

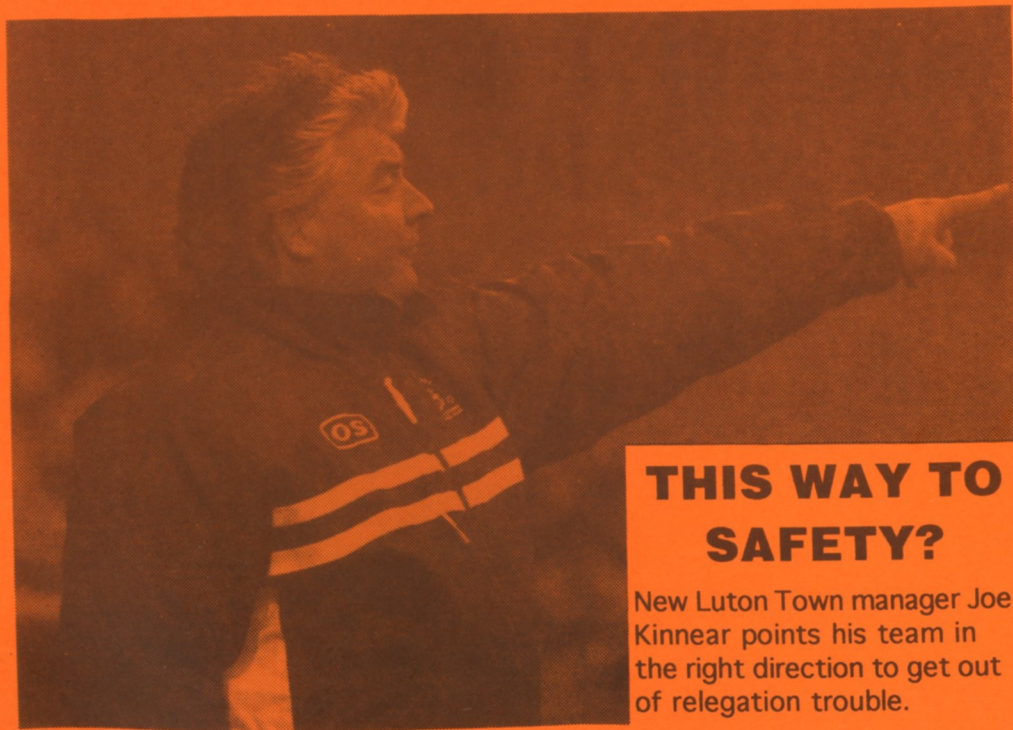
MAD AS A HATTER!

THE LUTON TOWN FANZINE



Issue 55

March 2001



THIS WAY TO SAFETY?

New Luton Town manager Joe Kinnear points his team in the right direction to get out of relegation trouble.

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THE LUTON TOWN FANZINE

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ED LINES

Well, it's been a while. If I had a pound for every time I've been asked when the fanzine is coming out next, since it last appeared, I'd probably be able to pay for my next two or three season tickets. But, as I have been reminded, if I'd paid out a similar amount every time I've replied, "soon" my financial position would be back to square one! Whilst the constant stream of people asking when *Mad* will be returning has been irritating at times, it is good to know that we've been missed.

The last time I produced an issue of *Mad as a Hatter!* the club was in the hands of the receiver, and FLAG was mounting a rescue bid. Ultimately, that was unsuccessful due principally to the main protagonists in the issue. One was unconvinced by FLAG's ability to make a go of running the club, whilst the other really wasn't terribly interested. In the meantime the middleman (the receiver) continued to encourage FLAG, probably because of a lack of other serious interest. Ultimately, the club passed from David Kohler to Cliff Bassett and we had a season of little change. Although the club was secure and the financial losses were stemmed somewhat, otherwise it could have been viewed as a season of stagnation, and another year where players were sold to help balance the books.

When the club changed hands again, we had a completely new board, and in no time at all, a new manager who, with the benefit of hindsight, was not up to the job. Players were brought in who were similarly equipped, and results suffered. But little else visibly changed, save for having a supporters representative on the board. And for those who feel there is an element of tokenism about this, there are regular Fans Forums, providing the opportunity to interrogate a member of the board.

Things have changed further and it was

another managerial appointment, finally showing genuine signs of ambition, that has prompted the return of this journal. Not that there is anything wrong with the ambition, so much as the apparently shabby way the appointment was made. Most clubs, after all, sack their manager before appointing his replacement and few, if any, leave it to the new man to tell the previous incumbent, publicly, that he has been replaced. Although it seems that Lil was never on a managerial contract, it seems that this was not handled as tidily as it could have been. Ultimately, results may provide the ultimate forgiveness. Little did we know at the time....

The final piece of the jigsaw will be an announcement about the new stadium, that we crave. Whilst John Mitchell has previewed this rather more times than necessary, we must hope that when it finally happens it will have been worth waiting for. There have been plentiful rumours about the site at Junction 10 being bought, and even one to the effect that the club was set to relocate to Hitchin (Hertfordshire? Unforgivable). Some snippets we have heard at least indicate progress - Joe Kinnear said he had seen drawings of the new stadium. Let's hope that we hear something concrete very soon.

Finally, a few words about our illustrious chairman. There has been some comment about how often our chairman is away on holiday, but to be fair the Watson-Challises (hereafter the WC's) are tax exiles. Admittedly, we're not used to having such wealthy people in charge of our club, so it is a concept that we do not understand. So, let's try and appreciate having a chairman who puts money into our club instead of being a hands on chairman in the style of some of the previous incumbents. If the WCs want to spend their time abroad, that's fine. We can get used to it - can't we?

LOOKING FORWARD

After Ricky Hill's deserved sacking my first thought regarding the new appointment of Lil Fuccillo was one of horror. How can the board of directors replace one very inexperienced manager with one of equal credentials? I was also angry and confused, Luton, long before Hill's departure, looked increasingly like undoubtable relegation candidates (as they still do - this written in between the Northampton and Notts County games) and their destiny was not likely to be cured by Fuccillo. I do not doubt for a moment, however, that Hill and Fuccillo were doing their best to save the club from the ultimate humiliation of playing football in the League's basement, in a league ill-befitting a club of Luton's prowess. But, desperate situations call for drastic measures, even though our previous two managers, former Luton players, had much success on the pitch, neither convinced me as manager that they could save Luton from relegation, let alone win promotion to Division One, which should have happened the season we were relegated to Division Two under Lennie Lawrence.

I have not seen anywhere near the amount of Luton games as I usually have by this stage of the season and this is for several reasons, but one of them is because I have been appalled with the lack of commitment and desire to win from the players, to lose nine games at home in little over half a season is more insulting to the fans than dismal. I used to moan at fans for deserting the team when the

chips were down, even my own friends, who were regulars at home and more often than not, at away games too. But in honesty, I can now completely understand it having missed a couple of home games myself in order to limit my feelings of frustration and hopelessness after seeing us take the lead only to collapse and surrender at the faintest attack from the opposition. I am all for supporting the club through the bad times (or perhaps now some of you will think I am not) and believe me, I have been there in torrential rain at Gillingham, on a freezing terrace at Wrexham and a witness of a dire game on the crumbling concrete expanses of Saltergate. No fun. No fun at all. There comes a time when you have to just accept that you are far more than likely to lose a game than even scrape a draw and this admission is precisely why I have begun to limit my travels to obscure grounds all over the country where we always seem to lose, opting to listen to Three Counties instead.

I was all set to make the short trip to QPR in the Cup after our excellent, one off, battling performance at home. However, after the Wycombe game on the Friday which I went to, I was so disgusted with our pathetic display that I decided to shelve my plans, even though I have to admit that I was kicking myself for not going in the 89th minute, Simon Oxley chirping away itching to announce the Arsenal ticket details, the Luton fans roaring

their appreciation in the background and then Chris Kiwomya.....

I stand to be corrected, but I do not know of any other season in the long colourful history of Luton Town F.C. when we have appointed three managers in one season. Joe Kinnear as "Director of Football" didn't excite me at all. Joe Kinnear as "Manager of Luton Town F.C." gave me cause to believe that, at long last, we may well be on the right track. Listening to the press conference and reading his quotes in the paper instilled optimism and injected hope into a desperate season at Kenilworth Road where I had already accepted the fact that we were to be relegated some weeks before the end of the season. Kinnear is a manager with a lot of worthy contacts in the game, a very well respected personality in football and most importantly, a very experienced manager who makes things happen. He did not have a lot of cash at Wimbledon, certainly not in comparison to other Premiership sides and with limited resources he kept Wimbledon in the top flight for ten years. Pretty impressive. It is true that he would not have come to Luton if the salary was not agreeable and it appears that there have been some "Ground promises", I sincerely hope that a new ground will be built in, or on the outskirts of, Luton and that any more attempts to move to Milton Keynes will be abolished for good.

After Kinnear's appointment midway through last week the remaining tickets for Luton fans at Northampton disappeared within minutes, serves me right really for

being sceptical about going. I sat behind the goal at the opposite end surrounded by claret and blue, with the exception of my three trapped friends listening to some ignorant sick fool in the row in front of us attempting to make limp jokes about Kinnear's very unfortunate recent illness. Says it all for Northampton fans really..... pathetic and in my mind they will always be bottom of the old Division Four, wouldn't it be nice to see them there again? Thankfully, the peanut brained bonehead was silenced after four minutes due to a sweeping move which ended with a rare headed goal at the far post from Stuart Douglas.

I am not getting carried away, but the difference in organisation within the team in comparison to any other game I have seen this season was almost a division better. Luton just about kept their shape throughout the whole game; Helin and Taylor operating as wingbacks worked relentlessly supporting the defence and midfield, Spring had a superb game, getting his foot on the ball in the middle and knocking it wide (even though his nervous, rashly hit penalty crashed against the bar) and Jude Stirling, my man of the match, was so dominant and mature at the back, never once losing his head in an extremely nasty onslaught from the Northampton front line when Wilson put three up front in the second half.

Gabbiadini and Forrester are a big handful for any second division defence. Ovendale was solid in goal and made two or three first class point blank saves. The fact is, we

kept a clean sheet and won a game and on that performance, if we can maintain that level and improve on it, with nineteen games to go, we will escape relegation. Although we should not be deceived. Some would say the damage has been done and I would partially agree with them but, it is a critical stage of the season and from Saturday's evidence Kinnear has got them playing as a unit, after just one game! The result will give the players confidence and belief especially considering that the game was away to a promotion chasing side. I have never doubted that many of the players we have are quality, they just need the right guidance and

James Cook

SHORT CUTS

We couldn't let this issue go by without a contribution from our old favourite the *Accuracy on Sunday*, now could we? But, surpassing themselves, they've managed to come up with not just one, but three.

Great score.

From what I've seen at Kenilworth Road this year - including the 4-3 defeat by Cardiff after leading 3-0 at one stage - I hardly think running football matters at Luton Town is going to do anything for his health...

More problems with the Welsh! But we've never heard of this bloke Rixon. Could they possibly mean Wrexham?

But goals from Kevin Rowland, Emerson Boyce and supersub Lee Mansell, in injury time, clinched a superb win.

direction. I will be very interested to see how Kinnear performs but I will certainly not blame him, or think anything less of him if we do go down, as with Lawrence in the first division, Kinnear has taken charge of a rapidly sinking ship but I am confident in his experience and ability that he will dig us out of the huge hole which has really been created by shortsighted appointments from the board of Directors..... at long last, I think they have made the right decision and I am looking forward to the rest of the season and I will not be looking back.

From AoS's John Ball's Diary, a comment on Joe K's health, but isn't that the wrong bunch of Welshmen?

Home.

Any pretensions the Town had of cruising home were soon dispelled by Swansea, who were obviously taking inspiration from fellow Welshman Rixon who made a successful comeback in Luton at the end of October.

And, finally, are we getting too pernickety? We noticed this last problem with names.

AWAITING THE MESSIAH

Great goals. Great games. Great players. All of which, and whom, we have failed to observe thus far. Falling attendances, fewer goals and crap buys - I'm sure Jim Jefferies at Bradford wouldn't swap his job for the one at Luton. In truth, the parts remain the same, but how different we all thought it was going to be. A new manager, new chairman, bloody hell - even a new 'keeper. Alas, the rest, as they say, is history.....

It was a hot August afternoon when it all started going wrong. Though a poor performance (and defeat) at home to Notts County followed the excellent welcoming of new Town manager Ricky Hill, little did we know that this was a more than convincing sign of everything else that was to follow. After a narrow defeat at the JJB against Wigan Athletic, the Town took to cup competition, though a 0-0 1st leg home draw with Peterborough did not exactly have the Town faithful salivating at the season's prospects. Spring's penalty managed to see off Bournemouth, and Kandol's late equaliser earned the Town their impressive unbeaten run against Wycombe. The referee that day, Fraser Stretton, nearly had me ejected for foul and abusive language, such were his pathetic decisions. What looked like a disappointing draw at newly promoted Rotherham actually looks like a decent result right now, and this preceded an extra time victory at Peterborough, to earn ourselves a plum(ish) tie over two legs against Sunderland. However, two inept performances firstly against Northampton and then home to Walsall made most Town fans think that we'd be going nowhere fast - and they'd be right. Add to this the addition of the incredibly useless plank Peter Thompson, and it all started looking well gloomy.

An appalling display in Swansea left the club with a positional crisis, let alone the ongoing petrol crisis. Laugh of the day was when, after the game, the Swans' boss John Hollins suggested his club would be well in contention for a play-off place!! It obviously hadn't registered in his small brain who he was actually playing against that day. A miserable home defeat by Swindon came in between the 1-5 reverse against Sunderland over two legs, though the home performance gave us a little, if optimistic, something to shout about. An impressive display at Bristol Rovers saw TK add (his last ever?) two goals to secure a 3-3 draw. October arrived, and 22nd position dawned. A Sunday kick-off did nothing to prevent those bastards at Millwall leaving with five consecutive victories at our place - depressing. Mar Stein's early opener at Cambridge still couldn't ease any players (or supporters) nerves, and with Spring's sending off went any chance of one point, let alone what could've been all three.

Surely a midweek trip to by far the worst side (well, just below us) in the league, Oxford, would bring the Town 3 points for the first time in nearly two months. Despite numerous attempts and near misses on their goal, we could still only manage a draw - a huge disappointment. A much needed victory over Brentford, with the addition of Stu Douglas, after injury had kept him out all

season, was a welcome relief to the Luton Town faithful. If only we had ten more of his type at the club.

Seven days later came the visit of Wrexham, and after easing into a comfortable 3-0 lead somehow, somehow, somehow, the players left the pitch at 90 minutes defeated 3-4. I'm lucky enough to be able to admit that I was at work that afternoon, but coming home at 4.30pm, and seeing the score come up on *Gillette Soccer Saturday*, I really couldn't believe it. Even when Wrexham equalised, I still thought we'd go on to win it.

Petri Helin's debut at Bury also brought his first goal for the club, alongside the debut of former Juventus defender (well, a substitute appearance), Kent Karlsen. An inept 0-3 reverse at home to Bristol City and an even more disgraceful performance at Port Vale sandwiched a less than convincing, but important, FA Cup victory over Conference side, Rushden & Diamonds with Liam George's slightly controversial goal enabling a 1-0 result.

Following the aforementioned performance against Bristol City, came the resignation/sacking of Ricky Hill. Maybe he had been found out, possibly he hadn't been given enough time, but essentially we were in the shit, and performances had reached an all time low. Within 48 hours, chief scout Pasquale 'Lil' Fuccillo was elevated to the helm to put some steel into the team.

Another trip to the Potteries, and the daunting task of trying to come back with anything from Stoke City proved somewhat easier than expected, with incredibly useless plank Peter Thompson scoring twice, including a deft lob to seal an unlikely 3-1 victory.

Following LDV and FA Cup disappointment at Peterborough and Darlington, though 0-0 at the latter might have seemed like a good result in the context of this season, came another pathetic collapse to "mighty" Colchester, and a seventh home defeat of the season. A trip to the unpronounceable Madejski brought nothing more than moans, but a spirited victory over Peterborough on Boxing Day gave a handful of us hope, though TK's 15 minutes as sub were as disgraceful as you will ever see at any professional club in the country.

The hope that came from that game quickly evaporated with a toothless performance at home to Wigan. Would the New Year bring optimism? The signs looked promising when firstly Andy Fotiadis, and then Locke scored within a minute of each other on the stroke of half time to give the Hatters the lead at the break. Sadly, and even more frustratingly, Bournemouth nicked right at the end to leave the Town with nothing.

A welcome distraction in the form of an FA Cup 3rd round tie at home to QPR followed, and an impressive display saw the Town leading with only two minutes to play. Inexplicably, Nogan palmed out a corner that was going absolutely nowhere, and Peacock sent Ovendale the wrong way to square it at 3-3. By the way, am I the only person to notice that when facing a penalty, Ovendale goes

down so early to his right, leaving all of the goal invitingly open? Judge next time if you will. A Friday night reverse left the Town pointless from their last three league matches.

And so to the QPR replay. Obviously not wanting to dwell on this matter longer than need be, but I'm afraid if referees make mistakes like Mr Furnandiz did, jobs need to be put on the line, and heads have got to start rolling. Mansell (playing the best debut for the Town I can recall) was nearly decapitated by Langley, and the match, on this single decision, was lost there and then. 4,000 Luton supporters knew that we never looked likely to score again but, going back to the original point, WE NEVER WOULD HAVE NEEDED TO. Please, Football Association, make your employees accountable for their actions, because that's the only way I'm judged at work. Add to this the appalling arrogance and manner of the way we were herded from the ground left me feeling the most depressed in 19 years of supporting the Town. Oh yes, it should have been Arsenal. A crap display up at Oldham (some grounds you just never win at) left the whole of the club fearing the very worst.

After postponements at home to Reading and Rotherham, a tiny rumour. Then, on February 8th, an announcement was made. An announcement which possibly, just possibly, could mean the start of something great again at Kenilworth Road. The arrival of Joe Kinnear.....

Tony Allbones, The Kempston Methodist

SHORT CUTS

ROYAL Mail meanies barred staff from joining in — claiming the shirts could ruin their image.

Postal workers were told they would be disciplined if they tried to sidestep the ban.

An internal memo at a huge sorting office in Watford, Herts, said because of the Royal Mail's "unique standing in the community" wearing kits "could damage our reputation and image".

This piece came from *The Sun*, and refers to the charity Strip 4 Shelter Day.

You can understand the Royal Mail's point of view - just one Watford shirt could have been disastrous!

WANTED

Football Programmes and memorabilia.

Please telephone Nick Albone (01767) 260992

PC PROBLEMS??

It has come to my attention that there are some "football" viruses around at the moment.....for example:

The Manchester United virus: Your PC develops a disorder whereby the memory forgets everything before 1993.

The Man United shirt virus: This one is especially hard to detect as it changes its identity every three months.

The Beckham virus: The lights on your PC are all on but nothing works.

The Roy Keane virus: Throws you out of Windows.

The Alex Ferguson virus: Continuous whining until your PC explodes leaving you with nothing.

The Blue and White virus family (Mainly from Italy) look like they may cause you problems for six months, but then fade away.

The Dennis Wise virus: Gives up after two bytes.

The Gustavo Poyet virus: Your PC repeats this loop, it works brilliantly for 45 minutes, then breaks down for three months.

The Ian Walker virus: You just can't save anything.

The Sol Campbell virus: Makes your computer think it's better than it actually is.

The Ian Walker virus v.2: A particularly ugly virus which when combined with the Sol Campbell virus, your PC fails to pick up any Italian mail.

The David Ginola virus: Computer pretends to go down, but then boots back up and is ok.

The as yet unnamed virus from North London: At the moment, it has got two titles, it's totally harmless but claims to be a world force. (A virus not seen in years.)

The Ron Atkinson virus: Remains dormant for six months but then your computer goes down anyway.

The Gazza virus: Just as you think everything is ok, it all goes pear shaped.

The Brian Kidd virus: Your 100MB hard drive suddenly expands to 350 MB and then goes down.

Not that it is very likely but if you do encounter any problems, try the On Site Man United Fans Technical Virus Support Hotline in London: They know nothing at all, they have different uniforms on every call out, it will take them 6 hours to get down the M1 and then they'll claim their Grandparents have supported the software for years.

Simon "Statto" Pitts

Managerial spotlight

	Terry Westley	Ricky Hill	Lil Fuccillo
Games	22	17	9
Wins	4	2	2
Draws	6	6	0
Defeats	12	9	7
Goals for	17	17	10
Goals against	34	29	22
Points	18	12	6
Points per game	0.81	0.7	0.66
Goals per game	0.77	1	1.11
Goals against per game	1.54	1.7	2.44
Highest position	16	17	23

So, there you have it, Terry Westley was the best manager of the three. He achieved the highest league position, secured most points per game and his teams conceded least goals per match. Mind you, I don't want to go through that again either.

Now it is different. At last we have a decision by the new board which we can applaud! The silence about the new ground may be deafening but at last they have appointed a real manager.

It took Lil 5 games to get 2 wins, Terry 10 and Ricky 14, so well done Joe - and both away as well!

We all desperately wanted Ricky to succeed and probably sentiment kept him in the job for a few weeks too long. Still, many thanks for all those never to be forgotten appearances out on the pitch.

Now let's get the fitness right - am I alone in questioning why there have been so many injuries in the last season and a half?

Some managers did get less points than Lil. Remember Jack Crompton? He was only here for a week (29.6.62 - 6.7.62) and we didn't play a single game then. If you don't want to count him there is always Terry Mancini.

Good luck Joe - 52 points should keep us up - when you came we needed 1.8 points per match and already (21.2.01) that is down to 1.56.

Neither Lil nor Ricky got 3 wins at all, and it took Terry 13 games, so to achieve 3 in 3 is magnificent,

Anyway, I cannot trace that any Luton manager has got off to three straight wins before - ever. But it seems that the play-offs may be just beyond our grasp.

Northampton Hatter

STILL CRAZY - JOE KINNEAR'S LIFE AS A W*TF*RD REJECT

Sometimes fate can make a decision for you. A couple of weeks ago I was killing time before setting off for the Sixfields Stadium to see if Joe Kinnear could do anything to cheer up me and my brothers. I went into the local branch of WH Smith to see if I could spot anything on which I could use the Christmas gift voucher my Mother-in-Law had given me. Spotting *Still Crazy*, the Joe Kinnear biography, on the shelf I could not fail to notice that it had been reduced to £8.99. Was this a sign of the man's declining fortunes or a just a lucky bargain? Within seconds the voucher was no more.

Still Crazy is in many ways like many other "as told to" football biographies, but the journalist Hunter Davies does well by his subject. He skilfully juggles the memories and thoughts of Joe Kinnear, his mother, his long suffering wife Bonny and former Wimbledon owner and eccentric millionaire Sam Hamman. Davies also throws in his own points of view, so that overall we get a reasonably rounded view of the Town's fourth manager since last summer. As is usual in these books we start with Joe's childhood. He grew up in a poor part of Dublin hardly knowing his father. His mother, an impressively determined woman, left him with his grandparents whilst going off to England to find work. In due time she returned for Joe and his sisters and brought them to, of all places, W*tf*rd. Here she had a job and a new husband, one Gerry Kinnear.

Joe's school life in W*tf*rd revolved around football. He was the star player at junior and secondary level. Eventually he captained W*tf*rd and Hertfordshire Boys, but then came bitter disappointment. After a brief trial, W*tf*rd FC (god bless them), for whom he had set his heart on playing, rejected him. Not knowing what else to do he took up the print apprenticeship that his mother fought to get for him. He carried on playing local football, joining St Albans City at 16. Whilst turning out for them he was spotted, in the time honoured way, by a scout for Tottenham Hotspur, then the most glamorous club in the country. He eventually signed full-time in 1965 and progressed rapidly into the First Team. At just 20 he was Man of the Match in the 1967 FA Cup final, when Spurs beat Chelsea 2-1.

After that Joe had a successful career at the very top of the English game. He was to win four cup winners medals with Spurs (the FA Cup, two Football League Cups and the UEFA Cup), play some 258 first team games and win 26 caps for the Republic of Ireland. When injuries finally kept him out of the team he reluctantly decided to sign for Brighton. It was not a happy time and, after just 17 games, one more injury brought his career to a close. This leads us to one of the great Joe Kinnear mysteries. How did the dashing and athletic Tottenham full-back of the late 60s and early 70s, readily remembered by those of us of a certain age, turn into the portly Cockney geezer who took over as Manager of Wimbledon FC in 1991? *Still Crazy* provides us with some of the answers.

Not finding an opening in coaching, Joe opened a successful Irish pub in W*tf*rd. In due course he became part-time coach of the mighty Woodford Town, but it wasn't until 1983 that he finished taking his FA Coaching Badge. Though in many ways determined, Joe Kinnear seems to have had a rather freewheeling, perhaps fatalistic, approach to his career. Things happen to him, but he doesn't often thrust himself forward. Thus it was an approach from the FA that took him to Nepal as National Team Coach. This was followed by two appointments in the United Arab Emirates, one with old team-mate (and hero) Dave Mackay, who duly invites him to become Assistant Manager at Doncaster Rovers.

After a couple of grim seasons Mackay had left and the Club then changed hands. Joe was shattered to find himself out of a job and back in London. Then Bobby Gould, whom he didn't really know very well, invited him to become Reserve Team Manager at Wimbledon. When Gould left, Joe became Ray Harford's number two. In 1991 Harford in turn departed and Joe's apparent hesitation led Sam Hamman to bring in Peter Withe. Kinnear is "gutted" but soldiers on. Withe fails to get the Crazy Gang to conform to his collar and tie management style and is soon sacked.

It was January 1992 and Joe Kinnear's hour had come.

Hunter Davies presents Joe's Wimbledon career as a triumph against the odds. He and Joe give us plenty of the 'Fash' and 'Jonah' Crazy Gang stuff. What they don't really reveal is how, in football terms, Joe kept his totally unfashionable and under-resourced charges so high up the Premier League table. We are told a lot about hard work, dedication and a madcap, stressed out lifestyle, but nothing much about tactics and football philosophy, unless you include such insights as the following:

"The dressing rooms [at Plough Lane] were awful anyway. I don't think they'd been changed since non-League days. The away toilets had a bare light bulb on a flex hanging from the ceiling. On match days we'd take the bulb out, making them have their shits in the dark."

We learn a lot about what it took to keep Wimbledon at the top. We learn about Hamman and Kinnear's ambitions to keep the Club progressing and the massive disappointments brought on by three semi-final defeats. The pressures on the Manager are increased by his over the top commitment, his unwillingness to delegate properly or to rely on other people. He compounds the stress of it all by leading an unhealthy fry-up, fish and chip, late night, motorway existence. Before an away match at Sheffield Wednesday in March 1999 Joe Kinnear succumbs to a heart attack that leaves him fighting for his life. It is not just his football world that is about to change forever.

The story of the heart attack, the slow recovery and Joe's change of perspective are movingly done in the book - there but for fortune and all that. However, those of us who follow the Town and come to *Still Crazy* six months after it was published, now have a unique perspective of our own. Whilst Davies and Kinnear spend not a few pages ruminating and speculating on what sort of job Joe will go for next, we have the advantage of knowing the punch line. We hear talk of Blackburn, Spurs, Sheffield Wednesday (rejected), the Ireland job and so on. We also get some revealing quotes:

"Next time, I don't want to do all that scratching round in the lower divisions and non-league, looking for cheap bargains, then working on them. I would like to be at a club where I can think of making an offer for Ronaldo, not someone from Brentford reserves. I've done all that."

Knowing where he does end up gives such comments an interesting slant to say the least. Amongst the many calls the out of work Joe receives is one from an alleged go-between representing a secret, but wealthy, consortium about to buy an unnamed club. Kinnear and Davies work out that the club concerned must either be Crystal Palace or (wait for it) Luton Town.

"Luton you'd probably get for £10 million. You'd have to build a new stadium, which could be £20 million. It's all bollocks of course. He's probably talking fantasy money."

Joe's frustrations at not getting back into the game begin to build up. Davies does a good selling job on his behalf, highlighting his achievements and emphasising what he has to offer to the right club. There is talk of what money it would take to get the former Wimbledon man into a high profile role. It is a lot more than the Town are currently paying him, leading one to wonder what might happen when the right offer comes along. Having said that, Luton Town in its current state has much to offer someone with a point to prove and a penchant for running his own show. The book is well worth a Luton Town read and tells us a lot about the man who has started so well in turning our fortunes round. I still don't like Wimbledon (or W*tf*rd), but it is hard not to warm to Joe Kinnear the bloke, particularly as fate again seems to have made a big decision for him - and us.

Roy Williams

JOE KINNEAR - STILL CRAZY. The Authorised Biography by Hunter Davies. Published by Andre Deutsch, 2000, £17.99 (local reductions available?).

NORWEGIANS WOULD...

On Saturday February 3rd, I dare say many of you will have been surprised to find the home match against Rotherham had been called off. A waterlogged pitch was the reason, even though most people had not noticed any significant rainfall in the previous 24 hours. Rumours of foul play were rife, but there was no football (another good result for the Town then!).

Most, but not all, of us were spared a wasted journey to Kenilworth Road and spent the day shopping or whatever. So, spare a thought for those whose journey was wasted. In particular, a group of 6 Town fans who had arrived in Luton two days in advance of the match and were committed to three nights B & B for the opportunity of seeing the mighty Hatters. Why three nights, I hear you ask. Well, if you have to pay out on plane fares to get here, you may as well make the most of the trip.

Let's hear it, then, for the six members of the Luton Town Supporters Club of Scandinavia who were in town to celebrate the 10th anniversary of their club's existence and ended up less rewarded than most of us are on our regular pilgrimage to the home of football. Salute the dedication of Crazy Lars, Torrill, Espen, Thomas, Per-Eigil and Thommie, and if you meet them on their next visit (scheduled for March 31, to take in matches at Colchester and at home to Reading) buy them a beer. For them it's an expensive business watching the Town.

KFH

Editor's Supplement

Since I first edited the inaugural issue of *Mad as a Hatter!* in May 1990, I have become used to being introduced to strangers as "the bloke who writes the fanzine". Nothing could be further from the truth. Without the contributions of a vast number of people, this journal would not be possible. And, as you read this, just 3 weeks after I finally decided to get the show back on the road, I would like to especially thank all those who have contributed to this issue, almost without exception, at very short notice. Without you, it would have been impossible. Naturally, aside from thanking you, I would ask that you, and others, continue to support me, and supply your writings for future issues, and allow me to continue burning the midnight oil (I write this at 1:06 am) that is part of the production process. Deadline for issue 56 will be April 21st - that's 7 weeks from the day this goes on sale. All contributions gratefully received at keith.h@appleonline.net or by post to 38 Twigden Court, Luton, LU3 2RL.

But, most of all, thanks.

K.F.H.

Another False Dawn!

When the Watson-Challis board took over I am sure many supporters felt Luton Town were about to take off; yet if his record at Baldock Town is anything to go by I feel we might be in for some disappointment. Baldock, sandwiched between Letchworth and Stotfold, both of whom have teams playing in the lower levels on non league soccer in front of barely sixty or seventy people, seldom seem to pick up football fans from those clubs when they are playing away and Baldock are at home. As in any level of football, without the supporters going through the turnstiles clubs will struggle to get quality players unless they are helped out by a wealthy benefactor. Watson-Challis, during his joint chairmanship of Baldock Town, did not seem to have spent much of his own money.

Baldock Town's rise began when they were runners-up in the Southern League South, mainly due to the prolific goalscoring of one Kevin Phillips. Watson-Challis came in with Brian Stein at the start of 1995-96, as chairman and manager and took the club to fourth from bottom. Stein didn't hang about for a second season as manager and the club were relegated, 20th out of 22. Back in the Southern League South a similar position was achieved; had the teams below the Southern League had better facilities then a second relegation would have followed. Under the same management positions of 8th and 10th (last season) were achieved.

Perhaps I am being cynical and trying to measure apples with oranges; but these facts speak for themselves. LTFC saw gates drop for the fourth consecutive season. Finances through the turnstiles are not enough to sign the quality players needed for a prolonged push. So far (*written at the end of June*) the only transfer talk has been of Bosmans, and Watson-Challis has made no definable statement that he would commit much of his own money for new players and it will be interesting to see how much money his fellow directors will put in.

Brian Ellis

The Short Sharpe End

People often wonder aloud when I tell them who I support; "What's the point?" Well, now there is one Luton fan who can answer - three inches.

Puzzled? The Daily Telegraph recently told the tale of a man who had been using the same pencil at work for thirty years. Colin Ormond, who works for a Luton accountant has apparently held on to the one he was issued with when he began work at the age of 25, at which point the pencil was 7 inches long. It is now a mere three inches long, we learn.

The article then reveals; "Mr Ormond, who lives with his mother, is happiest watching Luton Town or 10 pin bowling."

What's the point!

Graham Sharpe

IN RETROSPECT — RICKY HILL

"Oh yes," I told the club's press officer, John Buttle, last September, "*Mad as a Hatter!* is coming out really soon and we would love an interview with Ricky Hill." So, seven months, two managers but no *MAAHs* later, here it is.

The first thing to say is that Ricky is a great bloke. This was the second time I had spent some time with him, and he was unfailingly polite, friendly and interested throughout. Having been told that I would have five minutes with him after his weekly Friday press conference and before he went out to training, he gave me 30 minutes.

Parking up in the directors' car park, I walked past the W-reg, S-type Jaguar in the manager's parking space. The press conference — which was attended by Simon Oxley, some guy from Chiltern Radio and a couple of print reporters — took place in the manager's room, a rather shabby box of a room with no windows, naked strip lighting, cheap wooden furniture, a TV, a few photos of the team in action on the walls, a magnetic white board with a pitch on it to plot tactics, and a bottle of scotch on one shelf, presumably for visiting managers. He had a big desk (no computer) covered with papers, and the PFA's list of players.

The press conference started with Oxley's weekly pre-match interview — he just stood with a microphone in Ricky's face while Ricky was sitting behind his desk. Then the Chiltern guy did his interview, asking mainly the same questions. There were then a few questions from the print guys and that was it.

I was then left alone with Ricky. Of course now, knowing how it turned out, some of his answers are a bit painful, but remember, this was 8 September — we'd lost our first two games, but were then five games unbeaten (one win, four draws), were 17th in the table, and had just got through to the second round of the Worthington Cup.

Ricky took exception to the "fallacy" that Luton was his first managerial job. He'd been a manager twice, he pointed out. "Albeit they say it's America, but it's working with professional players. So far as I see it, I've managed players, I've managed the club, I've been party to transfers, merchandising, all those things, but because it wasn't in England people seem to want to devalue it."

So, was he worried about returning to the club where the fans considered him a hero? "I don't see this as a chance. I see it as an opportunity. I believe I have the quality to become a decent manager and coach, and the only way to find out if you have or haven't is by actually doing it, whether they are good or bad experiences, they are still experiences and you learn from each one equally.

"So it doesn't phase me at all ruining my reputation because I'll be doing my utmost to produce a good, attacking side that the fans can come to enjoy."

He appreciated the weight of expectancy given who he was, but said he hoped people would be patient. He recalled how Luton were nearly relegated in David Pleat's first season and that it took him four years to get them out of the old second division.

So what were the targets? "I'm not putting any pressure on myself in terms of targets set, but I want to see improvements, not just every season, but every day."

He said the squad he inherited was very light in terms of "manly experience. Spring, George and players of that ilk have been in the side over two years but are still not men in terms of the physical side of it yet. I'm concerned because they have played a lot of football [and it's not

clear] how much that football has taken out of them. And they have had a lot of responsibility put on young shoulders early."

Looking back on his career, did he regret spending most of his time at Luton? No, Ricky replied. "But I regret not having played for one of the major clubs in the country if I was good enough." He said there were other clubs interested in him which he wasn't told about. "And possibly at times it would have been nice to have known that there were these other clubs out there who wanted you even if you didn't want to go... But that's neither here nor there. I had good years and happy years and I enjoyed my football... I always felt valued by fans here."

He did not feel that football today was any better than in his time. "I don't think the product higher in the Premiership at the moment is that great. I don't see a real imagination in terms of football. I see lot of effort and competitive play, and real class from the foreign players and a couple of the English players like Beckham and Joe Cole, but I don't see an actual side that really, really produces exciting and imaginative football."

While he confessed that he was conscious of the tiny number of black managers and coaches, he added: "I don't look at things in terms of black and white. I look at it in terms of ability."

But would he have found a job quicker had he been white? "I don't know. I believe I've created a decent reputation in the country as a footballer. Perhaps because I'm not the sort who's controversial, my profile wasn't as high as I could have made it. But I always believed in carrying myself with a certain dignity and respect on and off the field, and go about things in a positive manner with my own goals and I always felt that if I kept chipping away and doing the right things and creating the reputation as a coach first and foremost with the players."

Cyrille Regis and Luther Blisset were contemporaries of his growing up in north London, but while the likes of Steve Gattling, who Ricky was at school with, got taken up by Arsenal, "scouts were wary to come and take players out for whatever reason. Whether it was the black thing, I don't know."

"There were a lot of stigmas going around: black players didn't like the cold, they didn't like the commitment, didn't like heading the ball, but one by one we knocked all those stereotypes out. There were times when I went to a ground and there were 4,000 people abusing me, but my strength is that I believed I had a talent. I'm one of those people who doesn't necessarily need praise or criticism — I have self-belief."

And of course that took him all the way. "From when I was 11 years old I said I wanted to play for England and thank God I achieved that."

The 1980s were a "fantastic" time to play, he said, and his path crossed the likes of Best, Marsh, Hoddle, Ardiles and Brooking. Trevor Brooking is an "all-time great" for Ricky. "He was a midfield player who created. I would rather create a goal than score one. I enjoyed creating."

Ricky emphasised the need to be a team player. "I wasn't a showboater, I played for the team. And I want my players to do that. If they do, I'll back them 200% whatever they do, good bad or indifferent."

Ricky nominated Brian Stein as the one player he played with who he would most like to have had in his present Luton team, "because he could do everything in terms of creating, winning penalties, scoring wonderful goals, making goals and you could play through him. He'd be ideal."

His best games? Arsenal at Kenilworth Road in the cup, which finished 2-2. Another 2-2 draw, this time at Swansea. The Man City game and the Littlewoods Cup, obviously. Wembley was a "great personal moment because although I wasn't 100% fit just to be part of it was fantastic. I

missed the Simod Cup and the semi against Wimbledon. To make it to the final was great, to win it was even better."

The FA Cup semi-final defeat against Everton was "possibly" the most disappointing game he played in.

His favourite team to play in was the 1982 promotion side, because it was full of characters. "It was a better period. The microscope wasn't on as closely as it is now. You could go out and have a little bit of mischief on the field but in the right manner. And the camaraderie was fantastic. 'Win or lose, we will booze' was the motto. You worked for each other and played for each other, and then you'd go out with each other after because you liked each other."

"All through my career at Luton the one thing that sticks out is the friendship all the players managed to strike up. You speak to players that have left Luton to go to other clubs and they'll all say Luton was the best for camaraderie."

And the best advice he was ever given? "Do the simple things well. Never try to manufacture things. If you have talent, instinctively that talent will come out when it's needed."

So that was it. It's a crying shame that it didn't work out. "If you shoot for the stars, you may touch the sky," he said, which sounds naff but he really meant it because he genuinely seems to have that kind of outlook on life. Ricky Hill is a top bloke and his unhappy spell as manager should not obscure that. Let's hope he still comes good.

Neil Rose

Nothing to worry about?

I recently learned of a problem at Kenilworth Road that I had been previously unaware of. During a chat with a member of the LTFC staff, who shall remain nameless, we were discussing the state of the Kenilworth Road ground - I still find it difficult to describe it as a stadium - the views from areas of the ground dedicated to corporate entertainment of the local back gardens, for instance. In spite of the best efforts of the staff to make the place look half decent for visitors, the problems just won't go away. For example, rubbish strewn areas such as Beech Hill Path hardly make the ideal approach to the Executive Boxes, away fans ridicule the state of some of Oak Road's back gardens, and even the chairman wonders about those garages opposite the Kenilworth Road turnstiles that at times seem to be a centre for a car dismantling business. But worse still is the fact that the observant visitor may notice carefully placed devices to deal with some of the local wildlife. To be blunt, the problem is that Bury Park apparently suffers a greater than average infestation of rats, and the Kenilworth Road ground suffers as much as the rest of the area.

But you have to look on the bright side. In our current league position it is worth remembering: rats desert a sinking ship. Let's hope this is a good omen.

KFH

RAVING MAD!!!

Dear Mad,

I actually live in Blossburg, Pennsylvania, USA now but every Saturday like most overseas Hatters I am glued to my PC with every single football website you can imagine flashing me latest scores as well as having Talksports internet sports shows blaring out as well. The QPR game gave my American friends new vocabulary to deal with!!!

Even 4,000 miles away the buzz is still the same when Luton win, rare though that is at moment, and lets hope JK can kick-start Luton's season!!!!

Bonjour!

Will Kelly.

Dear Mad,

I left Dallow Road for Denmark over 11 years ago and still follow the Town religiously. Trips 'home' are planned around the fixture list. Last season I managed to see four games (3 defeats and a boring goalless draw). This year looks to be a little promising that the previous couple. I've just reframed my poster of the Luton team and Littlewoods Cup dancing on the Wembley turf. Nobody can take away the good times.

Some time ago, you printed a Luton Town worst ever team. I hope there was room in your squad for David Carr, Wayne Turner and who could forget that donkey Steve White in attack. Any chance of a copy of that edition? I look forward to hearing from you soon (and you will, even though you wrote this back in October 1999! - Ed).

Steven Herman,

Esbjerg, Denmark.

Dear Mad,

Reading the latest offerings from 'Ilkeston' (in MAAH 54, a long while ago now - Ed), I feel I have to take issue with him over the style and content of his articles. I am very curious about the way he views LTFC and its playing staff and fail to see where all his heartfelt anger is leading him. We all view the matches in a different way and all have judgments on who plays well on certain days. However, with Ilkeston, every day seems to be a bad day and the constant beration of most of the playing staff is totally non-productive and frankly irritating. It's great to have someone who cares for LTFC as a supporter but how about directing the enthusiasm in a positive manner? Have you ever wondered what such negative comment does for self-esteem? And when were you ever so great at your job day in day out and totally deserving of your wage at the end of the week, eh? Perhaps we could have some feedback from your work colleagues to see just what they think of you and your superhuman productivity. As for your comments about fans shaking hands with Steve Davis and Graham Alexander before the Man City Game, perhaps we should put things in perspective. Both

Stevo and Graham put a lot of loyalty and hard work into playing for Luton and by no means should be slated for wanting to move on in their career to other clubs. Stevo in particular was a great ambassador to the club and an exemplary professional and it makes me wonder just where your priorities lie if you think it's so strange for fans to exercise their thanks towards him. He didn't have to come along to see the game after all!!!

So Ilkeston, let's start having some more positive energy in your writings and start seeing the overall picture instead of concentrating on one player, one match, one mistake scenario. If you continue to ply all the anger in your future offerings be assured, the only loser will be you.

Stephen Webber, The Antipodean Hatter.
via email.

Dear Mad,

I agree with some of the comments (elsewhere) about the state of the club. It's now clear the problems lie deeper than managerial level. Personally I am very suspicious of the current board set-up - we seem to have more Julia Carling type hangers on at board level - and no progress on the bread and butter issues. We have heard not a dicky bird about new ground developments, despite protestations by our all-singing, all-dancing, FLAG board rep and the assertions of MWC some months ago. I tell you what, I'd have preferred to keep Kholer (*sic*) - he may have been on the take but at least he was up-front about it and we had progress on a new ground. Better the devil you know, I say.

Another problem is the club just isn't sticking to firm business principles - if MWC left now we would be screwed because of our ridiculous wage bill. Letting Ricky Hill, an inexperienced young manager, run wild with his spending like a teenager with their first credit card is incredible and his judgement should be questioned.

I an.

PS: FLAG should now get shut of the few quid they have from supporters by sponsoring a one pound entry game for everyone, to try and get the punters back to Kenilworth Road. It's now time to end the posturing.

Dear Mad,

A lot of people have wondered how Emerson Boyce got the Man of the Match award for the Swansea game. I can actually answer this as I had my stag party that weekend and thanks to my brother, who is my best man, I was one of the match sponsors (I didn't know anything about it until I was taken to a hotel near St Albans in the morning and all my mates were there suited and booted).

Anyway, there were three co-sponsors. With almost 20 minutes to go, John Buttler came round and asked each of us for three men of the match in order of preference. I said Stirling, Boyce and Spring, mainly on the strength of Stirling and Boyce's first half performance. One of the other sponsors was in front of me and he said Stirling, Boyce and Mansell. I don't know what the other guy said, but

clearly he didn't say Stirling at all.

I wanted to tell you all about my day because I thought it would be interesting; there's also the odd bit of gossip, so sorry for the long letter. As I said, I didn't know anything about it until just before we all left for the ground (there were 11 of us). We parked up in the directors car park around 12.15 and were taken in for a drink in the sponsors lounge (which is behind block A in the main stand). Buttler said we were the first ever stag party to sponsor a game, surprisingly.

There was then a little tour of the ground, including the home dressing room, which was cramped and full of these stupid motivational signs like "No ifs, buts or maybes, just do it", put up by Terry Westley, apparently. I noticed a memo on the wall in the physios room from MWC making it very clear to all the staff, and especially the players, that only JK is authorised to speak to the press about football matters.

We then went out on to the pitch for photos etc and then back to the sponsors lounge for a decent lunch. Previously, the manager used to come up briefly for this, I was told, but JK didn't want to. What JK wants, JK gets was the message. John Mitchell did the rounds instead and I had a chat with him - nice bloke and he said there would be a press conference on Wednesday to announce the new ground. A separate rumour I heard is that easyJet are major backers for the new ground. Mitchell also implied that one of the things that really counted against Lil was his slagging the players off in public. He would not have liked that as a player.

After that was the game obviously and we had decent seats in the new stand (not as good as my season ticket seat, but there you go). Because it was such a bonkers game, all my mates including a couple who had never been to a game before, really enjoyed it.

After that it was back to the sponsors lounge and several of the players came up, but not JK and not all of them (there was a notice in the dressing room from when Lil was manager saying that any first eleven player not in the sponsors lounge within 30 minutes of the end would be fined £50). There were various presentations and photos with the players, but they weren't that chatty and all disappeared pretty quickly. There was a competition to win a signed ball by guessing the correct score before the game, and amazingly, one of my mates guessed right. We had all taken the piss out of him for guessing 5-3, but clearly he's a footballing god.

All in all, I had a great day and the club looked after us really well. All my mates enjoyed themselves and I'm sure that the care and hospitality they showed would make a good impression on anyone, despite the relatively low grade facilities.

Anyway, thanks for sticking by this letter.

Neil Rose,
London.

Dear Mad,

Good to hear that Mad will once again be gracing the terraces. I am not quite sure why you sound so apologetic about the gap. Anybody else could have taken it on if

they wanted. So I don't see why you should feel responsible for letting down millions of Hatters fans worldwide who have desperately been seeking other diversions to fill the aching void you have left in their lives.

I have attempted an article. As always, not the least bit offended if it ends up on the cutting room floor, or is held over for the next *Mad* in October 2007 (no, don't worry, this is not a cheap shot, you are not to blame).

I was in the Hare on the Hill last Sunday. The brewery owner asked whether I would like him to open a pub in Yeovil. I sometimes wonder why I drink there.

See you soon,

Clark,

Bristol.

PS: Junior Clark says "Yes, you are to blame."

LIKE THE FANZINE, LUTON ARE BACK!

Somebody pinch me. Eight days ago (this was written after the Swansea game!) we were staring basement division football in the face. But the revival under JK has put us right back in the frame for staying up. For a team that had won only four matches all season, three wins out of three says it all.

The thing that is pleasing is that it is exactly the same players who have turned it around, bar Dryden and Rowland (it also begs the question, why weren't they doing it before?!).

Not wanting to knock Lil, but it goes to show what a decent manager does to inspire a team to play with confidence. We're now playing with a belief that we are good enough, that we can win. Before, who would have given us odds on back-to-back wins away at Northampton and Notts County - both sides chasing the play-offs?

And the start against Swansea was just sublime. Two goals up inside eight minutes we actually looked capable of scoring every time we attacked. And while we were here, can I make a special mention of Liam George. Yes, he has talent and yes, he doesn't always show it, but against Swansea he was pure class.

How many times this season have we hollered at Liam, urging him to run at someone and take them on. Thankfully, JK has told him that's what to do and just look at the difference. Let's not get carried away here though, there is still a fair bit to do to stay in Division Two, and defensive frailties need addressing. At times it seems Boyce and Stirling just lack that little bit of experience, hence the number of sloppy goals we seem to be conceding. Admittedly they are young and inexperienced, although I don't think a fit-again Marv is the answer.

But, at least in the Swansea game, we didn't panic and fold completely when we conceded. We simply went up the other end and stuck another one in.

So, keep it up JK, we're on course for another Great Escape.

OUT WITH THE OLD, IN WITH THE NEW

As always we love to receive match reports for publication, although we cannot always guarantee that they will be used. With 14 matches to be covered between this and the next issue there should be plenty of scope for a wide variety of writing styles in this column next time round. Send those reports by email to keith.h@appleonline.net or by post to the address on page 2.

30.01.01 OLDHAM 2 LUTON DOWN 0

The end of an era?

I have said on numerous occasions this season, "That was the worst performance I have ever seen," but none, I repeat none, have ever been as piss poor as this one. Five strikers used at various times during the 90 minutes and only one shot at goal by Emerson Boyce in the 72nd minute.

The 2 goals - their first was as a result of a cross coming in, a bit of head tennis with the cross bar and bundled in; their second was great, a magical free kick from John Sheridan (Brian Clough said he was no good 10 years ago). Now I would have put a man on one of the posts so that he would have less to aim at, but we all knew what was going to happen, and it went exactly where we suggested it would go.

There was one funny point regarding this game - at some places groundstaff put ropes in and around the goal area, don't they? How many send on stewards to tell the opposing goalkeeper off for practising in his natural surroundings (between the sticks)? Oldham - not only did they get the arse for having the temerity to remove the poles and ropes, also for kicking the ball around. When the keepers would not move they then brought in not only the Senior Steward but also the Greater Manchester Police. It was a farce - even Lil and John Moore came out. During the argument the whole squad used their sense and swamped the goal area kicking the ball about - ah well, it was better than the match.

Sid Down

10.02.01 NORTHAMPTON TOWN 0 LUTON TOWN 1

This was fun - to start with Luton only had about 1200 tickets but I reckon they could have sold another 600 at least, maybe more with the shenanigans of earlier in the week. Just like the old days there were lots of rumours flying around; Mick signed yesterday, they have bought the land, Rivaldo coming in for talks, you know the sort of thing. How sweet of the local DJ to play Daydream Believer by the Monkees - we all changed it to the more readily known lyric - sounds great with the whole Luton end singing.

On to the game. The first half was OK, Town going 1-0 up in 4 minutes with a fine Stuart Douglas header from a Petri Helin cross - he was unmarked but the keeper was nowhere. In fact he is probably still rooted and being watered as we speak. The game was played mainly in the middle of the park where, it should be said, we just about held our own - restricting them to a couple of chances -

Forrester's header being one of them but straight at Ovendale. Second half was against the wind and also a typical Northampton aerial bombardment and again the main threat was Jamie Forrester forcing Ovendale into making 2 match winning saves. It was definitely a penalty in the 69th minute when Liam was tripped in the area, but Matt Spring did not look at all confident when he stepped up and hit it off the bar - we failed to follow it up and 1-0 is how it stayed.

Sid Down

13.02.01 NOTTS COUNTY 1 TOWN 3

So, was the result at Cobblerstown a one-off, or are we really gonna mount a serious challenge for an automatic promotion place this season? Having had to watch the previous game from the bank behind Sixfields it was nice to gain entry to Meadow Lane (lovely stadium - shame it's rarely even half-full!).

The Town started pretty well and though I can't remember too much in detail (five hours drinking in Nottingham may have contributed to that?) we looked the more confident and deservedly went ahead with Boycie proving that Marlene was wrong when she said he always fired blanks! We seemed to be in control of the game so it was a real blow when Stallard scrambled a messy equaliser for the Magpies on the stroke of half time.

The start of the second half would now prove to be the ultimate test of our new found confidence. We passed with flying colours when first George drilled home into the corner of the net and then Fotiadis sealed victory near the end. Foti had just come on, replacing the very ineffective Tresor Kandol. 'Thameslink' had only been on for less than 20 minutes so it was good to see JK quick to stamp his mark by subbing a very poor sub.

An excellent night's work completed by a clearly rejuvenated Luton team to send the decent away following home in high spirits!

Steve F.

17.02.01 TOWN 5 SWANSEA CITY 3

With two wins on the bounce, the Kinnear factor was in for a big test. He'd made it clear that he wanted a full house, and for the sceptics amongst us arriving at the ground was a pleasant surprise, with only that small block of executive seats in the front of the main stand conspicuously empty. The atmosphere was pretty good as well, and improved with Lee Mansell's early goal. It got even better when Douglas increased the lead, but there was a distinct downturn when Savarese equalised. As half time dawned, I doubt many of us were expecting the goal feast that followed.

The second half was one of the best I have seen for a long time, with both sides playing an open attacking game, and five goals. Particularly worthy of mention is Keith Rowland, for his involvement (superbly avoiding any contact with the ball) in Mansell's 2nd goal, and for his own well taken effort. Although the Town were always ahead, there was a noticeable level of tension around the ground as Swansea (and particularly Savarese - wasn't he rejected by Ricky Hill after a

trial at Kenilworth Road?) made it clear they were going to play a part in the game. This was probably due to earlier matches this season, but on this occasion it surely meant some people were unable to really enjoy the superb entertainment on offer. Personally, I left the ground with a broad smile, as memories of our early days in the (old) First Division came flooding back.

KFH

20.02.01 SADDLERS 3 HATTERS 1

After the impressive run of three consecutive wins under the new management of Joe Kinnear, Luton come down to earth with a bump on a disgraceful pitch, obviously used to graze sheep the previous week. Three wins in a row had brought confidence to a Hatters team you could hardly compare to a month ago but the mid-week away trip at Bescot was always going to be hard.

The team was unchanged from the match against Swansea and the shock of TK on the pitch before the game was relieved when he was not named in the final 16! About 600 Luton fans crammed into the away end as well as a few more dotted around the main stand and they were in fine voice encouraging the team - they had obviously not eaten one of the Balti pies as the toilets were empty.

The first half was really dour with Luton only managing three paltry attempts at goal. The fluid play of the Notts County game was far off as the Town struggled to put two passes together, and it was not surprising when Walsall's Leitao scored a scrambled overhead kick in the first serious attempt on goal in the game.

Walsall continued to control the game with Roper at the back looking particularly strong, mopping up any attempts from George and Douglas to break through. Mansell was injured after 17 minutes and replaced by Locke who continued to recover his form after his short absence. George also got a knock and was replaced along with Douglas at half time for Thomson and Fotiadis.

The second Walsall goal came on 35 minutes when an innocuous shot from outside the penalty area rolled along the ground, hit a divot (or maybe a burrowing mole!) and bounced over the body of Mark Ovendale. A gutted Ovendale took the blame himself after the match but the poor pitch has to be partly responsible.

So, 2 - 0 at half time, but a revitalised Luton came out for the second half (what did Joe say?) and Helin should have scored from a point blank header saved by the Walsall goalie. However, ten minutes after the restart a drive by Spring from the edge of the box went through a crowd of players to put Town back in the game.

Luton continued to press and a penalty appeal for handball was turned down after 60 minutes. But within six minutes, Walsall had the game sewn up as Dryden fell over allowing Byfield through to slot home Walsall's third. The game fizzles out and Joe's 100% record is over.

Good performances were few on the ground, but commendable performances from Boyce, Spring and Taylor, with my vote going to Locke. He felt after the game that Walsall were there for the taking at 2 - 1 but we let it slip (again!). A poor result and performance, but we will live to fight another day.

Russell Bulkeley

24.02.01 SWINDON TOWN 1 JOE KINNEAR'S LUTON 3

Arriving at the ground dead on 3pm thanks to Railtrack, I then found myself faced with a queue for tickets, and then a queue for the turnstiles. 15 minutes later, I'm in to see a good following for the Town and a crowd of just over 7000.

In the first 15-20 minutes Swindon put us under a lot of pressure and they looked all round sharper to the ball, with crisper passing, but we defended well. Swindon appeared to be a young, athletic team. After 25 minutes they got a goal. I didn't get a good view thanks to the sun which comes straight into your face at Swindon but I'm told Ovendale caught then dropped the ball allowing an easy goal. 1-0, and not looking good.

How things changed. Within 5 minutes we were level, a well worked move and a far post cross allowing an easy header to equalise in front of the delighted away following (sorry, crap with names!). 1-1 at half-time and we're looking good, even Mark Stein was showing signs of life after he came on as sub for Foti.

The second half we dominated apart from a short spell. Another well worked move and another header (Boyce?) made it 2-1. Swindon at this point created several chances, mostly headers fed by their belief that Ovendale was dodgy in the air. They swung a whole bunch of corners and crosses into the danger area but we held well. Around this point Mansell came on and put in a tremendous hooking tackle to stop a Swindon player getting into our box.

With Helin looking energetic and dangerous down one wing and Matt Taylor down the other we were breaking well. With about 5 minutes to go, a great kick out by Ovendale found Thompson (another sub and who gave us welcome additional heading power), combining with another player he got into the box, the keeper seemed to smother the ball but it ran out and Mansell fired it home, 3-1, a big relief.

4 wins out of 5, including 3 away wins, top-stuff.

Ralph

Another point in relation to this match. It seems that Swindon managed to sell more tickets for the away section of their main stand than there were seats available. Not only does this smack of incompetence, but there are important safety issues in this. Is this something that Luton Town will take up with the Wiltshire club?

Ed

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Mad as a Hatter! is again available on subscription at £9.00 for the next seven issues (Europe £11.50, rest of the world £14.50) from the usual address. Cheques payable to *Mad as a Hatter!* Please do not send cash by post as it rarely arrives.

WEB OF INTRIGUE

So, what has been happening since the last *Mad as a Hatter!* (and for a while, it looked like it would be the last) hit the streets. Well, a pint of beer will set you back £2 plus, petrol has spiralled towards £4 a gallon, and Britain has entered an Internet revolution. OK, we haven't been gone that long and all of the above were true of May 1999, but since we last appeared two new websites have sprung up all about our beloved Hatters - the official www.lutontown.co.uk and the unofficial www.lutonfc.com - the voice of the fans....

First out of the blocks was www.lutontown.co.uk, the official website of Luton Town Football Club. It is run by Ben Wright and Dan Savage, two 18 year-olds who used to run their own unofficial sites on the Hatters before starting work on this one last summer (apologies if other people are involved - I don't know who you are!). Being an official site, it has its limitations about what it can and cannot say but the colourful site includes almost everything you would expect. A quite decent news section contains some good items to read - things you wouldn't necessarily find in the papers, but then, websites don't have the same limitations on space so have room for all this!

There is also up-to-date ticket information for forthcoming home and away games, and travel guides, as well as player profiles and a club stats/history section. Sections for Junior Hatters and Football in the Community are, by the looks of things, just an extension of the sort of thing you'd find in the programme. And if you fancy buying the latest Luton Town merchandise, but can't be arsed to drive up to Kenny Road, then there is a web club shop for you to browse in the comfort of your own bedroom/office/internet café.

As far as I can tell, the site is kept regularly updated - I remember seeing one bloke tapping away a match report on his laptop, in the press box at Gigg Lane. But one criticism I would make is the length of the match reports - a minute by minute this happened, then this happened account of the game can become fairly mind-numbing (I think the Swansea match had to be done in two volumes!).

Second to hit our screens was www.lutonfc.com - an unofficial site billed as by Luton fans, for Luton fans. It was dreamt up last summer by James Garley and Paul - also known as Tootin Luton. James, an 18-year-old A-level student, said it was a unique venture, as although there were stacks of unofficial sites that claimed to be for the fans, very few actually got the fans involved in the site.

There are seven main people who run it James, Paul, Edd McArdle, Matthew Dwyer, Kevin Pierce, Mark Araci and Simon 'Statto' Pitts. James said: "Nobody can run a decent football website on his or her own because it will

become sterile with a lack of updates, and people will become bored of it. www.lutonfc.com is different because it is run by lots of fans, so the site gets lots more updates than it would if it were run by just one person. We want www.lutonfc.com to be a site for the fans - and we hope that it is. The whole site has been put together and is maintained in our own time - we don't get paid and we simply do it as a hobby."

The site is obviously far more independent, and as well as having regular news updates (ie match reports, team news, transfers etc), it is packed full of all the information, stats, player profiles you'll likely need.

There is also a fun section with jokes (virtually all anti-scum!), terrace chants and screen savers/wallpaper for your desktop (the Eric Morecambe one is ace!).

But by far the best bit of the site is the message board. The main one is where all the action is at, and at times there are some bizarre subjects discussed (one recent one was "Who would win in a fight: Mick Harford's mum versus Cherry Newbery?"!).

There are also boards for the Loyal Luton Supporters Club, travel and Championship Manager. But don't be fooled into thinking www.lutonfc.com was set up as a direct rival to the Towns official site. Paul said: "I don't see any clash of interests between the two, in the way that the match day programme is hardly a rival to the fanzine." (*too right we're a lot cheaper!*).

I'm sure the official site will attend to most of our needs on all matters concerning Luton Town FC but I, for one, think we should maintain an independent voice for the fans. The two can quite happily co-exist with the official site covering official stuff and the independent site less serious but, hopefully, more comprehensive and humorous. And, being unofficial, the web team have said any money they make will be pumped right back into the club.

Paul said: "Any money we raise above the running costs will be directly channelled into Luton Town FC, probably through sponsorship or, if we start to make enough, tickets for local kids."

Finally (and how's this for up-to-date information) www.lutonfc.com has been redesigned and is being relaunched today (March 3). Although he wouldn't reveal details, James promised stacks more features for the fans in the new look www.lutonfc.com. You'll have to log on to see what the new features are, he added.

Chris Lennon

Ed's note: What, you mean like a page for a certain recently revived fanzine? As if.....

www.lutonfc.com/maah

A TALE OF TWO CARRY OUTS

Can it really be only 7 years ago? The storming cup run ended only when the boys froze at Wembley in the semi.

The glory of the run has been well documented elsewhere - the gutsy draw at Newcastle and the brilliant replay win. The comfortable win at Cardiff followed by the violence by the home crowd and stewards. And Oakes's hat-trick in the 6th round replay.

But there was one episode of human endeavour and fortitude which has, so far, remained unchronicled on the pages of this distinguished organ.

You will recall that, to suit the needs of television, the 6th round tie at west Ham was arranged conveniently for 8.00 pm on a Monday night. This presented something of a logistical difficulty for the Bristol Hatters (a.k.a. Clark bros.). How to get in a few celebratory post match pints and still get back to Paddington for the 11.30 pm train?

A phone call to Paddington left luggage office established that it was open until midnight. Lunchtime in the Swan With Two Necks, a holdall, two glasses and two 4 pint carry outs did the rest. Arrive at Paddington at tea time, deposit the holdall in the left luggage, and off in the big city for a few celebratory pre-match pints.

Witness the heroic 0-0 draw (it was never a penalty - Sommer got the ball: well, near enough) and back to Paddington. 11.00 pm, up the escalator, pick up the beer and on the train. A doddle. Except that for a major London terminal, Paddington is suspiciously deserted. We find a railway bloke. Fire at Hayes, no trains tonight. He sends us to Waterloo, where we will get a train to Reading and thence to Bristol. He also, rather decently, opens up the left luggage so we can reclaim our beer.

Back on the tube. We seem to have acquired some West Ham fans going to Reading, three sailors whose ship leaves Plymouth in the morning, and various other stranded citizens who seem mostly to be women with small children. We find the Waterloo railway bloke. No, he doesn't know why they sent us to Waterloo. No, there aren't any trains. He sends us back to Paddington.

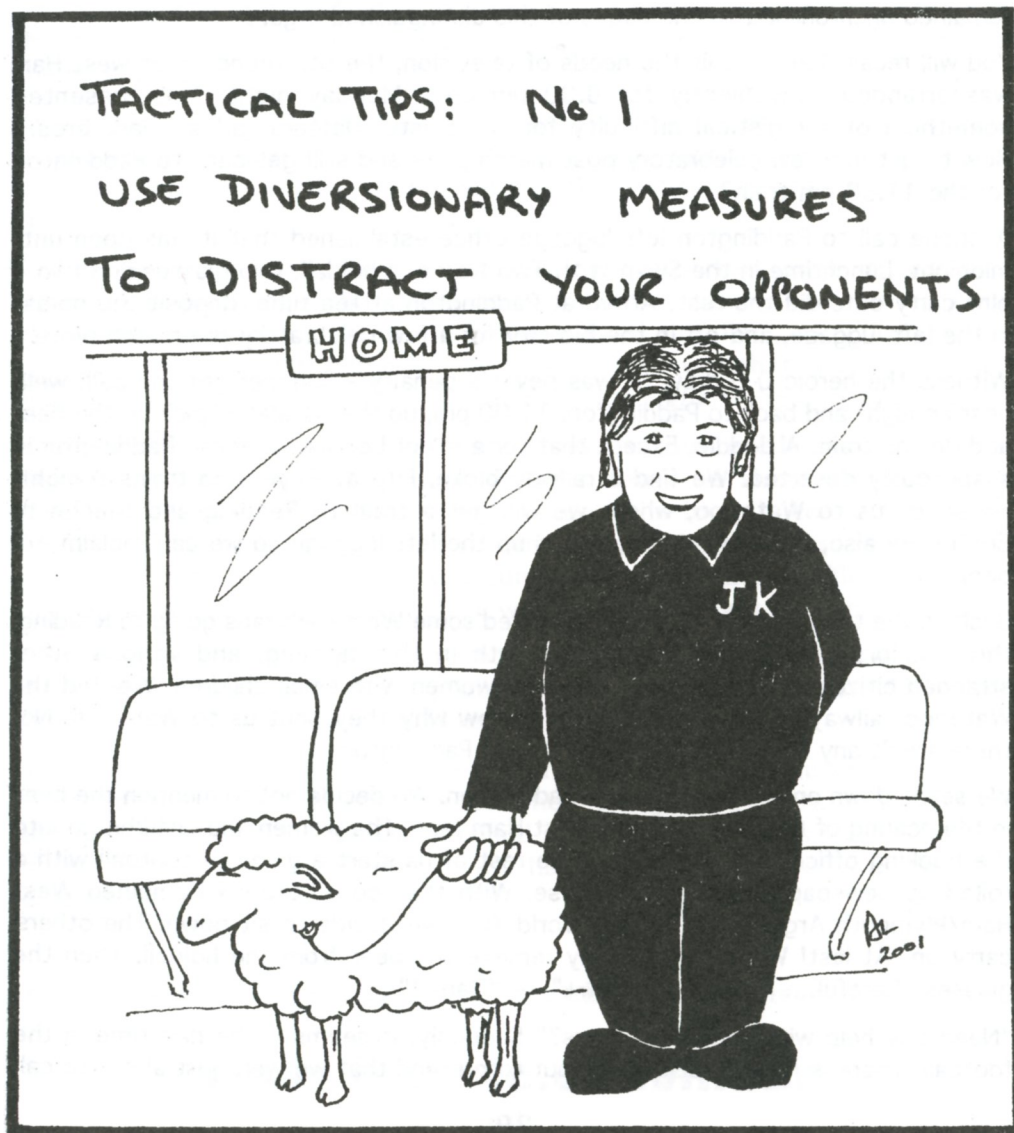
We settle down on the concourse at Paddington. We decide not to mention the beer in the hearing of the sailors or the West Ham fans. The women and children go into the booking office to try to sleep. The rest of us start a game of football with a rolled up newspaper on the concourse. With the score Luton 7 Combined West Ham/Plymouth Argyle/Rest of the World XI 2, we decide to sit down. The others carry on. At last! We surreptitiously remove the beer from the holdall. Then the glasses. Careful..... "chink" — "Damn!"

"Need any help with that beer, guys?" Suddenly, it seems to be half time in the football. There is nothing else to do but to pretend that we were just about to call

them over anyway. Junior Clark suppresses a sob. The beer drunk, the match continues. Until at 3.00 am the railway bloke decides that they will not get the line open and tells us to go to the Great Western Hotel. We all go to help the women in the booking hall. It is a touching scene. A motley collection of football fans and sailors carrying sleeping children to the hotel.

We are given a room. I have to share with Junior Clark. We have no washing kit. And, to be blunt, by this time Junior Clark smells a bit. But we open the holdall. Inside, intact, is the second carry out. At last, our celebratory pints. Joy!

Clark



THE LARS STRAW

Former Luton striker Lars Elstrup has got himself back in the news ten years after he was hitting the headlines in Bedfordshire. The Danish international, who moved to Kenilworth Road for a club record fee of £850,000 in 1989, has embraced a broader church since the early nineties, and for the last seven years has been a member of the 'Wild Goose' religious sect in his native country.

However, things took a turn for the worse after his fellow sect members kidnapped his dog, and he was then arrested for hitting a schoolboy while flashing for money in a Copenhagen shopping centre.

As to his surprising behaviour, he replied: "In some respects, I do this to provoke people. I like experiencing people's reactions.

"Some people may take my message to be 'sod off' and others an offer of sex. I am very aware of people's reactions and love the fact that people recognise me as Lars Elstrup."

Following his brush with the law, he has been expelled by the sect, which is based on the island of Funen, and his hopes of reviving his football career were dashed after he walked out on Odense when they refused to pay him during a trial (a footballing trial that is).

Now he is planning retribution against the Wild Geese, saying: "They are inhuman, and they even stole my dachshund, Devi. I am now ready to got the European Court of Human Rights."

Before he took to exposing himself in public, Elstrup was quite a useful player. He scored the winning goal in the Euro '92 semi-final against France, and bagged 19 goals in 60 appearances for the Hatters.

Sam Tidy

Quote..... Unquote

"Mick Harford struck me as the man who could give us aerial deadliness and I spoke to David Pleat, the Luton manager, about him. Sadly I did not show enough resolve to push the deal through. If I had acted purposefully as I should have done, we would have won the league."

Alex Ferguson's explanation as to why Leeds won the championship in 1992.

From the Football365 website courtesy of Will Kelly

MANAGERIAL REIGNS

Other than Messrs Crompton and Mancini (7 days each), Lil Fuccillo is the shortest serving manager in the history of Luton Town FC, in charge for a mere 83 days (up to and including Wednesday 7th February, the day Joe Kinnear was officially appointed as Director of Football). Of course, previous manager Ricky Hill held the record prior to Lil, with just 128 days, and Terry Westley before him, 168 days. As far as league matches go, Lil managed 9 games consisting of 2 wins and 7 defeats. This compares to Ricky's 17 games which comprised of 2 wins, 6 draws, and 9 defeats. Terry Westley meanwhile lasted 22 league matches, achieving 4 wins, 6 draws and 12 defeats.

Joe Kinnear confirmed that he was to be manager of LTFC on Thursday 8th February, so using this date as 'Day 1' his first target is 3rd May 2001 (84th day in charge), and in this period he would have managed 19 games - I hope

Simon "Statto" Pitts

'Statto's Corner' : www.lutonfc.com/statto

CONTRIBUTIONS PLEASE

You'll probably be as amazed as I am that we've put together this issue, but there will be another one for the end of the season. That won't happen without your help, so if you would like to send anything - articles, match reports, letters, cartoons, photos, press cuttings, or whatever, post or email to the addresses below:

Snail mail: MAAH, 38 Twigden Court, Mount Pleasant Road, Luton, LU3 2RL.
Email: keith.h@appleonline.net Fax: currently out of action!

A WIN AND A PRAYER

Don't let the opening line put you off this! I am currently training to be a vicar at Trinity College in Bristol and as part of that training us students (of a variety of ages) are put into small groups to lead the daily worship in chapel.

The evening prior to my turn to lead chapel we went out with the 'curry club' that we have at college and one of my mates (a Hammers fan) bet me that I couldn't get Luton Town mentioned in the short worship service. I thought, 'Well, I'm up for a challenge, and it's not as if we don't need prayer at the minute!' So I agreed to this, especially as I hoped it would perhaps liven chapel up a little!

The fact that everyone here knows that I'm totally nuts about Luton would make it even better since I always inform everyone, lecturers and fellow students alike, how we are doing which is greeted with a variety of responses!?!?!?

So, I woke up in the morning regretting the eating of a vindaloo strength chicken balti the previous evening, but when it came to the time of prayers I prayed for Catherine Bell as chaplain at LTFC during "a very difficult time for the club". That was sufficient I thought - anything else may have had college lecturers seething at an apparent lack of reverence in prayer - but my theory was that it was a genuine prayer need and God surely has a sense of humour and is interested in our passions.

Overall, it got an encouraging response from the other students who thought only Tim could get LTFC mentioned in chapel. My love for the club defies all logic!!!!!!

What happened next surprised me. I checked my email later that day and this is what I had received...

The Lord (godofluton@hotmail.com) wrote:

"TIM, I RECEIVED YOUR PRAYER CONCERNING LUTON FC AND I HAVE TO SAY THAT I DON'T HAVE A SENSE OF HUMOUR AND AM NOT INTERESTED IN YOUR PASSIONS. NEXT TIME I EXPECT YOU TO PRAY FOR OLD PEOPLE INSTEAD.

THE LORD

P.S. I AM APPALLED BY YOUR APPARENT LACK OF REVERENCE IN PRAYER."

Stunned, I felt it only right and proper to reply...

"Dear God of Luton,

Please accept my sincerest apologies and forgive my sin. Show mercy upon me, miserable offender. I thought you were the Lord of Luton Town Football Club as well as merely Lord of Luton. Don't you like the football team, then? Also, Loving Heavenly Father, was Mr. B Clough wrong when he said that, 'if God meant football to be played in the sky he would have

put grass there?' I thought that that was a reference to the fact that football was God's game played in heaven.

How can you ignore my plea for help when all seems so desperate at Kenilworth Road, and old people do go to watch the matches too, you know!

Please grant my request that we manage to avoid relegation and that hope may spring eternal. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour,

Amen.

PS. Can you get Watford relegated?"

I have received no further emails but so far God seems to have granted my request. If we can just get something from tonight's match (at Notts County)...

Incidentally, I have still to find out exactly who the joker playing 'God of Luton' actually is!

Tim Davis

TICKETS PLEASE

After having to relinquish my season ticket in 1998 due to work commitments (bloody non-league football!), a change in jobs at the end of last year has enabled me to return to Kenny Road. But rather than buy a season ticket, I've been paying on the day at the cash turnstiles, partly because I've been able to scrounge a number of freebies from mates not being able to go (I think I managed four consecutive games (home and away) before Christmas without paying!).

The only seats left for the Swansea game (admittedly it was about 2.59pm!) were ones up in the Main Stand at a whopping £17.50. Now for £17.50 I'd expect a decent view (no pillars!) and a comfortable seat at the very least and maybe a cushion or two.

Unfortunately, Block E of the Main Stand lends itself to economy class of some old Eastern European airline. The view is, shall we say, restricted (I feel sorry for the people who have pillars blocking the goals), and the leg room - well, it's absolutely non-existent. But, on the bright side, at least you get a decent view of Stockingstone Hill/Stopsley High School - you can also see that house in the middle of nowhere in Butterfield Green that I (and then Jamie Ayres after me) used to deliver papers to.

Now I'm not whingeing about the price of tickets, but would you not think the most expensive seats should be the best ones? There are far better views/seats in the Enclosure/Kenilworth than Block E of the Main Stand yet about £5 cheaper. Make any sense?

Scribe

LETTER FROM THE FAR EAST

Much has happened since the last issue of *Mad as a Hatter!* was fresh off the presses and no doubt a lot of the main topics are fully covered elsewhere in this edition. However, for me personally, it seems a lifetime away as I have since moved away from the cut throat climes of Bedfordshire, to the peace and tranquillity of Suffolk, near Southwold. I found myself in good company though, for Club Historian Roger Wash lives in Newmarket, long time fan Andy Fuller is based at Woodbridge and another, Stevie Weekes spends most of his summer weekends at Pakefield. I have seen several splendid souls sporting Town shirts on the beach at Southwold, but modesty has prevented me introducing myself. On the other hand, I once spotted a W*tf*rd shirt at Lowestoft, but as this place makes Grimsby seem like Cannes, it was quite fitting.

Of course, after over thirty years a Hatter, many of them a season ticket holder, it was a terrible wrench at first. I did make the 250 mile round pilgrimage a few times early last season to witness the exciting new talents of George and Taylor, but this soon tailed off. Partly, this was because of my deep dislike of driving but mainly because I got involved with the local village side. 'I'll help out when you're short,' I glibly volunteered. It turned out they were short most weeks. We play in the bottom division of the Suffolk and Ipswich League and last season finished plumb last in the table. One game we only had nine players, I pulled a hamstring early on and had to go in goal, and we ended up losing 23-0! This season things are slightly better, we are third from bottom at the moment and I even managed a couple of goals early on, but Saturdays can be pretty miserable, all things considered. The *Times* sportswriter Simon Barnes lives in a house overlooking our ground, but I haven't seen any report on our matches in his paper as yet.

Of course, round here, apart from the occasional 'Red', everything is Ipswich Town. Right across the county from Bury St Edmunds to Beccles, there is solid support for the Blues. You go in village stores and discover middle aged shop assistants discussing Town's prospects, something I definitely didn't hear all the time I lived in Bedfordshire. The potential for this club is enormous. Everyone is right behind the manager and the board, and they could become a real force in time.

People ask me why I don't go and watch them, but I reply that Luton are the only team for me. Ten years ago this weekend we beat Nottingham Forest, courtesy of a single Iain Dowie goal to follow up a 3-1 home win over Liverpool the week before. You could almost write a book on the sad events that have taken place since. Ryan, Pleaty, Westley, Lawrence, Hill, Fuccillo — they can't all be bad managers, can they? It must go deeper than that. Who'd have thought we would have been in this position a decade on? It's almost

heartbreaking, especially this season. I think the worst I felt was learning of the Wrexham debacle. My friend's little boy, Thomas Skinner, was mascot that day and I kept thinking how his big day had been ruined. At least Joe Kinnear has got off to a good start and give us a bit of hope, and with the welcome return of *Mad as a Hatter!* perhaps things really are taking a turn for the better. However, no matter how bad they get, no true fan ever turns to another team to support.

I still miss not being part of the Regular Rabble at Kenilworth Road. I miss the anticipation of seeing exciting soccer, great goals and the camaraderie and banter of the fans. I miss moaning at the likes of dear old Marvin, and of sharing the highs and lows (usually the latter!) of each game with my son and my friend Dave. I also miss those trips to away games on the Bobbers Travel Club with their wonderful assortment of characters who are genuine Hatters to the core.

I keep in touch via the internet and matchday magazine, which Mr. Swain has kept up to standard, although I am wondering how many more cigarette cards can that anorak possibly have? Never mind, his heart's in the right place. However, you can't actually beat being there, so one of these days, pretty soon I hope, I'm coming "back to my roots" to catch up with you all.

A.J.R.

PS: Got any cigarette cards, Mister?

Quote..... Unquote

"Keegan took a team including Beckham, Scholes and McManaman and turned them into Watford. And like Watford they got lucky on the odd occasion against opposition who were not mentally strong enough to swat the long ball like the irritating bluebottle it is and were flattened by any team with an ounce of wit."

From the Daily Express, courtesy of Dave Cudby

**ON THE INTERNET?
JOIN WHOSH
WORLDWIDE HATTERS ON THE SUPER
HIGHWAY
www.whosh.net**

SUNDAY LEAGUE REFEREE

With no fanzine for the past two years, we've missed an awful lot — too much to recap in this one issue. But can we just cast our minds back to last month, and what can, at best, be described as a poor refereeing display by Roger Furnandiz.

The match in question was the FA Cup replay at Loftus Road, a match we shouldn't have been playing, bar for scumboy Nogan. The minor hiccup in the first match saw scumboy inexplicably try his hand at netball to earn QPR a second chance (once a scummer, always a scummer - at least he did the right thing and cleared off). And in the replay we seemed set to book a dream fourth round match against the Arse, after Lee Mansell's brilliant debut goal in the first minute.

But then, deep into injury time, Doncaster's finest got involved in the act. Quite how that c**t missed the shocking assault on Mansell leading up to Kiwomya's (offside) equaliser is beyond me. I know we missed how bad the foul was until we saw the highlights on telly, but Furnandiz was stood 10 yards away from it, for fucks sake. Since when is a knee to the head a fair challenge? It's a bloody football match, not Leeds city centre.

As someone on the web said, even Garth Crooks got off his fence on Football Focus to have a go about it. Now with more and more players facing disrepute charges and trial by television, isn't it about time referees were questioned about inept performances. Roger Furnandiz should be shown the tape, and asked to explain why he played on despite a head injury (in a challenge like that, Mansell could have quite easily swallowed his tongue).

It's hard to think of another word to use, but we were cheated out of victory against QPR. Twice. But let's not get too disheartened, or feel Mr Furnandiz was picking on us. I have it on good authority that he was utter shite in his days as a Sunday League ref in Doncaster.

Scribe

PS: While we're on the subject, how did the most blatant clothesline on Scarlett only earn Barraclough a yellow card?

STAT ATTACK

A statistical preview of the Town's forthcoming fixtures

March 3rd Bristol Rovers H

Say "Bristol Rovers" and the reply will immediately be "12-0" or "Joe Payne scored 10 goals". Very few people will know the date, April 13th 1936, and even less can say that they were in the crowd of 14,296. Rovers do not have the best of records when visiting Luton. In 36 league matches played the Hatters have taken maximum points from 23 games, compared to just 5 Rovers victories although they have won 2 of the last 3, scoring 4 goals in both matches, they have only managed 30 goals in the other 34 matches! Luton, meanwhile, average 2.44 goals a game, having scored 88 in total.

Last season: Rovers were 4-1 winners (Phil Gray).

March 6th Cambridge Utd H

Cambridge United are the next visitors to Kenilworth Road, and the league history between the clubs only goes back to 1978. With only 6 matches played the records show that Luton have 2 victories, and 4 draws, 7 goals scored and 4 conceded.

Last season: 2-2 (Gary Doherty, Paul McLaren).

March 10th Millwall A

April 1921 saw the first league encounter with Millwall playing hosts, and the trip to The New Den will be the 33rd such fixture. Millwall have a clear advantage, 15 wins to 8, having scored 54 goals to Luton's 31. Although recent encounters have been relatively low scoring, the December fixtures in 1925 and 1926 both saw Millwall win 7-0! Luton have won 3 of the last 4 though.

Last season: Millwall won 1-0.

March 17th Oxford United H

Never has there been a draw in the 11 Luton v Oxford league fixtures, (now I've done it haven't I?!). Luton have the slight advantage with 6 victories, but are the much higher scorers, 28 goals to 18. Luton have won the last 4 encounters.

Last season: Luton won 4-2 (Liam George (2), Stuart Fraser, Adam Locke).

March 23rd Brentford A

Brentford v Luton: 28 matches played with the home side having the advantage 15-8. Goals scored is much closer, 41-35, partly due to Luton hitting 6 in February 1964.

Last season: Brentford won 2-0.

March 27th Peterborough Utd A

Another away trip, and the 6th visit to Peterborough. Few that were there will forget the last league encounter at London Road, in April 1997. A 1-0 win kept up Luton's promotion ambitions but in the process relegated Posh. Luton's 2 wins compare to Posh's only win in February 1965.

Last fixture: April 26th 1997, Luton won 1-0 (Andrew Fotiadis)

March 31st Colchester Utd A

Third consecutive away game, this time it's Layer Road and rather bizarrely also the 6th league encounter at Colchester. It's a victory apiece with 3 draws.

Last season: Colchester won 3-0.

April 3rd Reading H

This will be the 21st league encounter at Luton and the Hatters have a real advantage, 12 wins to 6, and 45 goals scored with just 20 conceded. Reading's 1-0 win at Luton in 1995 was their first for 60 years! Luton won the first encounter 6-0!

Last season: Luton won 3-1 (Julian Watts, Liam George (2)).

April 7th Stoke City H

16 matches played and it's visitors Stoke who currently have the better record, 6 wins to 5, Luton will of course be aiming to level this on 7th April. All the 5 draws have been goal-less. Last season: Luton won 2-1 (Phil Gray (2)).

April 14th Oldham Athletic H

Oldham's last victory at Kenilworth Road was on 25th April 1981, and they have managed only 3 others from the 17 previous league meetings. Luton meanwhile have 8 victories, including a 6-1 win on the opening day of the 1978/79 season.

Last season: 1-1 draw (Phil Gray).

April 16th Wrexham A

Easter Monday and a trip into Wales for the 13th league meeting at Wrexham. The Hatters will be looking to build on their solitary win, back in October 1981. In fact the 2-0 victory is to date the only time Luton have managed to score twice! Wrexham have 8 victories, but never by more than a 2 goal margin.

Last season: Wrexham won 1-0.

April 21st Bury H

Bury come to Kenilworth Road, for the 17th league match at Luton, having won only once. This victory, 1-0, was in fact the first meeting back in October 1937. Since that day Luton have taken maximum points on 11 occasions.

Last season: 1-1 draw (Andrew Fotiadis).

April 24th Rotherham Utd H

It's similar reading for Rotherham, although there have only been 11 previous matches they too have only won the once, in August 1962. Luton have been victorious in the last 4 meetings, and 8 in total, averaging over 2 goals a game.

Last fixture: Aug 31st 1996 Luton won 1-0 (Mitchell Thomas).

April 28th Bristol City A

The final away game of the season and a trip for the 24th league encounter at City. The home side hold a 13-5 victory advantage which includes 5 matches where they scored 5 or more goals. Luton have managed only 3 goals in the last 8 matches, and their last victory was back in September 1973, by 3 goals to 1.

Last season: A goal-less draw.

May 5th Port Vale H

And finally, Port Vale come to Kenilworth Road for the last match of the 2000/2001 campaign. 10 previous encounters have seen Luton victorious on 6 occasions, with 3 draws. Vale's only victory, 1-0, was also the first ever league meeting on 5th November 1898, when they were known as Burslem Port Vale. Incidentally this was also the only time that the Hatters have failed to score against Vale!

Last fixture: April 30th 1996, Luton won 3-2 (Tony Thorpe (2), Bontcho Guentchev).

Simon "Statto" Pitts

Check out Statto's Corner : www.lutonfc.com/statto

www.lutonfc.com/maah

Neighbours

So, what's been going on since *Mad as a Hatter!* last hit the streets? Not much, eh? Or, rather, loads and loads but now that the dust seems to have settled, the main thing to be thankful for is that the club is still part of the Football League. This is inevitable in a way, I suppose, though maybe it's a little sad that that should be seen as the be all and end all. The post-Kohler scenario is much changed and maybe we should be celebrating more than we have been. Then again, is it ever much of a good idea for a football fan, let alone a Luton Town supporter, to attempt looking very far into the future? Possibly. Possibly not. Who cares? Really?

Anyway, in more ludicrous moments I still harbour great hopes of a great new team in a great new stadium even if the dream of the KohlerDome on the outskirts of town has died. I must admit to have been quite enthused by the preposterousness of the design a few years ago.

Still, if the idea was far fetched then my latest niggling, and ongoing, concern is that the site is decidedly far flung too. These days, when money is killing the game quicker than it has ever done before, I find myself sentimentally hankering for the days when the football club was at the heart of the community. I can't remember when that last was for Luton Town, perhaps there were a few moments back there when Eric Morecambe was in town, maybe when Happy Harry was a real person and

not an outsized puppet with a ridiculous grin (albeit one who, dammit, is starting to become an entertainment rather than a perpetual pain in the arse) but I really can't remember.

The heart of the community ideal includes, as a necessity, a stadium which fits the bill and is clearly visible from most parts of the town. My dream home for Luton Town is, not too far away from where it is now, namely in and around Kenilworth Road in Bury Park. Oh, but hold on, that dream scenario doesn't stop at the toilets in the main stand emerging from the stone age, or the New Stand being renamed The Rowdy T Rat Memorial Gallery. Oh, no. I'd also tear down the Dreyer net and the Bobbers stand. Then all the houses in Beech and Ivy Road (and one half of Oak and Kenilworth Roads too). Thereby the main entrance would be on Dunstable Road and the new main stand (incorporating multi-storey car park and Hatters megastore, naturally) would be bloody MASSIVE.

Good idea? Well no, probably not (it'd be a sight to see though wouldn't it?). Traffic just might be a bit of a problem and this idealistic model flagrantly disregards the immediate community around the ground. But then, that could hardly be seen as untypical of opinion at Kenilworth Road could it?

Do you remember the very early days of fanzines when everyone seemed to be jumping on the bandwagon? There was a tatty, crappy publication called *Town* (be

fair though, the free gifts were good though weren't they? Alright, apart from the Phil Gray pun edition tea bag) and there was another, some might say more polished, fanzine called *The Hatter*. In one of the few editions of this 6th floor project, the editor suggested the Club court the Asian community in an article entitled, if memory serves "Pak them in"; an attempt to deal with a serious issue ruined at the outset by a deplorable lack of tact.

Thankfully, with Ricky Hill in the managers chair, the club at least showed that it has grown up in relation to the race issue. Or has it? Was it just me, or did anyone else think that the attempt at Caribbean razzmatazz that greeted Hill's return to Kenilworth Road was a little uncalled for? Perhaps trying a little too hard? Ricky Hill is a hero in the hearts of Luton Town fans because he played football with such style when he was here as a player. Not because he's a black bloke. His race surely shouldn't matter.

But, clearly, it does matter. If that isn't to be a sad thing then the club must see that they, in common with the vast majority of fans who converge on Bury Park every other week, they have much to learn with regard to local race relations. The financial implications involved with attracting the club's immediate neighbours would surely make funding a little research into why Asian fans (many of whom wear

national high street issue glory hunter shirts of red) are not attending matches at Kenilworth Road.

Before Luton Town FC looks at rattling the cages of NIMBYs elsewhere, they should be doing all they can to make more friends with their current neighbours.

A couple of other ideas, made with little thought and no research, to throw into the air. With regard to highly visible sites for the new stadium (for I believe this to be important), I was working in Capability Green over the summer in a nice office with some nice people (give them all my regards Dave). That would be a good site for a stadium wouldn't it? Not that it's not already getting a bit packed up there anyway. Still, a big plot of land on a hill overlooking the town, that's what we need.

With regard to the KohlerDome, surely the major plus point was the design. However, as that's not going to happen then I'm pretty sick of new stadia being built to really really boring designs. The traditional football ground, our own is no exception, is a hotchpotch collection of stands built over the years. I'd still be in favour of this kind of ground evolution rather than, with cost above all in mind, a blueprint influenced by four shoe boxes. Its handy to get to, but the Bescot stadium is a soulless dump.

Tim Kingston

TOWN TRAVELS

No doubt you've missed our service for away trips over the past 22 months, but it has to be said that the current season has been one of the least inspiring for awaydays for several years. There were some good days early in the season, but then rail travel became almost impossible and many of the drinking options went out of the window. Winter saw the weather take over and the rest of the season has few real highlights. In some ways, the prospect of relegation, whilst grim, at least holds out the idea of a lot more interesting days out.

But back to the present, the first match to be covered by this issue is that at **Millwall** on March 10th. For this trip it inadvisable to go drinking close to the ground. In fact, even around London Bridge has been a bit iffy in recent years. For curiosity factor, the place to visit might be the **Mad Hatter Hotel** (Fullers), 3-7 Stamford Street, SE1. A tip for those travelling by train, if you are simply travelling to the match and back home afterwards (and not using the tube) is that a day return from Luton to South Bermondsey will be cheaper than a Travelcard.

The next match is another in London, this time West London, when we visit **Brentford** on FRIDAY March 23rd. The evening kick-off will get in the way for most of us, but those who can find the time might seek out the **Brewery Tap** (Fuller's), 47 Catherine Wheel Road, or the **Magpie & Crown**, 128 High Street, a free house - but best behaviour, it's opposite the magistrates court!

Peterborough follows on March 27th, and presents similar problems with another evening kick-off. Sadly, the best pub in town and closest to the ground is restricted to home supporters, so next best is another **Brewery Tap** (in this case the Oakham Ales brewery is inside the pub) at 80 Westgate. Another fine pub is the **Palmerston Arms**, 82 Oundle Road, about 10 minutes walk from the ground but admission here may also be restricted.

The final away game of March is at **Colchester** (31st). The Essex town has a fair selection of pubs, but the good ones are all a long way from Layer Road, as is the town centre. A popular football pub is the **Dragoon** (Adnams), 82 Butt Street, easily located - it's opposite the police station. Those looking for a variety of beers might want to visit the **Kings Arms** (Hogshead), at 61-63 Crouch Street.

The mysterious absence of Saturday away trips continues with **Wrexham** on Easter Monday, April 16th. The Welsh town boasts precious little cask beer, so a welcome oasis is the **Albion Hotel** (Lees), 1 Pen-y-Bryn (should make asking directions interesting). In fact the rail traveller will probably be better off travelling via Shrewsbury or Chester, and having a beer or two before completing the journey.

Finally, we'll be off to **Bristol City** on April 28th, which is a Saturday. Ashton Gate is on the wrong side of Bristol for the pubs, but for those in the know it can be walked from the centre. Developing a theme, the **Brewery Tap** (Smiles), Colston Street is a superb pub and well worth a visit.

KFH

THE QUIZ IN NORWEGIAN

Well, if the erstwhile Live TV could get away with doing 'The weather in Norwegian', I'm sure we can get away with this. What follows is a quiz which first appeared in The Hatters Magazine, the journal of the Luton Town Supporters Club of Scandinavia (hereafter LTSCS) - there are 108 members. It's in a multiple choice format to help you overcome some of the language problems, and there will be a prize for the winning entry sent in by March 31. So, good luck, and send your entries to the usual address (email or conventional post).

- Hvilket år besøkte LTSCS Kenilworth Road for første gang?
a) 1989 b) 1991 c) 1993 d) 1995
- Landslagsspiller som har vært medlem av LTSCS en årrekke?
a) Erik Mykland b) Henning Berg c) Frode Olsen d) Road Strand
- Tilskuertallet da Luton Town slo Arsenal 3-2 i ligacupfinalen i 1988?
a) 95,732 b) 100,004 c) 107,698 d) 116,844
- Nåværende Luton-spiller som har vært lengst i klubben?
a) Matthew Spring b) Julian Watts c) Nathan Abbey d) Marvin Johnson
- Sist gang Luton Town ble vist på skandinavisk TV var mot dette laget?
a) Tottenham b) Oxford United c) Arsenal d) Aston Villa
- Navnet på tribunen som ble revet for å gjøre plass til luksusboksene?
a) Oak Road Stand b) Bobbers Stand c) Main Stand d) New Stand
- Luton-spiller som ble kåret til Årets Spiller i England i 1959?
a) Bob Morton b) Joe Payne c) Gordon Turner d) Syd Owen
- Klubbens siste kamp i toppserien var mot dette laget i mai 1992?
a) Notts County b) Manchester Utd c) Liverpool d) Derby
- Har ven den siste spilleren som scoret over 30 mål på en sesong?
a) Mick Harford b) Malcolm McDonald c) Tony Thorpe d) Phil Gray
- Han ver den første skandinaviske spiller i Luton Town?
a) Johnny Vilstrup b) Vidar Riseth c) Lars Elstrup d) Kent Karlsen

I KNOW WE NEED ALL THE PRACTICE WE CAN
GET, BUT TRAINING IN THIS
WEATHER IS STUPID!

