Road. Not only that, they create an atmosphere that could already have had a terminally detrimental effect on at least one major sponsor putting money into the club. Only time will tell, but whoever is in charge, we need every penny possible coming into the club.

Finally, a note about THAT meeting with Tony Banks MP, Minister for Sport. Advertised at three days notice in issue 52 of Mad, and cancelled at one days notice, it was replaced by a private meeting which I was invited to, at which the Minister discussed ideas like a Football Ombudsman and government involvement in football, and other important matters such as racism in football and the importance of community involvement with clubs. Areas where Luton Town FC has a hell of a lot to learn. Overall, the meeting was informative, but the timing was much less important than had appeared likely.

DISGUSTED

Having debated for two days whether or not I should go to the Wrexham game because of flu, I decided to drag myself out of bed and go. I thought, having beaten Burnley away and drawn with a very good Bournemouth side there was a vague chance we might continue our mini good run. Silly me; six paracetamol and the shivers later I returned home disgusted for the umpteenth time this season.

It was another game when the season ticket was nearly hurled onto the pitch. Off the present point, but still relevant, I was speaking to an elderly fellow who sits in the Main Stand during the Windscreen Wash farce against Walsall. He was such an interesting man, I suppose he was mid seventies, but youthful in speech for his years. He was telling me how the Town used to be such a force at Kenilworth Road in all the years he has supported them and how he simply can't understand what has happened. I was engrossed in conversation with him as he told me tales of beating Wolves 8-2 when Wolves were the Man United of the day. Fortunately, I missed virtually all of the second half, only glancing to see Herve's penalty miss which the three year old mascot could have slotted home from pre-match evidence.

Wrexham was another classic example of an inept performance by eleven men who were nearly 2-0 up, took their foot off the pedal, relaxed, consequently lost the control and flow of the game, allowed Wrexham to attack and score twice in ten minutes. When Luton go 1-0 up, in your heart of hearts you know even if it's in the 85th minute it's not enough for all the points. If a side get an equaliser you sit on the edge of your seat and pray for a point. However, if you go 2-1 down..... Well, how many times have you seen Luton get anything out of a game such as this except humiliation and abuse from the fans?

It is nothing short of shocking how teams like Wrexham and Wigan stroll past us with almost arrogant ease. I personally find it humiliating! I don't care if people say, "Oh, but Wigan have bought players and have pots of cash." I don't care, because we have some quality players in Evers, Douglas on his day and Spring... somewhere. Look at a side like Preston. Hardly bought anyone... top of the league, winning and not even looking convincing. I saw both games this season and I honestly thought that Preston are dreadful. At Deepdale they missed a hatful of first half chances and could hardly string three or four passes together. If that is promotion material that really says it all for this division and why we haven't taken advantage of this by now is unforgivable. I can't make my mind up about Lennie Lawrence, but there is one thing I am sure about: he is incapable of getting 100% out of his players on a consistent basis. I don't think he fires them up, I don't think he gives them a hard time when they don't perform, I don't think he encourages them and, quite frankly, I don't think he really cares. Lawrence's time at Luton is done for three reasons. He may think that because he is at a smaller club that the fans won't care as much; well, they do, and I'm sick of seeing Luton lose every week to sides I never in my wildest dreams thought I'd see the Town play.

The sad thing really is that this is our third season in Division Two and fans are beginning to mellow and accept the fact that we will be in this league for a lot longer. All Town fans know that even with the players we have now we are easily capable of playing football of a standard much higher than Division Two, so I ask you again why are we hovering in mid-table where relegation looks far more realistic than promotion? Lawrence was quoted on Teletext as saying that if we can put a run together, and win our home games we could make a late surge for the play-offs. Make no mistake, there's no chance and even if we did by some miracle get there we would only lose to some scabby team like Gillingham or Walsall. Also we don't deserve to be in the play-offs. We have lost far too many games this season — not only lost, but moreover 'thrown away' as usual.

The league table never lies and the statistics speak for themselves; ie. average at home, below average away. As far as I'm concerned our season may as well have just finished after a wretched, inept display at Sunderland, because all the games I've been to since, with the exception of two or three, have been of poor quality and hugely disappointing.

Luton are not a lucky team and even without Tony Thorpe and Steve Davis we have had the depth and quality to stride out of this league. Lawrence, I'm sorry to say (I don't mean to hound him out of a job), has not delivered the goods... the goods being promotion as Champions, not play-off hopefuls; my God, if W*tf*r'd can do it anyone can, but especially us. Get a manager who sees first spot and motivates his players to achieve nothing less. I can't tolerate watching Luton play in this league. The club and the fans (the fans that go to the games, not the ones who sneak just to see Coventry and co.) deserve so much better. Even in the lowly position we are in, it is fantastic to be a part of the crowd when we take so many away. Lincoln, Stoke and Sunderland especially (although this was a cup game) spring to mind.

Changing the subject, I must mention something that has been gnawing away at me and will continue to do so until I put pen to paper. The sales of Thorpe (I know it was a long time ago and many comments have been made) and Davis.

It wasn't so much the fact that they joined other clubs which annoyed me as much as the paltry, gippo fees they went for which left me tearing my hair out and wondering if Kohler had lost his mind. It is blatantly clear that in this day and age £800,000 is back pocket change to even some Second Division pubs. I hope Mr Kohler reads this, because I'd like to tell him that the sale of Thorpe, to Fulham especially, was disgustingly administered. Let us not blow matters out of proportion; we all know Thorpe was not world class by any stretch of the imagination, but we also know that he was worth a lot more than a pathetic eight hundred grand. Anyone who plays for Luton and scores next to 50 league and cup goals in just over a season and a half will inevitably be sold. Hartson only made about thirty appearances for us but he went for £2.5 million. He was two or three years younger than Thorpe and operated slightly differently as a forward, but look at the difference in fee!! Yes, Thorpe went to Fulham not Arsenal, but look at the ludicrous amounts of cash Fayed has splashed out on mules compared with Thorpe. The bottom line is that he went for probably half of what he should have done, and if Mr Kohler didn't realise that, then we need a new chairman as well.

We are a club in crisis and need desperate financial input as one of my friends put it, "Eight hundred grand will only keep the wolves (not Wanderers) from the door for another three or four months." He's right, if we lose every week as much as he Kohler says we do it will only be three or four months before the debt collectors come knocking again which will be Mr Kohler's cue to undersell another player. Absolutely appalling administration! For God's sake, Mr Kohler, you must be more ruthless in sales at this level. Clubs like Fulham would have paid double if you had been shrewd and ruthless enough, just make them sweat — they've got more cash than brains.

That is probably why Davis went so cheaply. Burnley, having seen Thorpe's sale, must have bided their time, knowing we were easy pickings and then moved in for the kill.

When Davis went I firmly believed that Luton Town would be involved in a much more serious relegation battle than last season. Stevo was the obvious backbone of our side. When you rip the backbone out of anything you are not usually left with a great deal. Not only was he our best defender; he could also make impulsive runs in midfield and, at the time of leaving, I believe he was our second top scorer with ten goals behind Phil Gray's eleven! He was a great influence and a talented and usually faultless player.

He was a good bloke as well, if you must know. I met him in the White Hart in Ampthill along

with a strangely injured and drunk Paul Showler (or does he always look like that?), a smashed Mitchell Thomas and one of my all time ever favourites, a quiet reclusive Brian Stein. It was a Friday night (none of them were playing the following day for various reasons — obviously not Stein, although I wish he had been!) and I chatted to Steve for lengthy periods and even then he made no secret that he missed his homeland so I say goodbye and good luck to him. There's no point being upset by his move, as we all know it's not Luton Town's policy to keep good players!!

I'd finally just like to mention Herve Bacque briefly. I really think he was a good player. In the last game I saw him play in (Walsall), although he missed a penalty, some of his touches were exquisite. He did not get a proper chance to prove himself and I feel very sorry for him. He had a lot of skill, he was probably too good to play in our side as some of his passing that looked wayward was probably meant for someone to run on to or read. If I am right in that, I think he came to the wrong club — I don't think Alexander could read the alphabet and Mitchell Thomas reads a game about as well as Stevie Wonder would.

A player of Bacque's technical ability could have made a massive impression in this division. Given the chance he could have turned defences inside out and scored a few goals, like Thorpe did. I think we were very foolish letting him go. This time next year, knowing our luck, he'll be on *Match of the Day* every Saturday playing for Chelsea partnering Zola and scoring goals for fun. Trevor Brooking and Des Lynam will be looking at each other in soft bemusement and murmuring questions probing why Luton Town ever let him go on a 'free' after playing only a handful of games at Kenilworth Road etc, etc. "He's worth at least ten million quid, blah, blah, blah."

Don't believe me? Well, I don't think it'll happen either, but anything's possible if Luton Town Football Club are involved somewhere in the equation!

James Cook

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POINTS OF VIEW II

- Obviously all the righteous and anorak people at K.R. will be outraged with the D.K. incident. Not me, absolutely brilliant, the end justifies the means, and if I find out who did the deed, I'll buy him a pint! Bet you daren't print that.
- I'm sick and tired of criticism of Loyal Luton Supporters Club for handing out leaflets condemning D.K. At least LLSC actually give a damn, how people can still defend D.K. is unbelievable, no wonder the club is in tatters with some of the fans we have burying their head in the sand.
- Why did we piss about when trying to get Thorpey back? Just pay the 75k Sunderland want for Harrison, and bring the prodigal son back to K.R. even if it's on loan. Don't care what anyone says about Thorpey, he was an absolute star for us and he'll get a heroes welcome from me when he comes back to K.R., unlike Judas Davis who wanted to leave Luton.
- If Alexander and McKinnon refuse to sign new contracts until the season's end why not drop them and play for the reserves. If they don't want to play for the club then get rid of them. Either they sign now or send 'em back to Scunthorpe/Dundee United.
- Why are the stewards at Luton all deadbeats? Even standing up gets you an earful off them and if you start having a go at Lawrence, this is punishable by death! These stewards don't even care for Luton, and just do it for the easy money. Why should some rugby playing student or housewife tell me to sit down and not get passionate about the team I love?
- Why is it people behind me in J block (*Aha! An answer to why the stewards want you to sit down? - Ed*) continue to get upset when anyone boos Lawrence after another crap performance. These idiots would still keep their mouths shut if we were bottom of Division 3. Surely you can't be satisfied with the Hull, Walsall, Wigan and Wrexham games, can you? Yet you refuse to condemn the performance, I can only conclude that you must be satisfied very easily.
- Why is it Alan White not playing in place of 'Magic' Johnson. This guy is a brilliant player and can only make the subs bench. Absolute joke Johnson has served the club well, but I am afraid his time is up, he is to be perfectly honest, a liability, and as for being captain, well my sister would be a better leader, and she's a lazy student.
- Why is Bumbles Bar closed from 4 - 7 pm on Saturday? Surely this is the time to be open in order for me and my Welsh colleague Vaughan to drown our sorrows after another crap display.

Bitter and Twisted, Ilkeston

SCRIBE'S CORNER

WAS it just me, or did anyone else find the timing of the petrol bomb incident just a tad strange? What supporter of Luton Town FC would put a petrol bomb through Kohler's letterbox just three days before a High Court decision that could alter our entire future?

Needless to say the appeal was turned down, but Kohler had already stated his intention to stand down as chairman and leave the club ASAP (what would he have done if it had been successful?), His departure couldn't be soon enough really. LTFC have gone nowhere but down since he first arrived, and it's about time he left.

Having said that I'd have preferred him to have resigned in different circumstances. There is no way any of us can find the petrol attack acceptable or tolerable, no matter how much Kohler was disliked.

As the man himself said, to place family (including young children) at risk in that way is a despicable and low act. Whoever it was should feel ashamed of themselves.



How come the finger pointing centred on the Loyal Luton Supporters Club though? What proof were people basing their accusations on when they blamed the LLSC? Yes it's no secret they disliked Kohler and had produced a leaflet less than a fortnight before, but where on that leaflet did it say anything about petrol bombing? (as far as I was aware the leaflet invited Kohler to answer some questions about the club).

Plus the fact, if the police suspected the LLSC in any way (and PC Palmer knows the group fairly well, apparently) don't you think they'd have asked them to at the very least 'help with enquiries'?



On the subject of supporters' clubs, lets move swiftly onto the LTSC. Their statement in the Luton News puzzled me slightly. Why were they apologising to Kohler? Isn't it normal practice not to apologise for things you haven't done? Also, why do they think they've got the right to speak for every genuine Luton supporter? I fall into this category and I can speak for myself thanks — without the LTSC trying to do it for me. In future I suggest the LTSC stay concerned with issuing statements on behalf of their group without trying to give themselves a higher status than they actually have.



While we're on the lookout for a new chairman (hopefully someone with a fair bit of cash this time) can we please get a new manager as well. Lennie Lawrence has got to be the worst Town manager since... erm... well, Terry Westley to be perfectly honest, and if he stays much longer the extra year on his contract will be spent managing a Third Division club.

LL — YOU ARE AN APPALLING MANAGER, PLEASE LEAVE NOW!



Back on to the field now, and I finally made my return to Kenny Road in March after a break of nearly five months.

Having gone to the Luton-Fulham match I have to say that Barry Hayles is the worst

footballer I have ever seen. With his lack of pace and awful skill God only knows how he is playing in Division Two. I'm so glad you decided he wasn't worth risking £150,000 for, Lennie — not at this level anyway. And to think of all that money Fulham wasted on him! How foolish must Keegan feel now — I'm glad we've got sensible LL as our boss instead of KK.



On the back page of the Herald & Post about a month ago Lennie was quoted as saying he didn't know how to instil confidence in the players. Forgive me for being stupid, but isn't this one of the fundamental roles of his job? If Lennie doesn't know what he's doing or how he's supposed to do it then why the hell is he our boss?

It's like me turning up at work and telling them I couldn't write (no comments on that please).



Another problem within the club is our present player coach. Mitchell Thomas has to be one of the worst players at LTFC at the mo', and if he doesn't know how to play football then what hope have the others (especially the youngsters) being coached by him got.

I've also heard rumour that Marvin is going for his coaching badge. God help us all if he ever passes (you can picture the scene now: "Right lads, I'll teach you everything I know").



The *Accuracy on Sunday* have really gone for it now, haven't they? According to Peter Kenyon, us supporters are 'liabilities' because we voice our opinions about a shoddy manager and shoddy players. What are we supposed to do, Peter — stay quiet and pretend that nothing is wrong as things at LTFC go from bad to worse?

Well Peter, if it's a crime to actually give a damn about the sorry state our club is currently in then I for one am guilty as charged.

As for our local Sunday journalist (I use the phrase lightly), your writing is piss-poor, you are factually incorrect time and time again and you work for a newspaper who are more concerned with scandal than the truth.

If anyone's a liability then it is you, Peter Kenyon.



How much of a fan of our club is Luton South MP Margaret Moran? Many of you might remember a letter in the local press from Ms Moran which said she was in possession of the autographs of two of LTFC's best players — Marvin Johnson and Mitchell Thomas (!).

Firstly, I don't know if Ms Moran has actually seen the two clowns play (judging by what she wrote, probably not), but surely we've got better players than those two. Secondly, what many of you might not know, is that the papers had to edit the letter before publishing it — Ms Moran originally wrote she was actually in possession of the autographs of Mitchell Johnson and Marvin Thomas!



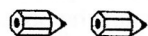
The weekend I'm writing this was a strange one for television. On the Friday there was someone by the name of Lennie making a fool of himself on BBC1 after dressing up as a

children's TV character. Sadly, it wasn't our own LL doing his Mr Burns impression, rather it was Mr Henry dressing up as a Teletubby for Comic Relief. Then there was the Lewis - Holyfield farce in Madison Square Garden on Sky Box Office. What a result — even the scum wouldn't have been jammy enough to scrape a draw out of that one.



Do computer games mirror real life? In the case of Premier Manager, possibly so. One Friday night recently a few of us became Lennie Lawrences for the night (although we actually did quite well) on the Playstation. In an uncanny opening to the season for my mate's Luton Team it took Paul Showler just two weeks to fracture a leg and put himself out of action for six months!

But on the other hand, for some reason I thought Stuart Douglas was worth £500,000 and bought him for the W*tf*rd side I was trying to get relegated (I don't know why, it was getting late and I was tired).

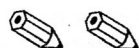


We have a new contender for the 'Who looks more like Gavin McGowan' competition. Step forward Fulham's Rufus Brevitt. I swear that Douglas and Brevett could have swapped shirts during half-time of the Luton v Fulham match and no-one would have noticed (insert own comments about respective playing abilities here).



Royston Town and Saffron Walden Town are looking up in their respective leagues at the moment.

'The Bloods' are still unbeaten in the Schweppes Essex Senior League at the moment, but somehow still aren't top yet with just eight games to go. Meanwhile the Crows came out of a marathon February with just two defeats (against the SSML league leaders and the scum), and a nine match unbeaten run which saw seven straight Spartan South Midlands League wins in just two and a half weeks.



While talking about Royston, I have eventually tracked down a Luton fan living there — albeit in bizarre circumstances.

The story goes: I was in the Chequers just before Xmas (office party piss-up) and was making my way back from the bar when someone behind me said: "Come on you Hatters!" I spun round and was asked something along the lines of "You're the Mad! bloke aren't you" (I take it he meant Mad! as in the fanzine and not as in mental). As it turns out, the bloke who said it knew through *Mad as a Hatter!* that I worked for the Crow and took a gamble that it was actually me when I walked past. Unbelievable! I think his name was Ben Weekes, but I was too pissed to be sure (think Friday night of Blackpool proportions — which was even worse than the Saturday for those who saw me in Yates'). And, as I said I'd mention it in SC, here it is.

Chris Lennon

NEVER MIND THE SPIN DOCTOR

This may make unpopular reading with some Luton Town Supporters, but I think we have often been too harsh on David Kohler and Lenny Lawrence. An attack on David Kohler has made me ashamed of being a Luton Supporter.

I have supported Luton since 1975, and since the arrival of Mr Kohler the club has moved from one crisis to another, but how can we seriously blame the chairman or the manager when the club is trading with a £1.5 million deficit every year.

Whatever is thought of Kohler's motives, we cannot get away from the fact that we need a bigger stadium capable of seating at least 20,000 people. A 10,000 capacity Kenilworth Road being used once a fortnight, nine months out of twelve will not generate enough money to survive in Division Two, when other so called small unfashionable clubs like Reading have built a 40,000 stadium.

I cannot remember a time when Luton has not been looking for a stadium. Older supporters have told me we have been searching since 1958, 41 years trying to find a site for the new stadium and being let down by politicians with plenty of hot air but with no action. Yes, the politicians are responsible for our club's plight. Remember we were offered a site in Milton Keynes about 12 years ago, after the politicians saw the uproar from the Luton people they PROMISED to find Luton a site for a 20,000 stadium.

They claim to support us, but many clubs around the country started looking for a stadium after Luton and already have them built, many having a capacity of 30,000 plus. So, is Luton the only town or city in England with traffic problems, are MP's and Councillors incompetent or are they suffering from the blinkered view that London must come first and every other town can be damned? If this is the case then the government is seriously misguided as London is more congested than every other city, also if facilities are not provided locally can the government be surprised that there is so much more traffic in London?

What I suggest to supporters is instead of protesting to the directors or manager, we should turn our energies to tackling the politicians (not Roy Keane style, although it's tempting). I stress nobody should do anything illegal, but instead hit them where it hurts them most — in the Ballot box.

If our political masters are not going to keep promises made at the last council and general elections then L.T.F.C. Supporters Club should get together to find 'Luton friendly' people to stand against them at the next elections

Please remember when they're giving their excuses. If the government wanted to build a road or Nuclear Power Station at the site which was in their interests, would they care about Slip End or road congestion?

Mark White

THE PROS AND CONS OF DAVID KOHLER

So, after so many years of asking David Kohler to go he has finally listened to reason and departed (well, sort of). Over the last few days I have been compiling a chart of the pluses and the minuses achieved under DK's reign and it makes very interesting reading.

THE PLUSES.

- Two relegations in three years.
- Nonexistent public relations with the local community.
- Continuing falling gates (less than half when he first arrived).
- No incentives to encourage new supporters to attend games, ie. kids for a quid, having to buy tickets in advance (no pay on the day).
- Overpriced ticketing in a ground with poor views and poor facilities.
- Non-removal of floodlight pylons in front of the Main Stand which was promised several years ago.
- No back up plan if new ground was given the thumbs down.
- Continuation of membership scheme despite falling gates, effectively putting off potential supporters.
- The very dodgy dismissal of Jim Ryan in favour of David Pleat.
- The even dodgier appointment of Terry Westley.

THE MINUSES.

I have absolutely no doubt that there are probably far more reasons than I have given, but I think that you will get the general picture.
Nuff said, really.

J.S.

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WHERE TO NOW?

Suffering Luton hit new low

By Timothy Collings

Luton Town..... 0
Notts County..... 1

A GRIM week for Luton and their despondent fans ended in misery and uproar at Kenilworth Road last night when Kevin Rapley scrambled the only goal of an ugly contest.

Rapley, on loan from Brentford and making his debut for Notts County, bundled the ball in after 71 minutes when Ian Richardson headed on a corner to bring his relegation-haunted team only their third away win this season.

Only 10 years ago, Luton were in the old First Division and holders of the Littlewoods Cup. Last night,

it was hard to believe such happy days had ever occurred as the home fans in a crowd of only 4,021 jeered their team off the pitch and called for the dismissal of Lennie Lawrence.

Luton last night fielded a team of fitful young talent on show in a run-down ground that is not even their own.

And with nothing to borrow against, the board have little choice but to sell players to survive.

This season has seen the sale of captain Steve Davis to Burnley. His successor at centre back, Sean Dyche, was their best player last night, but he is on loan from Bristol City and may not stay unless Luton's current crisis is resolved swiftly.

The opening period

demonstrated this as he organised a suspect defence. Shots from Richard Liburd, Paul Bolland and Rapley reflected the play as Notts County pressed without reward.

Three substitutions early in the second period enlivened Luton but after Rapley had scored, their luck ran out. Phil Gray hit a post and Andre Scarlett's follow-up goal was disallowed for offside.

When you're down, you're down.

Luton: Davis; Alexander, Dyche, Johnson (White 46), McGowan, Cox (Scarlett 63), Spring, McLaren, McKinnon; Douglas (Gray), Doherty. **Sub:** Scarlett.

Notts County: Ward; Hendon, Warren, Richardson, Pearce; Liburd, Bolland, Owers, Tierney; Beadle, Rapley. **Subs:** Creaney, Hughes, Fairclough. **Goal:** Rapley.

Referee: R Styles (Waterlooville).

I thought that this article in the *Daily Telegraph* on Wednesday 24th February regarding another Luton humiliation, this time at the hands of Notts County, was concise, accurate and sadly, wholesomely truthful.

Timothy Collings correctly summed up not only Luton's season, but Luton's last ten years. He didn't need to go into any detail except to point out to some neutral fans that "only ten years ago, Luton were in the old First Division and holders of the Littlewoods Cup." In just a few paragraphs Collings successfully created an atmosphere in the article which strongly hinted that Luton are in desperate trouble of going bankrupt. Collings appears to have an overall opinion of Luton Town which implies that now, more than at any other time in recent years, the good points are heavily outweighed by the bad. Perhaps this has always been the case, but even the strong element of "fitful young talent on show" appears to have been overcast this season, the youth policy and promise once being a dominant ray of sunshine at Kenilworth Road.

Drastically decreasing attendances, coupled with an ill-befitting ground are now threatening Luton Town with the prospect of extinction. Indeed it is absolutely staggering to see our side in mid table when one stops and thinks.... realising that we have only won twice and drawn five in the league, amassing a woeful total of eleven points since October 21st 1998. This statistic alone is enough reason for even the most loyal of fans to stay at home on match days, even home-match days, and toast crumpets by the fire.

If we lose against Blackpool at home on February 27th, we will deservedly be haunted by the relegation demons and it's hard to imagine another Rory Allen digging us out for the second consecutive season; Luton are never that lucky.

Listening to Three Counties Radio the day after Notts County at about 8.30 am on my way to work, an interview with Lennie Lawrence reflecting on the game muttered a comment which confirmed suspicions I have had about his ability as Luton's manager for some time. He said in a strained voice, and I quote: "I don't know what else I can do." I have usually admired Lennie Lawrence's honesty, even though he often 'sits on the fence', but surely this is conclusive proof that he no longer can do anymore at Luton. He is exhausted and has given his best shot. Town fans don't want and will not settle for football in Divisions 2 and 3. We belong in the top two divisions and Lennie Lawrence has failed to ensure this for the third consecutive season! With the 'fitful young talent on show' he has had the resources, even with player sales, to achieve quick promotions and has failed abysmally. I am sure many Luton fans will agree with me when I say that if we lose our fourth consecutive game on Saturday against a poor Blackpool side he really should do the decent thing and resign (in fact, regardless of the result against Blackpool), then he may escape with a little respect.

Finally, a few lines in connection with David Kohler and the 'pipe dream' new ground. In some ways I feel sorry for him. After all, it is common knowledge that Mr Kohler devoted and donated a lot of time and money to ensure that the project was a success. However, overall I'm glad he has decided to resign, even though the 'firebomb' circumstances were an outrageous motive in his decision. It might attract potential 'fat cats' to rescue our sinking club although that, let's face it, is highly unlikely. Whether it is for better or worse, a chairman and/or manager change had to happen to try and stop the rot.

The KohlerDome saga has been absolutely farcical. Why the decision was blocked for the forty-eighth time is beyond me, but I suppose I don't know enough factual information to comment in any detail. However, I was under the strong impression that once Labour came to power the candidate for our constituency was one hundred per cent in favour of the ground. What a fool I was to think that she would have any voice of authority.

I feel totally angered and disillusioned about the whole subject, mainly because of how the idiot authorities took so long on every occasion to say no. Thanks for nothing! Also, I am sickened at the way every other club in the football league have had their new grounds and refurbishments announced unhindered within a few months.

I dread to think where we plan to build now. As far as I see it we have one and a half options: the half is to try and redevelop Kenilworth Road (no space, too small, very unlikely) — revamping the Main stand and kicking the seats out of Oak and Kenilworth Roads. A maximum attendance would surely then be up to at least 15,000. The Government have said that terracing can be brought back, just look at the amount of clubs in Division One with terracing: Oxford, Bury, Grimsby, Barnsley, Stockport; I don't hear them being told to put seats all over their grounds!

The second option is simply: anywhere in LUTON — after all that is the name of our club and that is where we've been since 1885. I don't care whereabouts, as long as it is somewhere within the Luton boundaries and nowhere outside.

Forget that dump of a place Milton Keynes, I hate the place and I sincerely state that if we ever did move there, the club, soon to be named Milton Keynes Athletic, would certainly not have my loyal and vigorous support ever again.

James Cook

AN OPEN LETTER

Islington,
London.

24 February 1999.

Dear Lennie Lawrence,

I was wondering whether it would be possible for our pub side to play your current first team at Kenilworth Road.

I am not sure if I can get all the guys interested, but I am sure a few barmaids could fill in for us if we were short.

I could train the team up for a few weeks drinking loads of beer and eating loads of pie and chips so we would not have an unfair advantage.

We could arrive at Luton fat and unfit, and I could make sure that all the lads have a healthy 'we couldn't give a toss attitude', again so we would not have an unfair advantage over your team.

If you can promise that your team will put in the same effort and show the same technical skills that were shown whilst losing at home to that massive giant of a club Notts County recently, I am sure we will be able to give you a good game.

If you are unable to help me out on this, perhaps you could send me some information on Division 3 clubs for use next season.

Cheers,
Philip Darton.

Loyalty Clause

The recent negotiations between the FA and new temporary, part-time England supremo Kevin Keegan took on a new twist, yesterday, when it was revealed that Luton Town also put in an audacious bid for the great man's services.

Chief Operating Officer Laurence Lennison yesterday confirmed the approach for the country's most wanted manager. "When we heard Kevin had been allowed to speak to interested parties by Fulham FC we contacted him straight away. As luck would have it he was the third 'K Keegan' in the phone book. Unfortunately he was out at work but his girlfriend promised to get him to ring us when he got home."

Keegan did contact Luton Town that evening, leaving a message on the answering machine. The following morning Lennison relayed another message, via Keegan's girlfriend again, asking to meet him and discuss him taking over the role of coach at the club.

"Obviously there is no criticism of the current coach intended," Lennison told us. "The man, who is a good friend of mine incidentally, is a charismatic leader of men, ever popular with the fans and an effective communicator but, obviously, Keegan is a different class. We had to try for him. The fans would expect nothing less."

Keegan arranged to meet with Lennison on the Sunday evening in a local pub near to the ground.

"I was knocked out," Lennison conceded. "I watched the man lead his current team out against Manchester United in the FA Cup in the afternoon and a mere three hours after the game he was sitting in the Brickeater's Arms supping a pint with me. He must have jumped into his private helicopter straight after the match and hopped down here. Incredible."

According to Lennison the great man is as charismatic as his fans claim. "He immediately put me at my ease, telling me to call him 'Kev'. He had none of that superior attitude you expect from the rich and famous. He drank two pints, a Lager-top and a shandy. He looked a lot different than he does on telly, mind. He had short hair, wore glasses and seemed a lot younger than I was expecting. I expect he wears a disguise in public."

They got on well, then. "Oh, yes," Lennison agreed with obvious enthusiasm. "He even showed me his tattoos later in the evening. He's got one on his arm with this naked man and woman and when he bends his elbow they..."

Yes, interesting, but I'm sure our readers want to know if Keegan appeared interested in the job?

"Bit of a problem," Lennison admitted. "He said he was determined to see out his current contract. He certainly seemed happy enough with our offer for his salary and hours of work. He said it was more than he was getting at his current job, which frankly came as a bit of a shock to me. Still, he insisted he owed his boss loyalty until his contract came up for renewal in June."

So, Keegan took the England job instead, while staying with Fulham. Still, the supporters of Luton Town can hope that the seeds sown by this encounter will bear fruit in the near future.

News Extra: Luton Town FC last night denied the claims of a local man that they had offered him a job. Mr Kevin Keegan, 23, a part-time security guard from Marsh Farm said his six-month contract had been unexpectedly terminated after the building society he was supposed to be guarding was robbed one evening while he was meeting a club representative in a nearby pub.

"I feel very let down," Mr Keegan told us. "They seemed really keen to have me as their new coach. I was over the moon. It was a great opportunity for me and they've taken it away. I'm as sick as a parrot now."

"We deny all knowledge of this man," a club spokesman replied.

Declan McCabe

MAD MERCHANDISE

What have we got in store?

We haven't abandoned the idea of selling things to you other than the fanzine, we just haven't had space for the ads in recent issues. So, what have we got left over after Christmas?

SHIRTS

We still have a supply of the classic 1970's orange shirts, as worn by Town players between 1974 and 1979. At a price of £28.95, the home version (mainly orange) comes in sizes L and XL. The away shirt is however now what is known as a discontinued line.

PHOTOS

We have two aerial shots of the Kenilworth Road ground, one taken from behind (and above) the New Stand, the other taken from behind the corner of the Kenilworth Road stand and Executive boxes. The pair of photos will cost you £6.00 including post and packing.

BOOKS

We're all sold out of books now. Sorry.

Of course we also have back-issues of Mad and subscriptions. Please see the ads for these elsewhere in this issue.

Please send me:

..... 1970s home shirts in size L/XL* I enclose £28.95 each

..... sets of aerial photos. I enclose £6.00 per set

Name.....

Address.....
.....
.....

Send your order to: Mad as a Hatter! 38 Twigden Court, Luton, LU3 2RL

CLUB TOGETHER FOR THE FOOTBALL BUSINESS

Let me say I am all for running our football club as a business. But football clubs are different to most industry sectors. Each Football club has its own customer base already and these customers stay through thick and thin.

But the Football business can attract more customers by being enterprising and offering a better product. However, no business should take its customers for granted by being complacent and constantly making excuses for an inferior product.

The recent figures quoted by David Kohler were very interesting in plotting where season ticket holders live. I would contend that this customer spread should concern the directors of the business as it shows how people have moved away — but remained loyal — this loyalty might not last forever as it has to be fed by entertainment. The attraction of spending a lot of money, time and effort to be disappointed will wane.

Equally, whilst it is laudable to offer free tickets to Junior Hatters and schools, these potential new customers must leave on a high, wanting to come back for more having been thoroughly entertained, thrilled and excited.

I think it is time for a customer satisfaction survey, and although we know where the ground, Kohler, Lawrence etc would feature, we could usefully enquire regarding prices, facilities, John Moore, fitness of players, commitment etc. We could rate people on effort and customer service. We could help to assess the stewards, the ticket office the food and so on.

The customer doesn't mind paying a fair price, it is our contribution as we cannot buy the club — we can't afford it and the directors won't let us. So, we don't mind not getting a discount on certain things in the club shop, the club needs the cash. But don't take the mickey, use the cash wisely.

Don't forget — directors and Lawrence — we need an incentive to keep coming back. So how about more of an incentive for the players? I know they get a win bonus and a league position payment, but what about rewards for shots on target, goals scored, misses and fines for being sent off, getting banned, own goals..... the list is endless, but make them more hungry. I get paid by results and life is too comfortable for some hugely inflated egos I see strutting around.

Anyway, I personally am fed up of getting the blame for everything that goes wrong at Kenilworth Road. How about somebody that works there taking the blame? The Lawrence book of excuses is inexhaustable, but why not be more positive so it is not needed. Encourage the midfield to challenge, get the players fit, don't make so many changes each match — they're not clever enough to understand it. As for the club car park! There are too many executive vehicles on the payroll. Let's start cutting our cloth to suit our resources. As we can't afford to buy anyone, why does Lawrence warrant a Mercedes? I know he lives a long way away but I don't get a company car.

There is a need to introduce more usual business practices to an unusual business. We need more accountability to the customers. The club is almost 115 years old and it is ours for a short time only. The chairman and board are short term custodians and are showing few signs that their investment is worthwhile.

Unless the full range of business controls is introduced shortly, there is every likelihood that the dizzy downward spiral will be unstoppable, and we'll all find something interesting to do on a Saturday.

The Shadow Director

RAVING MAD!!!

Dear "Mad",

I have a lot to thank Luton Town Football Club for. The club has been instrumental in me giving up smoking.

I used to have a cigar after every home win, as a celebratory treat. 93/4 and 96/7 were heavy years with 15 and 16 cigars, but I am now almost totally cured. However, I owe this success to David Kohler, without him I could still be on 18 or 19 a season.

David Fleckney,
Northampton.

Dear "Mad",

On Saturday (Feb 13th) I had the choice of cleaning the toilet or going to see the Town take on the Wrexham sheepshaggers. Guess I was destined to see a pile of shit whatever I chose!

Phil Wash,
Orpington, Kent.

Dear "Mad",

Just saw your bit in *When Saturday Comes* (Dec '98). As for celebrity supporters, what about John Hegley, TV poet etc, who I think I saw at Blackpool, and the bloke (*Pete Frame*) who does the Rock Family Trees in books and on television is a keen Luton fan.

Also, kit: you mention orange being the best and I see in a recent programme 79.5% of supporters agree. I must be one of a very small minority — I'd love to see us playing in white shirts and black shorts like the heroes of the 1968 Division 4 championship side.

Mark Nelson,
Leeds.

Dear "Mad",

Sad days these. Where, oh, where are the likes of Coen, Payne (yes, I'm old enough to remember the joy of that match against Bristol Rovers), Owen, Morton, Bingham, West, Hill, both Steins, Slough, Walsh, Dibble (in Cup Finals) and, of course, Steve Davis. I could easily double that list but not, I fear, among our present players,
Gordon Parke,
Lewes, East Sussex.

Dear "Mad",

At last proof, beyond a reasonable doubt, that Lennie Lawrence, as a lot of us already know, has "lost it".

The Walsall match report in the *Sunday Mirror* (5 March 1999) quotes Lennie as

saying "We should have gone in level at half time. We had four or five chances but we needed to take one of them". Now correct me if I'm wrong, but I have been brought up to believe that nil-nil at half time is the same as going in level at half time! Obviously Lennie has different ideas.

Is it possible that he either wasn't at Walsall or he's talking about a different match. The man's a complete loon and nothing would surprise me!!!

Kelvin Dunn,
Dunstable.

Dear "Mad",

First thanks for a great fanzine. I live in Portsmouth and a friend of mine sends me down a copy, which helps me keep in touch with the real news of the greatest club north of the south pole. She also sends me paper cuttings from your favourite Sunday paper and some other news sheets. Keep up the good work.

My reason for this mail is the amount of abuse directed at the chairman. I have always been saddened by the way certain sections of the crowd have a go at the players, even before they have kicked off, although I admit by the second half I am frustrated by some players and their attitude. It does the players no good mentally to be told before they have kicked a ball that they are no good, even if they aren't. As SUPPORTERS we need to try and give them a lift from the start and stick with it at least until a little way in to the second half. A good example of fans getting behind their team is here in Portsmouth. As you probably know Pompey have been having a lot of problems off the pitch, even worse than ours, but they are still climbing away from relegation, albeit slowly. Knowing a couple of Pompey players I asked them how they were coping with the pressure. The answer was always the same — "the fans" — Pompey's supporters always give their team a great welcome onto the pitch and get behind them from the beginning, and the players know that the fans are passionate about their club so they try to give it their best each match. If they have had a bad game the fans let them know they don't want the same in the following week.

Another example is Moan Untied, Alex Fungus-an is always saying how the fans lift his team, and how hard they make it for other teams to play at Old Trafford (isn't that a fashion catalogue), the same at Antfield, and Lowbury. So please let's start helping our team and let them know we love our club and they must do the same.

Back to the chairman. I have had the pleasure (yes it was) to meet David Kohler three times over the last few years. Each time he gave me the impression that he had ambitions and hopes for Luton's future. On two of these occasions (the first two) he did not know that I was a Town supporter (34 years), yet he still spoke passionately about LTF. The second occasion we were well away from Bedfordshire so he had no reason to be on his guard, yet he still loved talking about the Town's future and he brought them into the conversation.

This (long - sorry!) mail will hopefully help some people understand his situation. He has very little money of his own left (common knowledge), he has no-one he

can call on to lend him the vast amounts of money now needed to build a successful team quickly, he can see that the new ground would bring in a lot of extra money, this money would then enable him to take the team to the dizzy heights of the Premiership where he wants them. Also think about his personal ambition, people often say he is only in it for himself, who in their right mind wants a team that's losing money week after week, surely if you want to make something for yourself you need a winning team, but this takes money! If you don't have that money you have to look for ways of getting it; ie. the new ground. As far as the manager goes maybe he does need to go but the Chairman is a loyal sort and Lenny has been loyal so I can understand him sticking with Lenny (as long as he doesn't let it go as far as he did with Westley).

Please let's get behind the team at the start and if they are not playing well gee them up some more, then towards the end of the game if they are still playing badly let them know we won't stand for it next week.

Sorry it's so long but I had to get it off my chest, hope it makes sense.

Still hoping for promotion,

Nigel Martin,

Portsmouth, via email.

PS: Could I say thanks to Lesley and Geraldine for sending the stuff down to me. Cheers.

Dear "Mad",

I've seen on my local teletext that W*tf*r'd have accepted an invitation to play in the island's local pre-season football festival in July (normally it's five English/Scottish/Irish teams plus the Isle of Man national team). I can't wait to give them abuse and see them beaten by our island team.

Martin 'Manx Hatter' Devereau,

Douglas, Isle of Man.

Dear Editor,

Although I bought the last issue of MAAH on the first day of sale, I did not get around to reading it until much later. Therefore I missed the opportunity to contact yourself regarding the visit of Tony Banks, as suggested on page 30. I would very much have liked to attend. Hopefully you did and will provide details in the next fanzine.

I was slightly annoyed, however, to hear that you (Keith Hayward) had declined the opportunity to enlighten the listeners of John (*sic*) Gaunt's BBC 3CR Breakfast Show as to the content of the above meeting. Now I realise that John Gaunt is an obnoxious individual, and that his previous comments about *Mad* have been less than complimentary. Nevertheless, he has many local listeners who are Luton Town fans, and as I have heard you speak on radio about our club many times, I was wondering if you could explain your decision not to appear.

I appreciate the fanzine is very hard work, but the benefit to you is a privileged position of literary power (the pen/Apple Mac being mightier than the sword). I

feel that this position contains a responsibility to keep as many Luton Town supporters as possible, abreast of any interesting developments or information. Unfortunately, not everyone buys your erstwhile publication so local radio is another useful medium. I would be interested to read your comments.

Regards,
Clifford Saunders,
by email.

Regrettably, the meeting with Tony Banks (issue 52, page 30) was cancelled the day before it was due to take place, so you didn't lose out by waiting to read your copy of Mad. I was invited to join with representatives of the two supporters clubs in a private meeting with Mr Banks on the same day. I chose not to speak to the media about this as it was private, and I do not believe in breaking confidences. As it turned out there was little to report anyway, and certainly nothing worth making space for in an issue as well contributed to as this one. As for those who do not buy Mad, then they obviously should. One final thing — when did Mad become 'erstwhile'??

Dear "Mad",
In issue 52, the article *Who's Where Now?* listed various divisions with a breakdown of former Town players. Of these, only in Division Two did we manage to name 7 players, the rest we came up far short. However, the list said there were 7 players in the Premiership, but my son and I came up with 8:

John Hartson and Ceri Hughes (Wimbledon), Scott Oakes and Mark Pembridge (Sheffield Wednesday), Gary Parker (Leicester City), Paul Telfer (Coventry City), Matthew Upson (Arsenal), Andy Petterson (Charlton Athletic).

Could *Mad* print a full listing of these players as I'm sure other Hatters fans are curious to know where past players are plying their trade.

David Joseph,
Portsmouth.

I think where you and your son slipped up is in the fact that Mark Pembridge is no longer at Sheffield Wednesday. He left a couple of years back on a 'Bosman' and now does his stuff for Benfica in Portugal.

CONTRIBUTIONS PLEASE

Only one more issue of *Mad!* this season, out on the 1st of May. 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 to us to arrive by April 17th (or sooner, preferably). Remember, we now have facilities to receive contributions by fax and email, as well as post. The postal address is MAAH, 38 Twigden Court, Mount Pleasant Road, Luton, LU3 2RL. Fax: 01582 653392, email khayward@aol.com

THAT SINKING FEELING

Thanks to all those who have sent in match reports for this issue, and made the job of an editor difficult in trying to choose which ones to use. There were no less than 4 for the Burnley game, and two or three for most others, so I was unable to use them all. Special mentions to the prolific *Ikeston*, *Highbury Hatter* and *Cliff Saunders*, with apologies for not being able to use so much good work. Please keep the reports coming.

06.02.99 BURNLEY 1 TOWN 2

With the previous day's unwelcome news that Tony Thorpe had signed on loan for Reading instead of the Hatters, I was not feeling inspired by the thought of the long journey to Turf Moor although, at least, games at Burnley tend to be more exciting than most. The weather was pretty gloomy just prior to kick-off and if I was a betting man my money would have been on a 1-0 home win. Thankfully, my depression was to be proved incorrect. Town were definitely the better team and some of our passing and one touch football was superb. Against the run of play, however, the Clarets went ahead. Mellon was not closed down outside the area and his powerful shot went under Abbey's body. Minutes later though, Nathan made a good double save and then grew in confidence as the game progressed to complete an impressive league debut.

Luton's response to going behind was very encouraging and brought a deserved equaliser following a dreadful howler by Mellon, who had the chance to release a free man down the flank but dallied for so long, stood on the ball under pressure from Fotiadis and Douglas and the Hatters strikers were left to decide between themselves as to who should have the simple task of slotting the ball past Crichton. Town continued to look the better side for the remainder of the first half and the start of the second and nearly every Burnley attack ended with the linesman's offside flag.

Shortly into the second half, a second yellow card for the Claret's Moore (slightly unfortunate for the player, in my opinion) seemed to affect the visitors more than the hosts. If the red card upset the home fans then the decision by the ref moments later not to award Burnley a free kick absolutely incensed them — it looked an obvious free kick to me. As the half wore on, Luton looked less and less likely to score with virtually all attacks ending with awful crosses which were easily gathered by their keeper. Burnley began to believe they could win the game as Luton, despite their numerical advantage, once again ran out of puff towards the end. Doherty was introduced (much to Douglas' displeasure) and, thankfully, on 87 minutes became the hero super-sub once more as he coolly found the far corner of the net with his left foot to send the travelling fans into raptures. Fotiadis should have extended the lead but Abbey also had to produce two saves to secure the points.

There were several plus points from this game:

- First away win for over four months.

- First time we have won a league game after conceding the first goal of the game since..... I don't know when.
- Many good performances including Marvin and Dyche partnership; Nathan Abbey's league debut; the one touch accurate passing of the midfield and mobility of Douglas and particularly Fotiadis.
- We managed to lose the yellow card count 4-1.

It was nice to have a smile on our faces for a change as we left the ground. I haven't mentioned Stevo. There have been games this season in which Stevo looked the only Luton player interested and/or capable.... Well, once again, in my opinion, he looked the best Burnley player on the pitch even though he didn't have a particularly good game, which gives you some idea of how poor this Burnley team is. Their supporters deserve better, that's for sure.

Finally, to round off the day, an eventful journey home — having caught the bus to Manchester, on walking up the approach road to Piccadilly station we were faced with a fleet of police vans and had the dubious pleasure of travelling home by train with hundreds of Millwall followers returning from Maine Road. Manchester Piccadilly resembled a war zone and it really was a throwback to the late seventies.

Steve F.

13.02.99 TOWN 1 WREXHAM 2

So much for smart-arsed theories about why we would win this match. Wrexham had been such a bogey team at Kenilworth Road for years that something was needed to provide a reason for optimism. It came in the shape of the fact that the last time we had beaten the Welshmen at Kenilworth Road was in 1980 when Blondie had been at the top of the charts with *Call Me*. So, the fact that Debbie Harry's Blondie were again at number one was to be the crucial factor in our glorious victory.

The first half was truly awful. So bad that calling anyone looked a better idea than watching the match in a morgue like atmosphere. The highlight was when Phil Gray, on as an early sub, hit a superb volley which brought a wonderful save from the visiting keeper.

The second half started well with Gary Doherty putting in some superb work down the inside right channel before hitting the ball home from an acute angle. All we then had to do was hold on to the lead for another 41 minutes. All we had to do.....

Doherty hit the underside of the crossbar from another acute angle a couple of minutes later, and if that had gone in, who knows? But the ball stayed out. Wrexham then started playing and pulled two goals back in the space of ten minutes, and for the remainder of the game Town looked for a way through but with such ineptitude that an equaliser never looked likely. Another home defeat at the hands of Wrexham, and another perfectly good theory down the pan. Thanks for nothing, Debbie.

K.F.H.

20.02.99 BRISTOL ROVERS 1 TOWN 0

Should have known it was gonna be a crap day when on the 8am train from Derby, all there was to take the piss out of were a carriage of Nuneaton Borough fans travelling down to Bath City.

Told them we'd be playing them soon enough if deadbeat Smiler is still manager at Luton. The Borough fans just laughed and said they'd heard Lawrence was a good bloke. Yeah, right!

Arrived at Bristol at 11 am just in time for the pubs opening. It took half an hour to find a lousy pub that was open. The farmers probably don't finish their milking till dinner. Had to wait 30 minutes for a pint. Absolute nightmare.

Arrived at the Memorial Ground and got my bag searched and my Guinness confiscated. I should have stayed outside supping as the game was absolute garbage.

We went behind in the 26th minute when Tillson beat Davis with a header that should have been saved. The rest of the game blurred in insignificance as Luton failed miserably to equalise. Kandol came on and looked quite good, but the geezer from the Ivory Coast, L'andry Zahana-Oni is an absolute pile of shit and should be kicked back to Bromley!

The only players to emerge with any credit were Sean Dyche and Alan White. The rest of the team was very poor, lacking any ideas — we could still be playing now and not score.

Came out of the ground moaning how crap Luton were, to which my mate Vaughan replied, "At least we've got an easy game on Tuesday against Notts County."

Yeah, right. We'd struggle to beat Ilkeston Town with performances like that.

What makes it worse is that we can play brilliant, circa Ipswich, Oxford, Barnsley and Fulham. All we need is a manager who'll show some passion and know-how. Why can't Lawrence shout at the team. He just stands there like a little girl waving his arms. The guy is a joke and the longer he stays the worse we will get, and that's the double truth, Ruth.

The train journey home was pretty boring apart from the Nuneaton fans nicking a crate of Stella on the train and laughing at the Old Bill when asked to pay for it! Got home at 11.45 pm, pissed up and pissed off.

Thanks for a great day, Lennie.

Ilkeston

23.02.99 TOWN 0 NOTTS COUNTY 1

Just when you think that things cannot possibly get any worse, they generally do, particularly when our beloved Hatters are concerned. Even allowing for the upheavals of the last few days and the poor performances in recent weeks I just couldn't see Luton losing this one, and in all honesty fully expected all three points.

Prat! I really should know better by now. Even by recent standards this was a nightmare performance, and it must be several years since I last saw a Town side put in such an abysmal display. Quite simply, Notts County were bad but we

were worse, far worse. I think the gate said it all really, barely 9000 paying customers on the night with only 750 or so from Luton. My God, how I remember the days when we all complained when the gate dipped below 10,000. Even allowing for the off the field problems this performance was totally unacceptable (Lennie please take note). It seems pointless to give an opinion of the game because so little happened. Suffice to say that had Luton still been playing the following morning their score would still have been nil. Whether there was a dubious element to County's goal is debatable. Even allowing for the Luton players' reaction when the ref pointed to the centre circle there have to be major questions asked about the marking of County's players. It was non-existent. So, another three points down the drain, a third defeat on the trot, confidence at an all time low both on and off the field. All in all, a very sad time to be a Luton Town supporter.

J.S.

27.02.99 TOWN 1 BLACKPOOL 0

The crowd and the players can take equal credit from this richly deserved victory over a Blackpool side that displayed none of the will to win evident at Bloomfield Road earlier in the season. The home fans here got behind the team in an encouraging way from the start, and continued supporting throughout the game despite seeing at least five excellent chances go begging. What prompted this change in attitude in the Kenilworth Road faithful was not obvious, but the presence of Chris Willmott and Alan White in a very young central defence, may have persuaded fans to give the players more leeway. Not that they needed it. This was the best performance for sometime. Willmott himself had an excellent league debut and looked a lot more composed than the vastly more experienced Mitchell Thomas. Thomas was presumably included to add experience to a youthful side, when in reality I could have done better. It is high time Luton cancelled his playing contract (at least) and allowed supporters to remember the first ever YTS lad for his skilful performances in the early eighties. No neutral observer would believe this shadow of a former footballer ever played for England U-21s.

On the other side Graham Alexander, showed more interest than in previous games, which allowed Gerry Harrison to take his place in the centre of midfield in place of Paul McLaren. Though this was harsh on McLaren (one of few Luton players to take any credit from the three previous debacles), Harrison was excellent. The former Watford player (everyone is entitled to one mistake) was tenacious in the tackle; skilful and speedy on his many forward runs, and quite simply an inspiration to the rest of the team. Consequently Ray McKinnon was able to go about his business in the calm and assured manner of an experienced midfielder that Luton could do with resigning next year. Allied to this, Matthew Spring moved to right midfield with no trouble and Phil Gray produced an energetic display up front, on his welcome return.

Luton tore into an unambitious Tangerine team from the off. Though still nervous

in places, the Hatters put together some entertaining moves and threatened the visitors goal on more than one occasion. Gray will know he should have done better with three good chances in the match. Had these, and a Liam George strike from a tight angle, not been saved: then Luton Town could have had a hatful. As it transpired, they were grateful for a linesman's flag which ruled out what Blackpool thought was a late equaliser. Despite pressurising the Town rearguard for the last fifteen minutes: a point would have been a point more than the Seasiders deserved, for a mid-table performance of below average proportions. This win was just the fillip Luton needed in preparation for a tough series of games to come. An optimist would point to Luton's recent good record at Walsall; their defeat of Fulham earlier in the season, and a very disappointing run of form for the early season leaders: Stoke City. Am I an optimist? Ask me in a fortnight. Attendance: better but still low, including the now requisite two coachloads from the opposition.

Cliff Saunders

06.02.99 WALSALL 1 TOWN 0

Tales of two ticket inspectors.....

Despite having sold their three best players in the close season and signing only the old has-been Andy Rammell, Walsall find themselves in the top three largely thanks to an inspired managerial appointment in Ray Gradon.

This makes me wonder if we'd have got shot of Loser Lawrence last season, maybe we'd be up there at the top of Division 2 for longer than a few weeks after the Fulham game. How many chances does Lawrence want to try to get us promoted? He's now had three seasons and failed each time. If I was as crap in my job as Loser Lawrence is in his, I'd be looking in the Situations Vacant column in the Notts Evening Post!

At Walsall we looked like a ship without a captain, a car with no wheels, a tree without branches. We had plenty of panache, style and charisma but no end product. The team has talent but like a tramp without a compass, we had no direction.

McKinnon was crap and if I were him I'd sign a new contract at Luton, 'cause no one else will sign the Scottish haggis, except maybe Tesco.

Spring should have scored after a minute but his shot, like a fat woman, was wide. The goal they scored was after a mistake by Springer who lost the ball and then saw Darren Wrack, the ex sheep shagger, score. Oh dear Jerry. Maguire. The rest of the game was crap, the pies were cold, the moon was bright, the air was fresh.

Echoes of 'Lawrence out' reverberated round the away end but, like a pig with no ears, Robin refused to hear our tears. We despair at the plight of the team yet all you care about is making excuses to the Luton News. You ought to be a politician Lennie. You speak so much garbage you should be on Question Time.

The train journey involved meeting York City supporters who had heard our tears and handed round a thermos flask and Jaffa Cakes. Even the ticket collector

smiled as I wiped away the tears of despair. Never has the loneliness been so apparent since my budgie escaped and left me without hope.

Ilkeston

Another 1-0 defeat — what is that saying about our current team? Obviously the defence is not that bad otherwise clubs like Walsall would be beating us more than a solitary goal. And the midfield and attack if they could only muster two goals in 90 minutes every now and again we may well be in a play-off position by now.

In a game that had 0-0 written all over it we again came out second best. Step forward Matthew Spring who should have scored early on when left completely free in front of goal. I wonder if Spurs are still watching him? I think not.

After that miss it was much ado about nothing. How Walsall have got this high in the table still mystifies me, they really do not look that special at all.

So, there we have it. On the positive side I did enjoy the special reduced price Silverlink stopper train deal which actually ran on time both there and back from Euston. However, I was a little put out to be kicked out of the First Class bit by the ticket inspector when I was flat out sleeping on the floor. I mean, I was not even using their seats, I just felt a little bit drunk (sorry, sleepy) and wanted a kip.

Highbury Hatter

09.02.99 TOWN 0 FULHAM 4

Return of the hack...

Having passed up the opportunity to watch Waltham Abbey v Royston, or Concord Rangers v Saffron Walden, I made my first trip to watch the Hatters since the Boreham Wood FA Cup match. By the end of the night, I wished I hadn't bothered.

Bearing in mind that Luton had won the last six games I'd seen them play goes to show how badly we've done since last autumn (this was my first defeat since September!).

We were doing well containing the champions-elect before Alan White's moment of pure stupidity on 31 minutes. Why the hell he waited until Hayles was in the area before taking him out only God knows. It was an obvious (and it has to be said deserved) automatic red, whereas if Whitey had flattened him in the centre circle when he first lost the ball he'd have escaped with a booking.

Top marks to Kelvin for the save, but he couldn't do a lot a minute later as 'The Hors' skipped through a powder-puff defence to open the scoring.

Our chances of winning the match had been ended by Alan White, but any prospect of salvaging a point were ended by that wanker in the dug-out with what has to go down as the worst substitution since Alan Smith for Gary Lineker in Sweden '92. McLaren for Douglas — I ask you! Douglas was the only man likely to grab an equaliser for us yet Lennie has a brainwave and takes him off. What a move.

The substitution worked wonders as Fulham doubled their lead within a minute. Keegan's team then went on to take the piss out of LL as Horsfield's devastating finish made it 3-0 before the defence all but gave up as 'not worth the risk' Hayles walked through for the fourth.

I hadn't realised how bad things had got over the past few months. If it wasn't for Kelvin playing a blinder Fulham would have reached double figures. I know we only had 10 men for the last hour, but that should have spelt out to the rest of the team how much harder they needed to work to try and get any sort of result out of the match.

The second half performance was just plain awful. Alexander and Mitchell were appalling — although the rest of the team weren't much better. I actually feel sorry for you lot having to watch this every week — I dare say I'm watching a higher standard of football in the Essex Senior League at the moment.

But let's look on the bright side, at least it isn't the manager's fault (is it, Lennie?).

Scribe

ONE MAN

Luton were on their way to play Watford when Matthew Spring turned to his team mates and said "I feel good today lads, you go down the pub and I'll take them on on my own." The rest of the team agreed and sure enough, after a couple of pints, the half times come up and the score from Vicarage Road is:

Watford 0 Luton 1 (Spring 27)

Happy, the lads settle down for a real session, but are stunned when they see a goal flash from the game:

Watford 1 (Noel-Williams 90) Luton 1

And this remains the final score! When Spring finally gets back to the pub after the game they all demand to know what happened. The crestfallen Spring looks up at them and says "I'm really sorry lads, I got sent off after 53 minutes."

Simon Arnold

the text files

WATFORD OFFER FREE ENTRY FOR DISABLED
Watford are to throw their doors open
to the disabled for the visit of
Swindon to Vicarage Road.

The Hornets are offering free tickets
to supporters for the clash on Friday
February 26.

This was seen on the screen on Monday 8th February. So now we know why some people support the scum. It's the karma working!

SHORT CUTS

Nice to see Dr Who was giving out good advice as long ago as 1966 — or was that 2150?

AMBITIOUS Division Two Colchester are giving Layer Road trial to former Bulgarian International Boncho Guenchev, 34, the ex-Sporting Lisbon and Luton Town striker.

Watch Colchester go now, eh boys?

FELLOW directors of Luton Town are unhappy at the way David Kohler has announced his intention to quit.

Cliff Bassett, Bruce Green and Nigel Terry — who own forty per cent of the club between them — did not know of Mr Kohler's decision until they were sent a copy of the same statement which was faxed to the media.

The Accuracy make their customary appearance for accurate journalism (sorry, does that give journalism a bad name?), this time for their inability to correctly name LTFC's massive board of directors. Bruce Green??

Daleks:
Invasion Earth 2150 AD F
C4, 12.35pm-2.05pm (12.35-14.05)
'We'll have to bypass Watford, the place is full of Daleks!' London bobby Bernard Cribbins joins Peter Cushing's Doctor Who and assistants Roberta Tovey and Jill Curzon, and they discover that the Daleks have taken over Britain. The powerful depiction of 21st-century London as a devastated war zone and the eyecatching design of the huge Dalek flying saucer are two of the film's strongest features. Its spirited mix of comedy and knockabout action is also very appealing. (GB/1966; Dir. Gordon Flemyng). Rating ✓✓✓

WHO NEEDS THE DOME?

So, the High Court challenge failed. So what. I have had an application to turn my house into a pub turned down. It happens to everybody. So stop whining and let's consider what else we can do.

In this age of shiny new stadiums there is no shortage of redundant grounds around the country. So, instead of building our own at great expense, why don't we simply move into somebody else's old one? Here are a few of the options:

Muirton Park, Perth (St Johnstone for the non-anoraks reading this).

Advantages:
Pleasant City.
Long way from W*tf*rd.
Could combine match with weekend in Highlands.

Drawbacks:
A bit far if not planning weekend in Highlands.
Half time haggis.

Roker Park.

Advantages:
Big capacity.
Friendly Geordie (OK, Mackem then) catchment area.

Drawbacks:
We always lose there.
Geordie/Mackem catchment area.
It has been demolished.

The (old) Den.

Advantages:
Charming local residents.

Drawbacks:
Even worse than Kenilworth Road.
Lousy pubs.
London ale prices.
Jellied eels.

Burden Park, Bolton.

Advantages:
Handy for supermarket.
Plenty of nearby grounds if match called off.

Drawbacks:
Language problems.
Tripe and pigs trotters.

V*c*r*ge Road (Rumoured to be still occupied. However, no football has been played there since 14 February 1998).

Advantages:
We have not lost there since 1987.

Drawbacks:
Armpit of universe.
Pitch churned up by Saracens (not a problem for hoof and run teams)

Baseball Ground.

Advantages:
Good tight traditional stadium.
Scene of a great Hatters triumph.
Handy for Luton by rail.
Handy for many other places (ie. Bristol).
Legendary alehouse (Brunswick).
Still standing.
Evening footy paper.

Drawbacks:
None.

So, Derby it is then. I'll have my season ticket for the same end that we occupied in 1990. It doesn't get much better than that.

Clark

DIARY OF A CHAIRMAN

They say that work as a refuse disposal operative, bin man to you, is boring but today I found the diary of a well known football club Chairman who has recently left his club. It makes more interesting reading than Glenda Drewery's World Cup Diary (or was it European Championship Diary) in a previous life? These are some extracts from it:

June 1990. I'm bored! Me and my friend Nick Pelkin want to be property developers but so far all we have developed is sand-castles and our egos.

July 1990. I'm excited! Just saw in a paper, not The Beano or Property Developers Weekly, that some Tory M.P. wants to sell his shares in a football club because "Darling Maggie" won't give him the job he hoped for as Sports Minister. It appears he tried to impress her by banning fans from home games unless they voted Tory. It also seems he sold their ground so he could make himself a fat profit on his investment. This means they will have to move and my mate Nick says we can make a big killing by building a new one. Nick's a Gooner and me, Man U through and through, but it looks a good thing, providing we can find the club's ground. Suppose we will have to pretend to be fans but who cares. Lovely money!

August 1990. Hurray!! We bought it! My Dad, who owns a Fish and Chip shop by the coast, lent me the money to buy the club with my mate Nick and "Tory Boy" nearly grabbed our hands off when we offered it.

May 1991. Nearly got relegated but who cares? Our plans are progressing and soon we will have a new stadium with a moving roof and a sliding pitch or is it the other way round? Who cares! Lovely profit.

One problem though, the manager, who used to play for them I think, and likes the place has seen through our plans. He will have to go! I know, let's sack him and bring back some bloke who used to manage them but left with everything including the loo rolls. He's on the dole at the moment, so no problem there.

May 1991. The manager's agreed to come back but the fans are angry and have been having a go at Nick and me. Nick says he's going to leave but not me; they won't get rid of me. Idea! I could buy Nick's shares. At a profit to him? You must be joking! He might be a friend but this is business. Lowest price possible! Then all the profit will be mine!

August 1992. The plank got us relegated. Who cares! I've got my salary (time for a pay increase), cars, etc. Don't ask what 'etc.' is. Can always flog a few players. The fans will believe I'm one of them. Ha Ha.

1992 - 1995. Working night and day on the club's, sorry, my dream. How are the team doing? Don't know, although I go to the games I'm too busy working out how much I can flog a player for and counting the interest on my salary. Do you know I'm the first of their chairmen to get paid. Unbelievable! Wonder how Man U will do and how Nick, that was his name I think, is getting on. Funny, he won't talk to me anymore, says I'm an anchor (I think).

July 1995. The manager's walked out. Gone to some club in the North, Leeds Tuesday or something. Got to get a new one but the only people who have applied are the youth team coach and my milkman. Mr Milko wants too much so youth team coach it is! I can always go to Sainsbury's for my milk. Seems it's cheaper! Another saving!

Nov 1995. Should have gone for Mr Milko. We couldn't win a raffle? The manager keeps on about being a top six side. Crap! Have to get rid of him. Who's available? Ah, some bloke who manages sides at the bottom of the table and seems to think it looks good on his C.V. What's his name? Can't think but who cares. The council likes my plans for the new stadium, so profit here I come!

May 1996. Relegated again! People keep trying to buy me out but no chance. I tell the idiots (fans) that no one has got the money — although nearly made a mistake and sold to some bloke who played in a Cup Final. Don't know who for as it wasn't Man U. Luckily I sobered up in time.

1997. The man from the council, he say 'Yes', but some Tory MP, David Dim, wants a public enquiry. Seems the only people who will vote for him live near the site. No problem. When Labour win the election, new stadium and loads of money for me!

July 1997. Labour win but still no "Yes" to my plans. No problem surely?

1998. Bastards! They've turned me down. Seems they don't want queues on the motorway. No problem to me! Once I make my killing they won't see me for dust. I'll sue, that's what I'll do. High Court here I come!

1999. Unbelievable! My "Legal Eagle" says I'm going to lose. Got to get out without the brown stuff hitting the fan. I know! I'll take the family to the seaside and leave some dynamite and a detonator inside the house so it looks like a threat. One of my neighbours can find it when they call to count my credit cards. Perfect, everyone will think I have to resign because of my family, credit cards and dog being in danger.

1998. It worked!! I'm out and everyone thinks I'm a saint. Which club wants a new ground now? Where's the league table? Oh good, Man U top again. I wonder? What's Martin's number?

Graham Field

CALLING EXILED SUPPORTERS

Do you struggle to get news of the Hatters where you live? If so, Hatters Matters could be what you need. HM is a monthly newsletter for the exiled supporter. A comprehensive compilation of news of LTFC every month, by first class post. To receive Hatters Matters send a cheque for £6.50 to Hatters Matters, 38 Twigden Court, Luton, LU3 2RL. For a sample copy, send a stamped, addressed envelope.

WANTED

Football Programmes and memorabilia.
Please telephone Nick Albone (01767) 260992

A BREAK FROM THE NORM.....

So, David Kohler is leaving the club and there is a mixed reaction from Luton fans. Some predict doom and gloom without his leadership. Others look more positively and feel that if we get someone with some money and a passion for the club it could be a good thing. I personally believe that a new chairman can act as a broom to update and carry the club forward. A new man will surely stop the rot that has seen us deteriorate during David Kohler's time. We await with interest to see who will buy Mr Kohler's shares. I can't really see you getting £2 million for them David, because what exactly, apart from an average playing staff, is there to buy? I will not condone the reasons for Kohler's resignation but am not convinced that it was a Luton fan responsible for the attack despite the ill timed Loyal Luton Supporters leaflet.

ΩΩΩΩΩΩΩΩ

On the pitch things aren't much better as we continue to not win many and lose at home to such quality sides as Notts County and Wrexham. However, there is no surprise there as Lennie Lawrence does not know how to remedy it and increase confidence. Well, I'm afraid Mr Motivator that is your job and with all of the experience you keeping telling us you have surely you should. Is it any wonder that often the players appear as if they couldn't give a toss on the pitch? Hot on the heels of Lennie's 'defend a one nil defeat' tactic it has become obvious to the players what to do if you fancy coming off after 70 minutes - be the best player on the pitch! Two more things about LL - can it do the confidence of young players, such as Scarlett and Willmott, any good to start one week and fail to make the bench the following?

He has stated recently that he will not quit as he feels that the club is not in a solid position like the 3 previous clubs he left. Were we not in Division 1 when you came to the club Lennie? Our better players are the youth developed by John Moore.

The first job any new chairman should do is hand Lennie his P45.

ΩΩΩΩΩΩΩΩ

Most people believe that we should sign Gerry Harrison if we can find the money. We managed to waste £20,000 on L'andry Zahana-Oni. Sean Dyche is an average defender at this level. That is he can tackle, head and foul. His Chesterfield roots are evident in his over use of the hoof. I do not think he is worth £200,000.

So, Steve Davis got well booed at Turf Moor. Well done lads! Why can't we realise that he left for personal reasons and appreciate him for his service. Gerry Harrison, who left Burnley on a Bosman, received a standing ovation from Burnley supporters. They can do it despite supporting such a terrible side. Next on the agenda is David Oldfield when he returns with Stoke. No doubt his reception will be warm and those boos work so well at the Britannia Stadium on the supporters current player of the year.

ΩΩΩΩΩΩΩΩ

A new angle on the KohlerDome emerged in a pub at Walsall talking to some Saddlers fans. The Bescot Stadium is built right next to one of the busiest stretches of motorway in Europe. I honestly believe that the proposal was turned down due to lack of money being offered to the government and the actions of two (one now ex) MP's Graham Bright and Peter Lilley.

ΩΩΩΩΩΩΩΩ

As I have said before I have the unfortunate pleasure of living near and working with many scummers. They constantly take the piss out of me for supporting Luton despite the fact that they only go to big games and didn't go at all for several years. "Why use up a days holiday going to Wrexham.....How was Preston?" are some of the remarks I've had this year. However, I had to laugh at them recently. Some of you may be aware that Watford have a terrible record on live TV and after the Swindon defeat they spouted on about how most Hornet 'fans' think that live TV puts a jinx on them!!! Perhaps it is because that on these occasions the opposition out play you? However, it got me thinking. Why not set up a Watford TV station, Scum TV or something, broadcasting all their matches live. They would be in the Ryman League within 5 years!

Norm

THOSE WERE THE DAYS....?

Reading about the days of following Luton in the 70's moved me to reminisce a little. You see, in those days (as now) there was a blanket ban on alcohol on the official coaches. However, it was not over enforced and the lads could not be bothered to pour vodka into innocent looking Fanta orange bottles. No, it was out with the very obvious Watney 'Party Seven' cans (oh, memories). One of us would then scurry down the coach asking in a loud voice if anyone had a can opener, which was usually provided by the steward (who now, by the way, stewards H block at the Oak Road end). I remember once pretending I was ill because I had drunk so many cans of beer I was in agony for a piss, unlike the lad mentioned in a previous article I did not have the nerve to whip it out and use the coach floor (luckily a few Bobbers runs now have a toilet on board!!).

I do not know if 'Skinhead' referred to is Steve, who has grown his hair now, but I still see him around. The guy with the bleached hair who snogged girls in the back is also still around as is a bloke who goes home and away and lives in W*tf*rd. And, of course, the aforementioned steward. And, in true cliché style, those really were the days.

Philip Darton

GET YOUR DICKOV FOR THE LADS

I should like to make one thing absolutely clear. I am not such a guy as would betray a confidence from a close friend, particularly not when it concerns bedtime secrets let slip during the course of a skinful of Shipstones.

And I have kept my silence these 20 years. That is, until a chance encounter with your editor in a pub before the Rovers match when he suggested that this story might interest the *Mad* readership. Indeed, it was my duty to tell it as it might well have therapeutic value by breathing new life into tired relationships of Hatters fans everywhere.

So, I have decided to compromise by revealing the truth while protecting the identity of my friend who will remain anonymous (but you know who you are Anthony Williams of Nottingham).

What is this secret? Well, back in the seventies my friend, then a keen Hatter, invented a bedtime game, 'Luton Charades'. Self-explanatory really. At bedtime he would act out a Luton player and his girl friend (not a Hatter and therefore not familiar with the players' names) would have to guess who it was.

Alan West, Brian Chambers, Keith Barber and Andy King were all pretty straightforward. The Futchers and Max Faulkner required a little more imagination but I am sure that we could all work something out. I remember an original interpretation for John Seaman. And, of course, Jimmy Husband and Graham Horn were saved for weekends.

Alas, my friend soon afterwards bought a season ticket for Nottingham Forest (it just shows what such decadence can lead to) which he has held to this day. I will never know what his creative talents might have done with Tony Adcock, Vidar Riseth or Graham Rodger.

But, most of all, I would give a lot to see him attempt Paul Dickov.

Clark

BACK ISSUES

Most back issues are still available. We have sold out of issues 10, 11, 22, 24, 35 to 38 and 47, and issues 3, 13, 23, 26, 27, 28, and 42 are in very short supply. 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 from us (at the usual address - see page 2) 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.

HAND OF GOD

Des Lynam, Alan Hansen, and Andy Gray are standing before God at the throne of Heaven. God looks at them, and says, "Before granting you a place at my side, I must first ask you what you believe in."

Addressing Mr Hansen first, he asks, "What do you believe?"

Big Al looks God in the eye, and states passionately, "I believe football to be the food of life. Nothing else brings such unbridled joy to so many people, from the slums of Sao Paulo, to the mansions of Chelsea. I have devoted my life to bring such joy to those people who stood on the terraces at Anfield."

God looks up, and offers Alan the seat to his left.

He then turns to Andy Gray. "And you, Mr Gray. What do you believe?"

Andy stands tall and proud. "I believe courage, honour, and passion are the fundamentals of life, and I've spent my whole playing career providing a living embodiment of these traits." God, moved by the passion of the speech offers Andy the seat to his right.

Finally, he turns to Des Lynam. "And you, Mr Lynam. What do you believe?"

"I believe," says Des, "You're in my seat."

Neil Brooks

GOING THROUGH HELL....

A British Soldier, whilst on patrol in Bosnia, happens upon a young lad kicking around a spent shell case with not inconsiderable skill. The two end up chatting and the soldier says, "Would you like to play football in England? A great friend of mine knows Alex Ferguson, the man in charge of the top English team. He could help you."

The boy appears very keen and so, when the soldier returns home, he asks his friend. Well, it turns out that Alex Ferguson is interested and so the young lad is brought over. He starts off in the Junior team, but is so good, he gets steadily promoted until he's on the substitutes bench for the first team at the FA Cup final. The game reaches half-time and the score is 2-2.

"All right," says Ferguson. "Let's see what you can do." On to the pitch he goes. The lad scores three fantastic goals and the team have a glorious victory. Afterwards, the lad goes to a 'phone to call his Dad. "Dad," he says, "we won the FA Cup final! I scored three goals!"

His Dad is non-plussed and replies, "Don't you give me that! Back here, we're going through Hell! Your Mother went out for bread this morning and hasn't been seen since. Your Sister was raped last night and your brother was beaten up in the street on his way back from school!"

"But Dad," complains the youth, "you can't blame me for that!"

"Well," said his father, "you made us come to Manchester!"

Neil Brooks

Luton v Fulham - A Tourist's View

An unexpected phone call one day, realised one of my worst fears with regards promises I have made while under the influence of a few too many Kaliber shandies. A couple of American friends were over and would they mind me taking them to a 'soccer' game as I had promised all those summers ago. Without hesitation, I agreed as I saw it as an ideal opportunity to show the Yanks that real football was the sport of Gods, not those dodgy sports that they are so fond of. Looking through the fixture list, I decided to take them to the Fulham game as it was the most likely game to provide my guests with the best level of entertainment, not wrong there then! I had planned the full 'British Experience' for them, a trip to a typical boozer beforehand, the march to the ground with the hordes (?), a red blooded game and a dodgy kebab afterwards, what more could they ask for?

Bearing in mind the fun and games that many of my mates have encountered over the years with the ticket office, I was pleasantly surprised by the level of help that they gave me when purchasing the tickets. I decided to plump for seats in the New Stand, as the Americans would appreciate the view from there.

The day of the game arrives and the 4 Yanks turn up in sunny Luton eager to experience the national sport of Britain in all its glory. Well, I did build up Luton's standing in the national game! Upon arrival at the mighty Kenny Road, the first thing my guests pick up on is the amount of police and stewards that were in attendance. American sports are a lot more family orientated, so they don't need hordes of police to watch over them. When I pointed out to them that Kenilworth Road was nearly a hundred years old, they all went misty eyed! Once inside the ground, they got their cameras out and started taking pictures aplenty as they were really impressed by the old ground, which, as you can imagine, took me by surprise. The game kicked off and my guests settled down to watch, soaking up the atmosphere. Before the game, I had taught them the 2 songs that we sometimes sing and they joined in with enthusiastic vigour whenever the crowd started singing them. They were disappointed when no-one sang the old ditty about Elton John though!

By half time, I had converted my guests over to the 'Beautiful Game'. They could not compare it to any American sport for atmosphere and passion. The amount of stewards in the Oak Road end got their attention, especially when the ponces from London scored. They were really impressed by the way that the fans backed Luton all the way (?), but were a little confused as to why we let the Fulham fans outsing us! They also loved the fact that nearly everyone was swearing but got a little confused when Douglas had his goal disallowed for being offside! I didn't bother explaining the finer points of the offside rule to them! On another note, they said that the half time burger was better than the ones available to them in American grounds, strange people these Americans.

At this point, I would like to take LTFC to task about the price of the seats. For £17 a ticket, the view my guests and I had from the New Stand was nothing short of appalling. I personally couldn't see the Oak Road penalty box and a large portion of each half was obscured by that bloody floodlight pylon. I don't expect LTFC to chop the pylon and stanchions down, but charging £17 for a seat that has a restricted view is hardly going to bring people back.

Mark Araci

The William Hill HatterLeague 4

The Steve Davis transfer deal is still having an impact on this season's HatterLeague, even though the number of transfers has slowed to a trickle now. The hot news for this issue is Vic Prior's incredible rise from 24th position last issue to top place this time, aided and abetted by the Manager of the Issue award. Speaking from memory (OK, writing from memory) this is the most significant improvement achieved in the history of HatterLeague — and even if it isn't, it sounds good. What is beyond doubt is that the David transfer has shaken up the top places, with only Messrs Price and Wallace maintaining their place on the leader board. Amongst the players, the star HatterLeague performer has been Matthew Spring, adding 22 points to his total in the period under review.

The HatterSix players and their scores are:

Code	Player	£	Pts	Code	Player	£	Pts
<u>Goalkeepers</u>							
301	Kelvin Davis		0.7 m	-12	302	Nathan Abbey	0.3 m -20
<u>Defenders</u>							
311	Gavin McGowan		0.5 m	-8	315	Steve Davis	0.8 m 22
312	Julian James		0.4 m	-26	316	Alan White	0.6 m 9
313	Mitchell Thomas		0.6 m	12	317	Gerry Harrison	0.7 m 0
314	Marvin Johnson		0.6 m	26			
<u>Midfielders</u>							
321	Sean Evers		0.6 m	63	327	Ray McKinnon	0.7 m 36
322	Matthew Spring		0.5 m	70	328	Jimmy Cox	0.3 m 2
323	Graham Alexander		0.7 m	60	329	Michael McIndoe	0.4 m 4
324	Paul McLaren		0.6 m	29	330	Andre Scarlett	0.3 m 7
325	Paul Showler		0.5 m	7	340	Kofi Nyamah	0.4 m 0
326	Simon Davies		0.4 m	2			
<u>Strikers</u>							
331	Phil Gray		0.5 m	51	335	Liam George	0.5 m 4
332	Stuart Douglas		0.4 m	52	336	Dwight Marshall	0.5 m 0
333	Herve Bacque		0.7 m	0	337	Gary Doherty	0.3 m 21
334	Andrew Fotiadis		0.4 m	15			

As mentioned previously, Vic Prior has made up an incredible 25 points on Kevin Hardy since the last issue, but with places at the top changing so quickly, this could be an interesting season. Newcomers to the top places are Les Miller, up from 19th to 6th and yours truly, making a further advance from 11th, and I can assure you there is no one more surprised (but certainly not embarrassed) than me — I have made my team change following Stevo's transfer, but had to ask who I had in my team first!

Leading Places:

1	DISGUSTED OF TUNBRIDGE WELLS	Vic Prior (Tunbridge Wells)	234
2	BARRY READS LOTS OF BOOKS	Kevin Hardy (Barton-le-clay)	228
3=	SCIENTIAE ET LABOR DETUR	Mick Price (Kensworth, Beds)	226
3=	KENILWORTH KICKERS	Andrew Wallace (Hitchin)	226
3=	MILLER MAGIC	Les Miller (Kempston)	226
6	SIX MAD!	Keith Hayward (Luton)	224
7	ANDY'S TOP HATTERS	Andy Wesson (Luton)	222

Thankfully, there will not need to be another 9 issues of Mad! this season as I have managed to accelerate my progress, but down at the blunt end it looks like Andy Hunt has exclusive rights to the wooden spoon, with David Harris now making a break for freedom and safety. the 69 point gap looks more than comfortable, and leads me to wonder just who Andy picked for his team to be doing that badly. Maybe we will be able to bring you that information in the next issue.

Bottom End:

119	BUMPS-A-DAISY	Mrs Sam Daniels	86
120	THE YOUNG ONES	Kevin Roche (South Africa)	83
121	RUSTY SUBMARINES AGAIN	Dave Daniels	82
122	DAVE'S DYNAMOS	David Harris (Southampton)	59
123	WHO ARE YA?	Andy Hunt (London)	-10

Remember, with the competition entering the closing stages, the transfer (HatterSwap) deadline is on Friday March 26th, and the competition closes at the end of the Lincoln City home match on April 17th, to give us time to compile the final results.

For now, that's your lot, but in issue 54 we'll bring you the final results for this season's competition, and the name of the winner of the £50 prize, along with runners-up and the proverbial wooden spoonist (what odds on that being Andy Hunt??).

K.F.H./R.B

WHATEVER YOU WANT

The Sultan of Brunei was getting a bit cheesed off as he had 6 children, all girls, and therefore had no son and heir. Imagine his joy then, when one of his wives presented him with his only son and heir.

Just before his son's sixth birthday, the Sultan took him to one side and said, "Son, I am very proud of you. Anything you want I shall get for you." His son replied, "Daddy, I would like an aeroplane." Not wanting to do anything by halves, his father bought him British Airways.

Just before his son's seventh birthday, the Sultan took him to one side. "Son, you are my pride and joy. Anything you want, I shall get for you." His son replied, "Daddy, I would like a boat." Not wanting to do anything by halves, his father bought him P&O Ferries.

Just before his son's eighth birthday, the Sultan took him to one side. "Son, you bring so much happiness into my life. Anything you want, I shall get for you." His son replied, "Daddy, I would like something to watch films on," Not wanting to do anything by halves, his father bought him MGM Studios and their cinemas, where he watched all his favourite Western movies.

Just before his son's ninth birthday, the Sultan took him to one side. "Son, you are an inspiration to us all. Anything you want, I shall get for you." His son, who had caught the 'Western' movie bug, replied, "Daddy, I would like a cowboy outfit." Not wanting to do anything by halves, his father went and bought him W*tf*rd Football Club.

The Harrow Hatter

The Sharpe End

If you watch Chris Tarrant's 'Who Wants To Be A Millionaire' programme, you'll know that when a contestant decides to put his trust in what the audience believes to be the answer, he is usually rewarded with a correct choice.

So, when Lennie Lawrence decided to take off Stuart Douglas and Liam George, the only two players with an ounce of pace between them, against Fulham, the immediate response from the already demoralised fans was: "You don't know what you're doing....."

And within minutes they were proved to be spot on as goals began to rain in from all directions.

Yes, I know it was a harsh decision to dismiss Alan White. We should have had a penalty before that happened, and had what looked a good goal disallowed. But the transformation from the best side to play at Craven Cottage all season, by admission of K. Keegan, to a shambolic mess against the same side at home was just too painful to take.

The absence of Steve Davis has been crucial and never overcome, but that can't be the whole answer.

Perhaps even more worrying than the collapse against Fulham who, we mustn't forget, cost multi millions to put together and now, courtesy of Keegan's understandable popularity and charisma, are also enjoying the tenderest of handling from referees, perhaps even more worrying is the statistic of losing three times to Walsall.

Any side can be beaten by any other, and no-one can complain too bitterly. Such things happen.

Very few sides lose both matches in a season to another side. the defeated side usually takes enough on board from the first game to manage to avoid going down again — that's why 'doubles' are so prized and so difficult to come by.

It is almost irresponsible to lose to the same side three times in the same season. And when one of those defeats is self inflicted, you have to question the suitability of the man who oversaw the debacle to be in a position to do so.

Chuckling away the Auto Windshield game against Walsall by fielding a below par side when they brought a full strength team and at a time when a confidence boosting victory was needed, was risible enough.

But then admitting defeat even before the return League fixture prior to the Fulham game must have been as demoralising for the players as for the supporters. "Unless we're at our very best they'll beat us", declared Lennie. And where were we going for this game — to Old Trafford, Highbury or Stamford Bridge, perhaps?

No, to crappy old Bescot Stadium to play Walsall in front of a pathetic crowd of just over 4,000. Yet Lennie had virtually admitted defeat before we got there.

Further evidence, if any were needed, of the misjudgment of our glorious leader was the inevitable sight of Barry Hayles, the man Lennie refused to splash out a massive hundred grand on, strolling through our back line to score, contrasted with the abject displays of the man he did decide to recruit from non-league, whose name I can barely spell, in the few games in which he has appeared.

Of course, the off the field confusions have not helped the performances on the pitch, but

any professional should realise that the best way to escape such a situation is to play well and to be recruited by another club.

There really doesn't seem to be much to be optimistic about at the moment, with Mr Kohler unwilling to explain just what is going on.

No one is going to be too upset at his departure, but he leaves behind one almighty mess for someone else to sort out, and unless this is done post haste we could well be starting next season at our lowest ebb for many a long year, which is saying something even for a club as conditioned to disappointment and setbacks as this one has become.

Graham Sharpe

RATS

A tourist from Luton wanders into a back-alley antique shop in San Francisco's Chinatown. Picking through the objects on display he discovers a detailed, life-sized bronze sculpture of a rat. The sculpture is so interesting and unique that he picks it up and asks the shop owner what it costs. "Twelve dollars for the rat, sir," says the shop owner, "and a thousand dollars more for the story behind it."

"You can keep the story, old man," he replies, "but I'll take the rat." The transaction complete, the tourist leaves the store with the bronze rat under his arm. As he crosses the street in front of the store, two live rats emerge from a sewer drain and fall into step behind him. Nervously looking over his shoulder, he begins to walk faster, but every time he passes another sewer drain, more rats come out and follow him.

By the time he's walked two blocks, at least a hundred rats are at his heels, and people begin to point and shout. He walks even faster, and soon breaks into a trot as multitudes of rats swarm from sewers, basements, vacant lots, windows, and abandoned cars. Rats by the thousands are at his heels, and as he sees the waterfront at the bottom of the hill, he panics and starts to run full tilt. No matter how fast he runs, the rats keep up, squealing hideously, now not just thousands but millions, so that by the time he comes rushing up to the water's edge, a trail of rats twelve city blocks long is behind him.

Making a mighty leap, he jumps up onto a light post, grasping it with one arm while he hurls the bronze rat into San Francisco Bay with the other, as far as he can heave it.

WHOOOSH! Pulling his legs up and clinging to the light post, he watches in amazement as the seething tide of rats surges over the breakwater into the sea, where they drown. Shaken and mumbling, he makes his way back to the antique shop.

"Ah, so you've come back for the rest of the story," says the owner.

"No," says the tourist, "but I was wondering... do you have a sculpture of a Watford supporter?"

Neil Brooks

TOWN TRAVELS

The next away match as you read this will be to Oldham, but that was covered in issue 52 so I'm not going to repeat it here. Instead, we'll move swiftly on to Sixfields, home of Northampton Town FC. Everyone who has driven to Sixfields before will know about the car parking situation, and the time it can take to escape from the ground. Having arrived early, you will want some refreshment, and will swiftly find that half of the various outlets on the Sixfields entertainment complex want nothing to do with you. Worse still, those that do are crap. Anyone seeking a decent beer will need to look further away, either in one of the villages to the west of Northampton or in the town itself. The Old Black Lion, Black Lion Hill is close by the railway station, about a mile and a half from the ground, and sells beers from the local Frog Island brewery amongst others. Family groups may prefer to try the Cromwell Cottage, High Street, Kislingbury, off the A45 between the M1 and the ground, which is a pleasant country pub, only spoiled by being a Whitbread/Brewers Fayre outlet. For the programme collector (!) the Northampton Town Supporters Trust run a programme shop outside the West Stand at Sixfields, or in inclement weather inside the Sportsman's Bar, where access can be gained solely for the purpose of visiting the programme stall.

Four days after Northampton is the match we have all been looking forward to, the visit to Manchester City. A pleasant April evening in Moss Side! Those driving will be pleased to hear that there is a good amount of genuinely safe parking around at a number of local schools, with Whalley Range High School looking best placed for visiting supporters. The nearest pub for visitors is the SHERWOOD INN, 417 Claremont Road, a Whitbread pub, although many of us will be drinking in the city centre before the match, and area awash with good boozers.

The penultimate trip to be covered in this issue is at Notts County, a simple train journey from Luton, and another city where good pubs are not too tricky to find, a fact not entirely unconnected with it having the highest ratio of pubs per square mile outside London! Typically, the very best tend to be the furthest away from the ground, on the other side of the city, but are worth the journey. But in spite of this there are plenty close to the ground and the railway station which is only a ten minute walk away.

Finally, for the very last match of the season (assuming that we haven't, by some miracle, made it into the play-offs) at Millwall. It's fair to say that we don't usually have much to write about visiting the New Den, and this will be no exception. It's worth pointing out that the *Evening Standard*, when previewing the weekend matches always recommends a pub for supporters to drink in. Always, that is, except for Millwall home matches. Which is why stopping en route is the best idea if you want a drink.

K.F.H.

SHORT CUTS

...actually know one? They are a breed apart who live among us but not actually with us. Such has been the situation ever since match officials first arrived in Britain in the Middle Ages claiming that they were descendants of the Lost Tribe of Israel who had been wandering in the wilderness for hundreds of years, possibly in

search of the away end at Vicarage Road.

The Refs quickly established themselves as itinerant adjudicators, moving about the country in search of arbitral opportunities much

So much for *Sunsport's* predictions. If only they'd been right about March 9th.

From *The Guardian*, a newspaper not unknown to have a little dig at the scum.

OH I DO LIKE TO BE BESIDE THE SEASIDE

Martin's favourite things about Brighton

1 THE SBA

"As a child I always wanted to live by the sea. I'm five minutes away from the sea. It's magical. No I don't go swimming. Why? Because I can't swim."

2 THE PALACE PIER

"I like the roll-a-penny game. I'm totally useless, I've lost thousands already in just seven months."

3 IT'S BETTER THAN WATFORD

"I must say that Beirut is favourable to Watford. I didn't move here because Brighton is considered trendy by the media, but equally I have no desire to live in Eastbourne and have nowhere to go out."

FEBRUARY 6 1999 *Melody Maker*

Martin Rossiter of the band *Gene* referring to his home town. Being less than favourably compared to Brighton is one thing, but Beirut.... bloody hell!

GAMES TO GO

SUNSPORT predicts that Fulham will finish up with 92 points and win the Second Division title.

Feb 20	NOTTS CO	W
Feb 23	READING	W
Feb 27	York	W
Mar 2	Bournemouth	D
Mar 6	LINCOLN	W
Mar 9	Luton	L
Mar 12	Bristol Rov	D
Mar 20	BLACKPOOL	W
Mar 27	Walsall	L
Apr 1	MILLWALL	D
Apr 5	Reading	W
Apr 10	WIGAN	D
Apr 13	GILLINGHAM	L
Apr 17	Chesterfield	W
Apr 24	WREXHAM	D
May 1	Burnley	D
May 8	PRESTON	D
TEA	Stoke	W

*HOME games are shown in CAPITALS.

Little backs his smile high club

BRIAN LITTLE has revealed the secret behind Stoke's success this season: "A happy dressing room!"

The Stoke manager believes the tender approach with his players is the reason for his men topping the table.

He said: "It is a happy dressing room with all the players coming into work with a smile."

"I have tried to treat the players as I would like to be treated by any manager of mine and it is paying off with them trying their hardest to get a

STOKE v LUTON

result for me and this club."

Stoke were boosted with the news that Graham Kavanagh has signed a new three-year deal and that Richard Forsyth is ready to return from injury.

Luton boss Lennie Lawrence is expected to recall David Oldfield to his attack.

ONE TO WATCH: Graham Kavanagh (Stoke)

PREDICTION: 2-0

Get to the end of this item, and wonder. Was this a badly informed newspaper or a badly informed manager?