

MAD AS A HATTER!

THE LUTON TOWN FANZINE



Issue 57

Oct 2003

GOAL MACHINE



Gary McSheffrey – probably the Town's best loan signing for many years – celebrates another goal! Let's hope there are many more.

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THE LUTON TOWN FANZINE

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ED LINES

At the time of writing, we are on a bit of a roll. The twin victories against Tranmere and Wycombe were valuable results in any context, and whilst they have helped propel Town towards the play-off places, it will be results such as these against struggling clubs which should help us to achieve what should be the primary objective of this troubled season, which is to preserve our status as a second division club. I'm not saying that anything better is definitely out of reach, but we face so many uncertainties that we should take this one step at a time.

Watching a winning team is all very well, but this can change with very little warning. Steve Howard's injury could have been more damaging if we did not have the services of Gary McSheffrey to fall back on. But with Howard out for two months, we must hope that we can benefit from a third month of the Shef's loan spell. If not, and when he inevitably returns to Coventry, then what? There are some options within the current squad, but they are limited, and there is no certainty that another loan player brought in would be half the player we would be replacing.

There will also be question marks over our ability to hang on to some of the youngsters who have so ably stepped into the first team this season. Kevin Foley, Rob Beckwith and Dean Brill are all attracting attention, and it is said that the January transfer window may see Premiership clubs making offers for them. If that happens, and we remain in administration with a transfer embargo still in place, there will be limited options for replacing departed players and we may be very grateful of the points acquired at this stage of the season.

I for one will come out and say that I am pleased with Mike Newell's first few months as manager. He has done very well with the circumstances he has been given, has brought in good loan players, managed the youngsters well and got the team playing a style of football which is much more pleasing than that we have had for the past two years. If he can now persuade the defence to concentrate for a full 90 minutes (plus added time!) we may pick up a few more points.

As at the time of the last issue the club remains in the control of the administrative receiver. Barry Ward has brought a whole new meaning to quiet, and we have to assume that he concentrate's all his efforts on running the club within its means, and trying to find a way of getting the club out of the present situation. When that happens we do not know, and we all have doubts about some of the names being suggested as being involved in any future ownership – in fact, the only certainty is that none of the names being mentioned are renowned for being loaded with money, so we will almost certainly have to get used to the idea of the club not being the big spender it has been in the past. This is no bad thing if the motives are right – that is to safeguard the future of the club.

Trust in Luton are actively trying to put together the consortium and deal that will bring the club out of administration, which is a highly complex matter and, as I know from my time

involved with FLAG, very time consuming for all concerned. TiL are representing us, the supporters in this and, unlike FLAG, have the backing of the government set up Football Direct organisation and are a democratic organisation who will in a few months have elections for all positions. Yet they have attracted barely 1000 members, and at the same time membership of the Supporters Club has fallen. So, to clarify, the Trust is not another supporters club and both organisations need your support. The Trust needs members to show that it represent the body of Luton Town's support and that we want to be involved in the club. Trust have been successful elsewhere and can be here, but they need you to join, so if you haven't yet, please do so. You will find a membership form somewhere around the centre pages of this issue.

Whilst mentioning the Supporters Club, we are pleased to announce that we are making a donation of £1000 to their campaign to buy a new minibus for the youth team. The target to be raised for this is in the region of £20,000, so our bit does not exactly do the whole job, but if you can also help with this, please help them.

Changing the subject slightly, amongst the departures from the club recently has been Peter Lindau, who in recent years has been the driving force behind the club shop. Peter has been welcoming, helpful and enthusiastic during his time at the club, and has made the souvenir buying experience much more enjoyable than some previous holders of that position (you know who we mean Bev). Peter has also been a very good friend to *Mad as a Hatter!* providing us with useful feedback and sales, and will be missed. We wish you all the best, Peter.

We do not yet know who has replaced Peter (or will) or what the long term future of the shop is, as there has been talk of the operation being sold to a franchise. This is, apparently, the way things are going and has happened widely at clubs in Scotland. In that it removes financial risk and perhaps encourages a greater level of enterprise as well as benefiting from some economies of scale it would seem like a reasonable idea. The downside could be that it removes what many supporters see as a link between themselves and the club they support, and if the club do not make a direct profit from what is sold, less of it may be bought.

Finally, just when you thought I might waffle on for the whole 40 pages, a mention for our friends at *Luton on Sunday*. It was good to see them acknowledge our comments about them in last issues editorial in their issue a week later. They asked, in view of our regular criticism of them in the past, if this was the start of a beautiful friendship. Well, sad to say, the answer may be no. There are no cuttings from the *Accuracy* in this issue, which they may see as a plus point. However, the reason for this is that the editorial household did not receive a copy of the said paper for a period of some 6 or 7 weeks following the publication of that comment. So, as friendships go, good start but looking like something of a distant friendship at best.

KENILWORTH BLUES

After watching the Town see off Tranmere rather convincingly in a game screened live across the nation I began to sit up and take note of our dwindling, and how can I put this... pathetic, support this season (with exception to the Charlton game – what a night).

Now, I know Joe's reign was a good one – one that filled us all with pride for the first time in a while, and a promotion – but in comparison, we're playing a lot better football under Mike Newell and we're in a similar position in the league. So why have gates fallen so dramatically over the summer (of ridiculous upheaval)?

Were Joe and Mike Watson-Challis a) giving tickets away or b) paying people to watch us during the past two seasons?

Only 5,002 were at Kenilworth Road, albeit on a bitter October evening, to witness the win over Tranmere, that yes, was screened on Sky Sports. I don't care if it was on the TV and because it was cold – 5,002 is poor. Really poor.

But it's not just the numbers that are beginning to nark me off. It's the attitude of some so-called fans.

For the first time in god knows how long I didn't purchase a season ticket (not because I didn't want to, more a case of not affording one) and decided to sit in the Main Stand for the first five home games.

Block D offers a stunning view of the pitch, perfectly positioned on the half-way line – there's no atmosphere here, no malice, just people wanting to watch decent football (which had been both plentiful and exciting in those five games) without the hassle and noise of Blocks E, F and G.

Okay, there's the occasional "sit down" remark from a couple of the older, more established spectators – and I say spectators, because they hardly what you'd call "support" the team – but that's as a heated as it gets.

For the past two seasons though, and for the aforementioned Tranmere game, I sat in the Kenilworth Road Stand which offers a decent, close-to-the-action view of the goal (and a damn sight more bloody leg room than the Main Stand). For the most part, people are friendly, and like us all, want the Town to succeed, and obviously win. But what I don't understand is the minority. And it's this minority that narks me off.

Why?

BECAUSE THEY SEEM TO HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO IDEA HOW THE GAME OF FOOTBALL WORKS.

Now, this is being penned (well typed) by a 20-year-old, a fan of 13 years. People can say: "What gives you the right...I'm a supporter of 20/30/40/50 years..." In my defence, I can say that I've watched plenty of football, and have played football to understand the concept of football.

Why, for example, do people shout and howl abuse when a player gets tackled? Has the person in question not noticed that towering centre-half, clearly doing what he's paid to do – clear the ball.

Why, for example, do people shout and howl abuse when a player of 5ft 5in gets beaten in the air? Has the person in question not noticed that his marker is over a foot taller than him?

Why, for example, do people shout and how abuse when a player forces a good save from the keeper, when admittedly there was a player in a better goalscoring position? Would the person in question still make the same remark had the ball bobbed past the keeper to give the Town the lead?

I've heard this only in the Kenilworth Road Stand – why do people in this stand moan more than anyone else in the ground? Or is it just me? I know lots of people who agree with me – most of which sit in the Kenny End.

Our job is to support – okay, we pay our money and we're entitled to our opinions – but some comments are nearly unbelievable.

Take the Tranmere game. I could not believe the amount of abuse Matthew Spring received for misplacing a pass – how many of you got up and told Spring to "Eff off?" In my opinion, Springy has been a class act this season, revelling in a team intent on ripping teams apart by playing slick attacking football.

I swear some people would rather see the Town lose, than win – I don't want to single anyone out, but a certain row in a certain block (bit vague I know, but don't fancy a bout of fisticuffs) have it in for the team.

They want:

- Us to win every match. Okay, we all do – but be realistic for god's sake – no team can win every game and play well every game.
- Want instant success. Ten minutes played and the score's blank. "Come on Luton, this is shit". Jesus Christ, man, why not turn up at ten minute's past three.
- Want players to score with every opportunity. If we had players that scored every chance they wouldn't be playing for us. Go watch Real Madrid instead if you want that. (Seriously, note to those intent on doing this – not even Raul and Ronaldo score from every chance).

If the above is not produced the following will happen:

- They will get on players (who they must hold a grudge against, for some reason) backs.
- Moan, groan and generally moan even more everytime a player mis-places a pass/misses a goalscoring opportunity.
- Begin talking about how good the opposition are.
- Generally talk bollocks on how to improve the Town's tactics, who should be playing, who shouldn't be playing, how we should be playing, etc etc.

This piece is turning into a bit of rant really, something I've needed to get out of my system for some time – but it needs to be addressed. The Tranmere game really made me notice how bad some of our so-called supporters really are. Their negative outlook, lack of knowledge and understanding of how football is played and just the general comments just annoy me that I wonder why I bother going myself.

I'll leave you with what I thought was the most absurd comment from the Tranmere game: (Tranmere have just equalised): "You watch them go and stuff us. You'll be laughing when they get their [Tranmere's] fifth."

This was said, by the bloke sitting next to me – and if you don't believe me, meet me for a beer and I'll give you the seat number and you go and judge for yourself!

It was nice, therefore, for this writer – who had encouraged the team the whole game – to see two Town goals secure a victory.

Maybe it's because I'm relatively young – who knows in 20 years time it might be someone else writing a similar piece about me – well that's if I'm going to continuing sitting in you know where.

The Westoning Trancer

The Caught Short Report

New Stand Toilets

I recently visited Old Trafford for the England v Lithuania match. The self-appointed Theatre of Dreams is, trust me, a shit ground (loads of fans). Obviously its changed lots since the rip-roaring Hatters last graced the Salford turf but, in terms of the place being full of loads of narked arseholes with chips on shoulders from all across the country, not much has really changed.

At half time I noticed that here, like at Villa last season, Premiership conditioned fans habitually ferry themselves towards the stinking overpriced fast food outlets within the brightly lit bowels of the grandstand, to buy soggy nuclear heated pies and coca-bleedin'-cola. From the top of the stairwell it's possibly to see down to another floor where another level of massed humanity dutifully but dourly chomp their way through their club branded burgers.

We've nothing like that at Luton, thank God. Not much in the way of sparking Mcfacilities here.

However, at the top of the New Stand, it is possible to relieve oneself in a lavatorial block which could almost, in terms of its competition, be described as "plush". The lights are set on a notably above the normal "dinge" setting. Pipes are not visibly rotting away and/or covered with unconvincing foam covering. There's a distinct whiff of disinfectant in the air – and one doesn't feel compelled to wash one's hands after using the sink. Rumour has it they're even trying out toilet paper in the cubicles.

On the down side, it is decidedly cramped, but when you can see where you're pissing that isn't so much of a problem.

Walking back to the stand one traverses a gangway from which, looking down, you can get a half-time view of fans eating burgers at the back of the Maple. Views from the New Stand are pretty good too... but what's going on the pitch will leave you relieved to know this is far from the Premiership... is that Nathan Abbey warming up?

Malcombe Turner (with a silent "B")

KINNEAR – A CHANGE IS AS GOOD AS A REST

I am a little embarrassed, not to say surprised, to find myself defending Joe Kinnear. When BFJ (surely a Roald Dahl character?) and Big Mick Harford joined Luton Town there were few dissenters. The popular line was that he had “a proven track record” and “wide experience of football at the highest level”. I disagreed, saying that ten years at Wimbledon and failing to win anything was hardly a roaring success; and that Kuwait was not the highest level of any football, let alone international football. However, I was prepared to support the new team and judge them, as football management is inevitably judged, by their results.

BFJ and BMH could not keep us in Division 2. Hardly surprising after the signings and management of two consecutive bosses in six months had left us at very low ebb. Lennie Lawrence (apparently Roger Holdstock's choice, last issue p27) also failed to keep us up in his first half-season, but the similarity ends there. When Lawrence left us, we were staring at another relegation, which promptly happened, with a little help from Messrs. Hill and Fucillo. Lawrence would not have been too disappointed in this as he always thought we deserved it, and seemed to believe there was nothing he could do about it. When he joined LTFC a friend of mine from the Bradford area told me that Lennie Lawrence would be a miserable disaster as he spent all his time at Bradford City on the local radio making excuses. We soon found out at Luton that this was the case. Phrases such as “boys against men” (a Pleat favourite too) and “our long injury list” became weekly media fodder, whilst the disgraceful “Luton overachieved last year” was enough to warrant a written warning at least, if not instant dismissal. Joe Kinnear by contrast was confident from the start.

Now, I understand if BFJ's attitude and personality are not to everyone's liking but I was encouraged by the change in emphasis. BFJ never said we would lose or that we would be lucky to get a result or that we were not good enough. The positive approach spread to the supporters and more importantly the team. Yes some of the tricky but lightweight players had to go, but personally I was tired of the “potential” of Scott Oakes, Des Linton, Liam George, Jamie Woodsford, Andrew Fotiadis and a host of youth team players who tore up trees at junior level but failed to progress when promoted to the firsts. I was also fed up with the “classy old pros” (Garry Waddock excepted) who were only suitable for Luton when they were past their best and no one else wanted them. Mostly, I was sick of watching Luton teams play out of their skin in cup games or one-off matches against high-flying table-toppers, only to get beaten by the likes of Colchester United time and again in the league. Joe Kinnear is a winner and expects the same desire from his players; Lennie Lawrence, David Pleat Mark II, Ricky Hill and even Ray Harford seemed happy to coach players, improve individuals and let bad performances go with barely a murmur. Now Jean-Louis Valois may have left complaining about the quality of our football but I think the higher wages at Hearts may also have played a part; and don't forget who found Valois in the first place. Furthermore, don't forget who found/signed Perrett (easily the best centre-back in the fourth division last year), Chris Coyne, Paul Hughes, Steve Howard and Adrian Forbes.

There is, of course, an issue about the money. Frankly, I feel that good football managers are few and far between and the best ones are worth their weight in gold. Whether one has enough gold is not for supporters to decide but for the chairman/owner. People say BFJ was paid £250k, £400k, £500k and so on but unless any of your previous correspondents (e.g. The Cheshire Hat, last issue p29) can actually show me the contract on paper then I refuse to believe that anybody knows the real figure and I suspect that it is lower than some of the more fanciful notions. Nevertheless, BFJ increased revenue through the gates, increased the club's profile and if he had got us promoted this year (two promotions in three-and-a-half years) then I think he would have justified his salary. As far as money spent is concerned, a manager can only spend what the board give him, and very few managers would not spend all the money in the budget. My only criticisms are the number of central midfielders we have (regardless of your appraisal of Robinson and Brkovic, they were not required and are a waste of money); and the lack of opportunities for the youngsters such as Lee Mansell and Kevin Foley.

So here are your choices. If you want a flash-harry who gives away hundreds of free tickets to arse-lickers and spends more time on television telling other managers where they are going wrong, than he does at his own club: then vote for David Pleat. If you want a manager who buys old names with old legs for their so-called experience, along with young discarded starlets with more fashion sense than football sense: then vote for David Pleat. If you want a miserable whinger who blames everyone but himself: then vote for Lennie Lawrence. If you want a man who apparently likes to play good football but whose teams have no fight: then vote for Lennie Lawrence. If you want a manager completely out of his depth who swears like a trooper at half-time, and thought Luton didn't have the players to play 4-4-2: then vote for Terry Westley. If you want a nice man who was a great player but was also completely out of his depth: then vote for Ricky Hill. However, if you want a confident, bullish man, who backs his staff, players and supporters: vote for Joe Kinnear. If you want a man who knows a good player when he sees one and signs people in the prime of their careers with something to prove: then vote for Joe Kinnear. If you want a manager who works harder than any she has seen (according to Cherry Newbery) then vote for Joe Kinnear. Mike Newell might turn out to be very good but at the moment I would still vote for Joe Kinnear. Did he have a proper contact? Not my problem.

Cliff Saunders

Hmm, interesting idea that, voting for the manager. Hasn't that been tried somewhere before??

Ed

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Mad as a Hatter! is again available on subscription at £6.50 for the next five issues from the address on page 2. Cheques payable to *Mad as a Hatter!* Please do not send cash by post as it rarely arrives.

FOLLOW ANOTHER?

*Late in from work on that fateful Friday night
To a blur of phone calls telling of Town's plight*

*Deep depression descends - as manager phone poll,
Formula One track on stilts, name change takes it's toll
As the club rapidly becomes a sad Music Hall joke
And slowly and surely we know we are going broke*

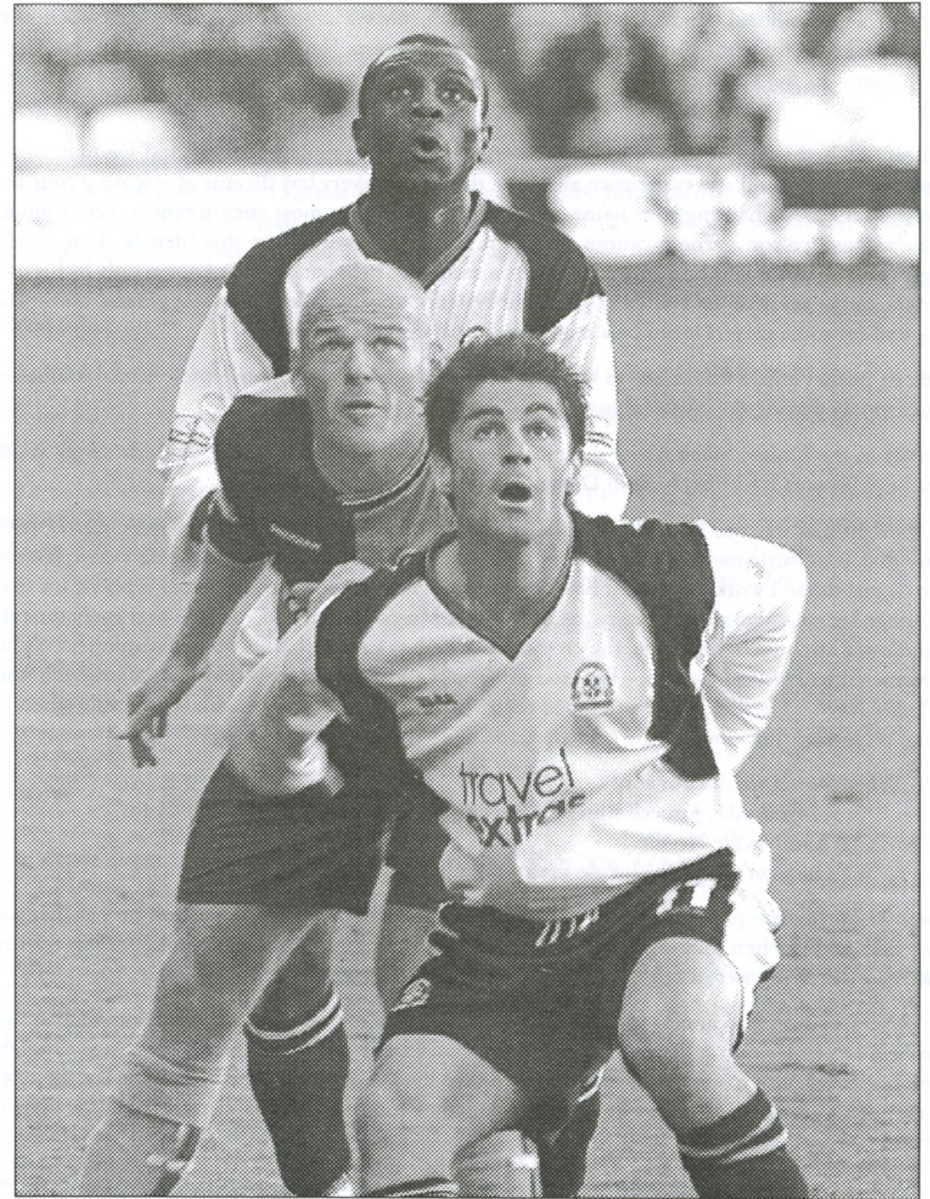
*Embarrassment and doubts of the future begin to gnaw
As my Hatter's shirt lies hidden forlornly in a drawer
35 years of tempestuous support, an irrational love
At risk of a divorce, gives my heart a nasty shove*

*I start to ask the unthinkable question in the disarray
Could we like the homeless Dons split and bleed painfully away?
Because of the devious asset stripping plan
Contrived by a fantastical grubby con man*

*Can I living here in the Western exile now start watching another?
Betray my past and take on the Premiership or Conference as a lover?
Where will I go if he gets his way?
With my 30 pieces of silver to pay.
Go to Kingsholm with my cricketing mates a different code to follow?
No we need our club back, other options would leave me hollow!*

*Phone rings, he's gone, administration, new crisis and a new fight
However this time in the long dark tunnel is just a tiny chink of light!*

Bill Church



Three minds with a single thought – just how can that bloke in the New Stand be THAT ugly?

WHAT'S HIS NAME AGAIN?

The life of a professional footballer is, in my opinion, always a glamorous one. OK so not all footballers will earn the same sort of money as Messer's Beckham, Henry, van Nistelrooy etc. but you'll still be a 'hero' to the supporters of your club, whether you play for Manchester United or Boston United.

Regardless of whether you're a Premiership player or plying your trade in the Second Division of the Portuguese League, you'll still experience all of the things that every boy dreams of - scoring your first League goal, the fans chanting your name, girls, a nice car and, in most circumstances, better money than the average person. There cannot, therefore, be any downsides to this lifestyle then, surely? Wrong! You see, you might be a superstar or just a mediocre right-back who is known only by his own supporters, but at every home and away game the PA announcer will let the whole ground know your name - and for some players it can be a moment to truly curl up and die!

So without further ado, I would like to take a look at some of the most bizarre professional footballers names currently playing the beautiful game throughout the world!

We'll start in the United States where a Zimbabwean striker has succumbed to the technology World that we have become by calling himself Digital!

If you thought that was bad enough, Portugal boasts two rather bizarrely named players. Firstly, try to imagine that your surname was the same as your first name - imagine Stevo being called Howard Howard - just doesn't work, does it! It has happened in Portugal where a midfielder is plying his trade in the lower Leagues and goes by the name of Mustafa Mustafa! I should imagine that every time the PA announcer announces his name, the crowd think he has a stutter! This bizarre naming hasn't just been restricted to Portugal though - England duo Gary and Phil Neville's dad has suffered the same fate. Yep - Neville Neville! What parents in their right mind would name their son Neville when his surname is Neville? Just imagine the conversation...

Mum: "What should we call our son?"

Dad: "Ah for God sake, just call him Neville, I'm trying to watch the football darlin'"

Mum: "Call him Neville Neville?"

Dad: "Well he won't forget his name then will he?"

The second Portuguese player proves that the King does indeed live! Yes, when you prayed that your parents were joking when they said you'd be named after their idol, imagine the horror when realising they weren't - and you were a 6 ft 4" central defender called...Elvis!

Some players' parents also appear to have been a little confused as to whether they really wanted their son to be a footballer or to pursue another career. Indeed one of South Africa's best players had this unfortunate problem - his parents wanted him to save lives so imagine their horror when their bright son became a footballer instead of doing the occupation they wanted and named him after...Doctor Khumalo.

This season we may also be privileged enough to see one of Britain's greatest entertainers on our very own Kenilworth Road pitch. No joke. One of the most famous people in Britain. OK, so it's not really him, but the player has the same name - Barnsley's Robbie Williams.

In fact, it is not the first time we've had an oddly named player sweating it out on the hallowed turf of Kenilworth Road. In 2000-01 Ricky Hill, then the Hatters boss, signed an Austrian named Friedrich

Breitenfelder. Slightly strange name anyway, but not as bizarre as the name he preferred to be called - Ratz Fetz! Sounds like something from the Black Plague, never mind a footballer!

And we've all twisted players names in the past - Devon White for example who was more commonly known as Devon Shite. However, just imagine the embarrassment of actually having a name like this - for real!

Dutch left-winger Brian Pinas is now at Feyenoord but had a spell in England with Newcastle United. Thank God he never played against Arsenal - Pinas could be firing blanks, which would help Seaman who never usually keeps clean sheets! Makes me wonder if a commentator would say, "Pinas shoots, Seaman clutches the ball..." Hmm...would it ever happen?!

Another unfortunately named player is Ajax Amsterdam's Waldo Ponce - maybe he'll move to Vicarage Road in the future if Sir Elton returns to Wankfordshire?

However, I have saved the last for a player from our friends at QPha - step forward

Danny Shittu! This surely must be the funniest name in football! (Please note he is no relation to ex-Hatter and new teammate Tony Shittonu).

The names aren't just limited to the players though - they're even giving football clubs outrageous names! The award for the most bizarre team name in professional football unquestionably has to go to Peru's...Deportivo Wanka! Trust the South Americans! See Tony, you did make a mistake leaving Town, your 'home' was not at QPR, you'd have fitted straight in at Deportivo Wanka!

So there you have it - my guide to the most weird and wonderful names in professional football.

Just please, God, don't let any of these join the Town!

James Garley

A SCUMMY OLD JOKE

Two boys are playing football in the park when one of them is attacked by a rottweiler. Thinking quickly, his friend rips a plank of wood from a fence, forces it into the dog's collar and twists it, breaking the dog's neck. All the while, a *Luton on Sunday* reporter who was taking a stroll through the park is watching. He rushes over, introduces himself and takes out his pad and pencil to start his story for the next edition. He writes, "Luton fan saves friend from vicious animal." The boy interrupts: "But I'm not a Luton fan." The reporter starts again: "Stevenage fan saves friend from horrific attack." The boy interrupts again: "I'm not a Stevenage fan either." The reporter asks: "Who do you support, then?" "W*t*f*r*d," replies the boy. So the reporter starts again: "W*t*f*r*d Scum bastard kills family pet."

Will Kelly

FOLLOWING THE SUMMER OF DISCONTENT, AN IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT:

WANTED

More football supporters from Luton and the surrounding area to add to the 5,000 who care about the club's survival.

REWARD

You will see a team playing attractive football under a top management team

The Players:

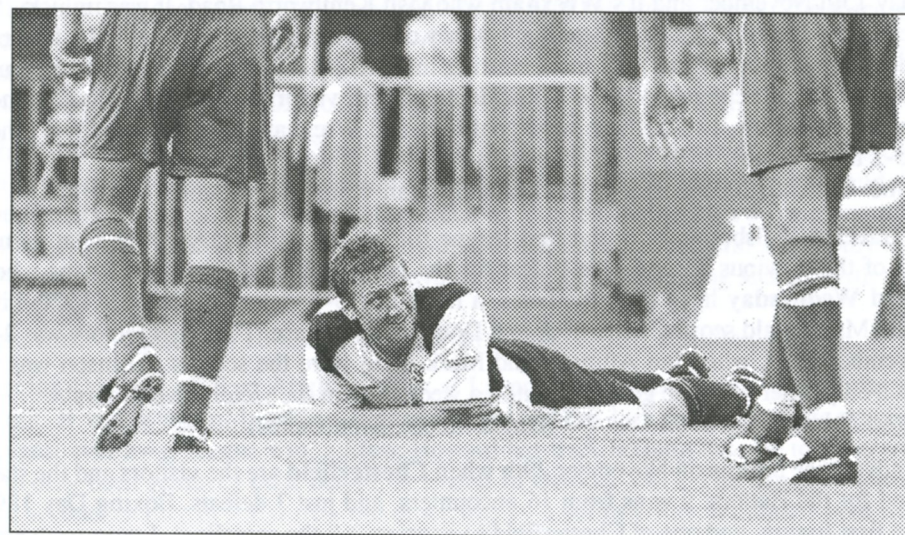
- Rob Beckwith** At last, a keeper who's not afraid to leave his goal line for crosses. OK, he misses most of them but is a terrific shot stopper. Premiership potential. Make the most of him. Will be gone during the January transfer window (Arsenal, I hear).
- Alan Nielson** Better in midfield than defence. Quality player who is a role model for the youngsters. Stayer.
- Matthew Spring** Star man. Two footed. Never gives less than 100%. A mystery why he's not at a bigger club. Enjoy watching him while you can. Matty, if you are reading this, more shots when within 30 yards of goal please.
- Russell Perrett** Top central defender who'll score a couple a season. Should stay.
- Chris Coyne** See Russell Perrett.
- Adrian Forbes** What we like to see at the Kenny, an exciting goalscoring winger. Likes playing for the Hatters. Stayer.
- Courtney Pitt** See Adrian Forbes, except only on loan.
- Kevin Nicholls** Combative midfielder who's also club captain. Found his level at Luton.
- Steve Robinson** Like Nicholls, has found his plying level here.
- Enoch Showunmi** Looks a bundle of fun. Needs games.
- Emerson Boyce** "Boycie for England" is the chants from Blocks F & G of the Main stand. Maybe not, but Boycie for Luton.
- Ahmet Brkovic** Needs a couple of goals. Apart from that, a useful wide midfielder. Stayer.
- Steve Howard** Crowd favourite Stevo may be forced to leave by the money men.

- Paul Hughes** Midfielder Hughesy should stay the season.
- David Bayliss** Yet another long term injury for Bayles. Vital part of the back four squad.
- Ian Hillier** Bit part player but won't let the defence down. May go if offered regular football.
- Sol Davis** Natural left sider who's replaced "Super Matt well". Should stay.
- Gary McSheffery** Regular scorer and crowd pleaser. Come and see him before he's sent (back) to Coventry.
- Lee Mansell** Ready to step in if anyone leaves.
- Kevin Foley** The only way is up. Superb in defence or midfield. Won't be with the Hatters for long.

So that's it.
Spread the word.
Bring a friend.
Buy the kit.

YOUR CLUB NEEDS YOU

The Welwyn Continent



Down, and out for a couple of months. Former top scorer Steve Howard takes a breather.

STAT ATTACK

A statistical preview of Town's forthcoming fixtures

November starts with the trip to Ashton Gate where **Bristol City** are the hosts. The stats aren't impressive for the Hatters, as they have failed to win in the last 10 visits, and only scored 5 goals in the process! You have to go back 30 years for the last victory, 3-1 in September 1973! Of the 25 encounters at Bristol, Luton have won just 5, with 6 draws and 14 matches ending in defeat.

Last time: Dec 21st 2001 Drew 1-1 (Steve Howard).

FA Cup weekend follows and at the time of going to press the opponents were not known. So instead a quick run down of 1st round fixtures. At home Luton have won 11 of the 16 ties, with a further 4 victories coming in replays. Two draws and just 5 defeats complete the record. An impressive goal scoring tally goes with 1st round home ties, 55 goals scored and only 19 conceded from the total of 20 matches. A record 1st round win was recorded in 1927, when Clapton Orient were beaten 9-0!

Away from home, and it's all even, 4 of everything. Luton sneak the advantage having won a replay (at Kingstonian in 1932 if you were wondering!). A replay was required in 1930, but the tie against Clapton Orient was played on a neutral ground, Arsenal's Highbury. Luton again progressing through to round 2 with a 4-2 win.

Last time (home): Nov 16th 2002 v Guiseley AFC Won 4-0 (Matthew Spring, Tony Thorpe, Ahmet Brkovic (2)) Last time (away): Nov 17th 2001 v Southend Lost 2-3 (Adrian Forbes, Ahmet Brkovic).

Saturday 15th November and it's **Wrexham** who visit Kenilworth Road. It was unlucky 13 for the Hatters last time out when leading 3-0 they contrived to lose 4-3! The first 6 fixtures all ended in maximum points for Luton, starting in April 1964, but then there has been just 1 victory since, in September 1999. Coincidentally both victories were 3-1! Three games have ended in a draw, two of those were goal-less, and Wrexham have recorded two other wins, 5-2 in September 1997 and 2-1 in February 1999.

Last time: Oct 28th 2000 Lost 3-4 (Mark Stein, Julian Watts, Liam George).

Luton travel to Hillsborough for the first league fixture since February 1992! That game, like 13 of the previous 23 ended in defeat for the Hatters. Luton have only 2 wins when **Sheffield Wednesday** have been the hosts, a thumping 5-1 victory in October 1970 with Malcolm MacDonald scoring a hat-trick and Don Givens a brace. The other victory was 2-0 in November 1987, when Ian Allinson and Mark Stein were the scorers. Allinson was to score his only other 2 league goals for Luton a week later in the victory over Spurs!

Last time: February 1st 1992 Lost 2-3 (David Preece, Scott Oakes).

Home advantage returns on November 29th when **Chesterfield** are the visitors and the stats are good for the Hatters. 9 wins from 16 encounters, and just 3 defeats. Boxing Day 1899 saw the first fixture, and one of Chesterfield's victories, 3-0 the scoreline! Luton recovered and where unbeaten in the next 7, including a 5-0 win in 1938, with Hugh Billington scoring 4 of them! Chesterfield won again in September 1965, 2-1, and the last victory was

1-0 in September 1996. Luton have won 3 of the last 4 matches since then, including a brace of 3-0 victories. All 4 draws have been 1-1!!

Last time: August 31 2002 Won 3-0 (Russell Perrett, Steve Howard, Dean Crowe).

It's hopefully FA Cup weekend again for the Hatters in early December, either that or it's time for the Christmas shopping! 2nd round fixtures are few and far between at home, just 8 of the 21 fixtures! Luton have progressed on 6 of these occasions without the need for a replay, the solitary draw at home to Lincoln in 1999 was followed by victory at Sincil Bank. There has been only one occasion when Luton have lost a 2nd round tie at home, that coming in 1998 when Hull City went away victorious, despite a superb solo goal from Steve Davis, Luton lost 2-1. There have been 4 replays and Luton have been victorious on 3 of these occasions, with the only defeat, another shock, was in 1965 when Corby were 1-0 winners.

Away from home and of the 13 fixtures Luton have progressed immediately only twice. Their first ever 2nd round fixture in 1921 ended with a 4-0 demolition of South Shields, and then 11 years later the Hatters beat the Hatters! Luton won 3-2 at Stockport. As mentioned previously the only replay was won at Lincoln. The biggest defeat in 2nd round competition came last time out at Wigan, see below for details.

Last time (home): November 19th 1999 v Lincoln City Drew 2-2 (Gary Doherty)

Last time (away): December 7th 2002 v Wigan Athletic Lost 0-3.

It's sure to be illuminating in **Blackpool** in December, but will the football provide as much enjoyment for the Hatters faithful? Probably not if you take a look at the stats! 18 matches and 11 have ended in defeat! Luton have only managed 3 draws in the last 10 matches, although one of those was due to a great comeback when in January 2000 they were losing 3-1 before late goals from Phil Gray and Matt Taylor salvaged a point. The three victories were 3-2 in November 1898, 2-1 in August 1957 and 1-0 in November 1971, so the maximum points are long overdue!

Last time: August 13th 2002 Lost 2-5 (Steve Howard, Tony Thorpe).

The final home game before Christmas, and its **Barnsley** who provide the opposition. This will be the 24th time the two sides have met in the league, with Luton hosting, and although the Hatters have scored 63 goals in the previous fixtures, including a 6-0 victory, a 5-0, and two 5-1 wins it's the visitors who have won the last three encounters! Their only other win was back in January 1964. 5 fixtures have ended in the points being shared, with 4 of these 1-1 draws.

Last time: August 24th 2002 Lost 2-3 (Kevin Nicholls (pen), Matthew Spring).

Boxing Day and an East Anglian derby at Layer Road, where **Colchester United** are the hosts. It was a record-breaking fixture for the Hatters last season as they equalled their biggest ever away league win, a Steve Howard hat-trick helping his side to a 5-0 win! This had only been achieved once before, at Exeter in October 1967. The win at Colchester was the second victory in 7 fixtures, the other was by a solitary Ray Whittaker goal in August 1964. Colchester have won twice as well, 3-0 in December 1999, and 3-1 in March 2001.

Last time: April 21st 2002 Won 5-0 (Steve Howard (3), Carl Griffiths, Kevin Nicholls (pen)).

A Sunday fixture follows two days later when **Notts County** come to Kenilworth Road for the 31st league fixture with Luton as hosts. County have won 2 of the last 4 fixtures, but this doesn't really tally with the Hatters having won 19 of the matches!! Luton have won 6-0 twice, in September 1951 and then again in October 1978. County's first victory was in October 1966 when they won 5-2, the remaining 3 victories have all been 1-0 though! Just one goal-less draw back in January 1993.

Last time: September 14 2002 Drew 2-2 (Russell Perrett, Steve Howard)

Simon "Statto" Pitts

MID-SEASON NUPTUALS

Getting married during the football season is bound to cause a few problems to any football fan. Working out how many games we were going to miss due to the wedding and the honeymoon made reading the new fixture list back in July a little more interesting than usual! It definitely helps marrying a fellow Luton fan and ex-LTFC steward! Fortunately we only missed two home games, and both were whilst we were on honeymoon.

Naming the tables at the reception gave us the chance to sit my wife's cousins from Watford (season ticket holders no less) on the table named 'Kenilworth Road', but they took it exceptionally well and helped prove that Luton Town and Watford fans can get along after all!

Little did we realise that going on Honeymoon to Mauritius was going to turn into an ambassadorial trip in the name of Luton Town FC. The locals watch English football all the time, and due to the shamelessly unbalanced coverage that the Premier League gets compared to the Football League, they nearly all support Manchester Utd, Arsenal or Liverpool. There's even a small village in Mauritius called Arsenal (complete with mural of the cannons!), and we drove through one small town and saw a football pitch on the edge of a sugar cane crop with a large sign that said "This is Anfield". Actually, that might have been a clever word pun that completely escaped both of us at the time! There was another village that had in the middle of it a small hut painted in claret and blue with West Ham United written along the top. Bizarre sights indeed!

We regularly wore England or LTFC shirts so that when the bar tenders asked who we supported, we could extol the virtues of following the mighty Hatters of Kenilworth Road. Some of the locals remembered Luton Town quite well, and could even recall that it had to be ten years since we were last in the top division (actually it's more like a dozen, but we didn't have the heart to correct them!).

One person remembered Brian and Mark Stein, and also recalled that Ricky Hill made a few appearances for England. A few of them remembered us winning the Littlewoods Cup in '88, which gave me the chance to recall that glorious day at Wembley for the 2000th time!

Keeping tabs on the Luton results was actually easier than we expected, thanks to Sky Sports News being broadcast every morning for a few hours on the hotel TVs. Watching the late goals conceded at Plymouth thankfully didn't spoil things. It's funny how a stroll along white beaches looking out at turquoise sea can make you forget about football for a short while!

There is (apparently) one Luton Town supporter in Mauritius. Our driver for a trip to the Mauritius capital, Port Louis, remembers meeting him once. We spent a good hour trying to convert the driver into being number two, but we're not sure whether we had succeeded or not by the end of the trip.

Anon

IT'S ALL GONE QUIET OVER THERE...

Contrary to some people's opinions, being the Trust Media Officer is not a life of glitz and glamour. I've been woken up at 5.30am on more than one occasion by a radio station ringing me to ask if I'll give an interview on their breakfast show. I'm a few hundred quid out of pocket having taken several days off work to dedicate time to Trust business. Over the summer, I have sorely neglected my family and friends (and the concept of eating regular meals) because I have spent every single spare minute in front of a computer firing off press releases, articles and web copy.

The time since the ousting of the Gurney regime has been the most frustrating. Time has given me a new perspective on those mad fifty-five days, and in media terms I now see it as a halcyon era, where good and bad were so easily defined, and it wasn't difficult to convince people of the righteousness of our cause.

Now, with the Club in administrative receivership, Barry Ward is sifting through however many bids he received in order to decide who will become its new owners. It's no secret that TiL have met with investors with a view to putting together a bid; indeed, I put out a press release in mid-September urging any interested parties to get in touch with us.

However, what happens now is up to Mr Ward. He's the one who's been appointed to run the Club until he chooses the best offer for its future. At this stage, legalities are so crucial and so complex that nothing new can be put into the public domain. Much as I'd love to be able to tell everyone how many bids have been put in, and who's involved in them, and how long it'll take for any new owners to complete their deal, I can't - because I simply don't know.

What I do know is that fan power continues to make a difference across the country. The fans at Exeter's Trust have taken control of their Club. Those at Notts County's Trust, with the support of their community, have put in a bid to take their club out of administration and will play a big role on their new board. TiL want to be yet another Trust success story. Supporter solidarity got rid of Gurney. Now we need to look at the big picture and plan ahead - and pull together.

We have nearly 1,000 members as I type, which is amazing, and I thank each and every one of you for signing up. If you're not a member, please join us. If you are a member, ask your family, your friends, random strangers in the street to sign up. We're not a protest group. We're not another supporters' club. We're an umbrella organisation, a registered Industrial and Provident Society, seeking to secure the Club's future and to make sure that we, the fans, have a say in decisions taken at board level. David Moss and Kirk Stephens have both contacted me to send messages of support. Mike Newell and Mick Harford have joined TiL and given us their backing. And now, non-members - your Trust needs you.

Carrie
TiL Media Officer
carrie@trustinluton.com

TiL 2003 Ltd



trustluton.com

Membership Application Form

The Trust is an Industrial and Provident Society.

Please return the completed form and remittance to: Trust in Luton, c/o The Luton News, Media House,
39 Upper George Street, Luton, Beds LU1 2RD

Please complete in block capitals.

Title: Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss or Company Name _____

First name: _____

Surname: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____ **Date of Birth** _____

Phone No: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Occupation: _____

Minimum membership donation for 2003/04 season is as follows. Please tick where appropriate.

Adult - Full annual membership	£10	<input type="checkbox"/>
Over 60 - Full annual membership	£5	<input type="checkbox"/>
Junior (under 16): annual membership	£5	<input type="checkbox"/>
Please note - no share issued or voting rights		
Additional donation - amount		

I enclose cash/cheque/postal order to the total value of £ _____. Cheques etc should be made payable to Trust in Luton.

I understand that the sum of £1 from a full member's first payment will purchase a share for that member in Trust in Luton. This will give that person, or their proxy, the right to vote at all "Trust in Luton" meetings and elections.

I agree to abide by, and be bound by, the rules of the Trust's Constitution, which is available on the Trust website www.Trustinluton.com or on application to the membership secretary at the above address.

Signed Date:

Registered office 17 Grove Place, Bedford, MK40 3JJ
29601R

For the Purposes of the Data Protection Act 1998 I confirm this information can be held on Computer file for the purposes of (1) Group administration.
(2) To inform you of matters, including marketing material, relevant to the Trust and Luton Town F.C. No information will be passed to other parties without permission being obtained. Please tick the box should you not wish to receive this material ☐

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The amount of £ has been received from
ondate. Thank you.

THE GOOD, THE BAD, & GRIMSBY

23.08.03 TOWN 1 GRIMSBY TOWN 2

A thoroughly disappointing afternoon, in which the hope and promise stemming from the opening three games of the season disappeared. Grimsby were clearly the side just taking a quick dip from the higher division, and stifled the Town by using their greater experience. Whether it was a cynical or professional performance is debatable, but seemingly every tackle resulted in a minor injury as time was wasted to break up the Town play.

Grimsby took in a half time lead, and extended it just after the half hour, before Dean Crowe went down to win the Town a late penalty, converted by Nicholls. It was no more than a consolation though.

KFH

25.08.03 BRIGHTON 2 TOWN 0

Who would have believed it? A Bank Holiday fixture at the seaside, and with an easy train ride direct from Luton. Wonderful. Pity that Brighton play at such an awful ground. In their circumstances, they are probably grateful, but for not very much. However, they obviously feel at home there, and emphasised the fact by inflicting a comprehensive defeat on the Hatters. This was a game we never looked to be closely involved in, and the talking points afterwards were about the two dismissals. Howard sent off for saying something wrong – some suggest racist comments – and Mike Newell for the bizarre “tackle” he made., causing the home sides McPhee to fall over. Apparently, Newell was sent off for leaving his technical area and kicking the ball away, although heaven knows why he would want to waste time when we were losing!

Overall a disappointing match, with some consolation being gained from a nice day out at the coast.

KFH

30.08.03 TOWN 3 HARTLEPOOL UTD 2

After standing outside the Maple selling fanzines for the hour or so before the game, I was able to gain an insight into the Hartlepool supporters view of things. A couple of them had assured me that Steve Howard, as a “local lad who’d rather go away with his mates than Luton” would never score against his favourite team. So, when Stevo slotted the ball home after only 6 minutes, I did wonder what those two northern Monkey Hangers were thinking at that very moment!

Only 14 minutes into the match, the lead doubled with a classy lob from loan signing McSheffery, and then before the half hour Howard had got his second. Naturally, an avalanche of goals was to follow! This actually looked to be the case for much of the remainder of the match, trouble was it looked like Hartlepool were going to benefit. When they scored their second goal from the spot with 20 minutes left after a silly foul by Nielson, it looked certain they would at least equalise, if not win, so the celebrations at the final whistle owed more to relief than outright celebration.

As an aside, on the day we were selling the fanzine, the best bit of reading available was in the match programme, of all places. Mike Newell’s managers notes would not have been out of place in this publication and was a fine piece, sprinkled liberally with controversy, wit and sarcasm. More power to your pen Mike!

KFH

06.09.03 NOTTS COUNTY 1 TOWN 1

The trouble with visits to Nottingham is that there are too many decent pubs. As a result by the time we get to the ground I’m usually watching through an alcohol induced haze. And matches at Meadow Lane rarely seem to be truly memorable events. This may have been memorable for home supporters with a bumper (!!) crowd of over 7,000 coming to help them get over their latest crisis, but for the rest of us? A draw after being in the lead against a truly awful side. No. No great memory from this one.

KFH

13.09.03 PLYMOUTH ARGYLE 2 PIG SICK TOWN 1

Not quite there...

Now this is why we need people to send in match reports. I wasn’t there. While some people were enjoying themselves at Home Park, I was at work.

Apparently, the highlight of this match was Enoch Showunmi’s debut. Having seen him since and seen how raw he still is, I can understand the comments that most Town fans present were surprised that he didn’t get sent off. Obviously he’s enthusiastic, but his timing leaves a bit to be desired!

Other than that, we took the lead early in the second half through a McSheffrey header, and were cruising to victory when the Argyle manager Paul Sturrock made changes with 20 minutes left in desperation – he admitted it in press interviews – and it worked well enough for him to say that he thought that Luton, and Mike Newell, must be pig sick. He was right.

KFH

16.09.03 TOWN 2 PORT VALE 0

My dad is always accusing me of leaving things until the last minute. Indeed, judging by the timings of my contributions to this and the last issue of *Mad!*, the editor can probably testify to that as well.

I, of course, dispute this allegation - well, until the night of this match anyway.

Just to get things into context, Tuesday is my late night at work, so it’s always a bit of a rush to get away to the match, when we’re at home.

Maybe I was pushing things a bit too far this time though - my office (in Royston) is 25 miles away from the ground, and I was still there with less than 35 minutes until kick-off.

Leaving the car park at 7.11pm, I have to admit I didn’t fancy my chances of getting to Kenny Road for kick-off. How wrong I was!

Now, I'm not going to admit to breaking any speed limits (but you do the math!), but it's pretty fair to say I drove "like a bastard" to get to Luton, get parked and get as far as the turnstile just as the whistle blew for the start of the match.

I needn't have rushed though. The first half-hour was pretty dire (despite the official site's match report saying it was "end-to-end stuff"), until a goal out of nothing from The Shef livened things up.

The second half was a different story, as we kept the ball on the deck and took Vale apart.

Another goal was always coming, and it duly arrived through Kevin Foley - easily our most impressive youngster since the start of the season - with the coolest of finishes after being put through by Spring, who in turn had been set up by the ref (the only decent thing he had done all night).

We should have won this match by more, and the fact that Vale were league leaders just about sums this sorry division up.

Scoop

20.09.03 TOWN 1 QPhA 1

*Bastards. F*cking bastards...*

I can't remember when I stopped being annoyed about this result, but it certainly wasn't for quite a few hours (about the fifth or sixth pint, I think). The headline to this report is pretty much what I was muttering to myself at the final whistle.

It was a game we'd all been looking forward to since Judas decided to shaft everyone at the Hatters and move to "a bigger club". As if this fixture needed any extra spice.

And for a while, it looked like the back-stabbing, money-grabbing c**t was going to wimp out. I've heard of getting excuses in early, but being stretchered off a fortnight prior will take some beating!

The poor lamb recovered in time though, to take his place on the subs bench.

What a reception was waiting for him when he finally entered the fray, midway through the second half. I have never, ever, heard a player get such abuse at Kenny Road - not even a scummer.

Yes, it was harsh, but it was no more than the traitor (surely a contender for the John Gurney Popularity Award) deserved. It will take a lot for us to forget the manner in which he sold out, and what he said just days before about everyone sticking together.

It was perhaps typical that Judas, who almost got himself sent off less than two minutes after coming on for squaring up with an already-booked Bayliss, had a part to play in the equaliser.

And what a choker it was. Scummer Day hoofs it up, Judas flicks it on, and scummer Furlong pokes it home. And in injury time, too - that's the really annoying thing about it (of course, the significance of 90th minute goals was, at this game, yet to be realised!).

The strike cancelled out The Shef's opener - I presume he is claiming the deflection from Stevo's shot - before Brko wasted a golden chance to wrap the match up, choosing to shoot straight at Day, when he had the whole goal to aim at.

Scoop

23.09.03 CHARLTON ATHLETIC 4 TOWN 4 (8-7 on Penalties)

For the second year in a row we were drawn away to a Premiership team in the second round of the "Carling Cup" after eliminating a team that was practically non-league in the first round matches.

The away end, with strictly lower league leg room, was packed with around 2500 Luton fans, praying we would not see a capitulation like at Villa Park a year earlier. In fact Luton started well and took the game to Charlton, getting the ball down and playing football.

The first goalmouth action came when Lisbie had the ball in the back of the net, but it was disallowed for a blatant push on Chris Coyne. Luton then struck, and took the lead when Foley got on the end of Shef's pass through and in typical Foley fashion finished like a seasoned pro, low to Kiely's right. Almost immediately, and unbelievably we scored again, while the fans were barely into a rousing rendition of Super Kevin Foley, Springy swung over a corner and Dave Bayliss ghosted in at the far post and planted a firm header into the net. It was hard to tell who was more shocked, Luton fans were in dreamland whilst the Charlton fans were stunned into silence.

Then the key moment of the match, Ahmet "Croatian Sensation" Brkovic playing out of his skin, was played in by Howard, and struck a low shot towards the bottom corner, which beat the keeper, and seemed to take an age until it hit the post. Agony for the Town fans as surely that would have been game over.

We then appeared to switch off for a brief period, and Lisbie was given far too much space by Coyne, and he squared to ball to Scott Parker who pulled a goal back, with Beckwith left with no chance.

The second half started and it was end to end stuff. Howard had a header saved and Shef was thwarted by a last gasp tackle by Chris Powell. Charlton then managed to make the game level, Lisbie heading in from close range after good work from Di Canio.

The fact Charlton had come back from two down, had Town fans fearful that the Premiership team would go on and grab a third, but Luton didn't allow them to settle and kept going at them, Pitt introduced for Brkovic was causing problems, and Shef not looking out of place amongst the Premiership players.

Then came the moment of the night when the ball dropped to Shef on the edge of the box and he took it down and unleashed a glorious curling shot into the top corner with Kiely flapping at nothing but thin air. A top class strike from a top class player.

Cue 2500 people singing "Fuck-off-Di-Can-i-oooooooo" at the top of their voices, however with our typical luck, the Italian popped up in the 94th minute to equalise and it appeared to take all the energy from the players and fans alike.

Luton were then dealt a hammer blow, as David Bayliss ruptured his Achilles which ended his participation in this match along with his season. With Luton still re-organising, Jensen

put Charlton ahead, after a brilliant double save from Beckwith the ball dropped to the Dane who hit a deflected shot into the roof of the net. This goal appeared to galvanise the Luton players who pushed on again and deservedly equalised when Coyne coolly slotted home from sixteen yards.

Suddenly it was game on and Howard was inches away from scoring Luton's fifth with a back heel after some glorious skill by Shef on the touchline. Then in practically the last 10 seconds Boycey hooked Euells shot off the line with Beckwith well beaten.

So to Penalties - after 15 consecutive penalties, with Beckwith coming close to saving 3 or 4, Coyne stepped up and appeared to be lining up to blast it, however tragedy struck as Coyne changed his mind and placed a weak penalty far too close to Kiely, and unluckily for the excellent Coyne Luton were eliminated.

Despite the loss, the Luton fans left with their heads held high, proud of the character shown by the players and proud of the manner in which we played the game, Mike Newell has clearly instilled the passing game back into the players and to take Charlton on at their own game was impressive and brave.

Well at least we can concentrate on the League.

Luton_s

27.09.03 OLDHAM ATHLETIC 3 TOWN 0

What garbage. Now I don't claim to be a soothsayer but on the way out of The Valley last Tuesday I declared that, having played so well against Charlton, we were bound to be badly beaten at Boundary Park. I was right. I know we had injuries and tired players but it occurs to me that if most of our players were still tired from Tuesday night's exertions, why did Mike Newell not start some of the others such as Lee Mansell? Having said that Courtney Pitt seemed full of beans as he managed to beat himself about fifteen times during the game in his worst Luton performance by some margin.

Give Oldham Athletic credit, they are a big, powerful side, not dirty but too physical for us at times and very strong in the air. They closed us down and played some good stuff in the second half once they were 2-0 up. Then there was the linesman. Quite what he gave the belated penalty for I have no idea but the protests were a bit weak so maybe there was something in it. Having held out for half-an-hour with neither side looking very likely, the penalty was the sort of gift for Oldham that Luton never seem to get. One minute to half-time and things got worse. Oldham's left winger Dean Holden (who plays spookily like former Latics' left-winger Rick Holden) swung a cross to the far post where lanky centre-forward Zola had got away from Chris Coyne and easily beat short Sol Davis to finish with a powerful header from close range. The fact that Davis had slipped did not help matters as he joined the list of almost eleven players on the Hatters side who had appeared to don glass slippers instead of studded boots for this match.

Everyone was rubbish in the first half, only Hughes and Leary improved in the second where Luton conceded an expected third goal unexpectedly early to finish a game almost as soon as the second half got started. It was a dreadful goal to concede as a ball over the top was left by the defence pushing up for offside, and left by the goalkeeper pushing pineapples or something: leaving the Oldham player to tap home what will be his easiest score of the season. The talking point came later on as Beckwith came rushing out of his area to block

with his hand and was deservedly dismissed. Why is it a talking point? Well apparently Luton's outspoken new manager thinks it was an example of one of football's "stupid rules". I think it was an example of one of football's stupid players. Why can managers and fans never accept red cards? I could see it coming from the moment the ball was played over the top; Beckwith rushed out to meet the striker with little idea of what to do next and he palmed the ball away quite deliberately and quite clearly outside the penalty area. Our esteemed website (who writes those reports?) thought the dismissal harsh and unnecessary given the state of the game. Well, it was certainly unnecessary as Beckwith should have stayed put and waited for defenders to get back instead of getting himself suspended in a game that we couldn't hope to win. Harsh it wasn't, but maybe players should be let off bookings and sending-offs when they are already 3-0 down, eh? It was also another example of the Luton Town fan's extraordinary sense of justice. We all know how fickle Luton fans can be but the idiotic applause for a man who has just received a red card was only believable due to the fact that I have seen/heard it many times before. Just like the inflatable bad boy at the inflatable school: Beckwith let everybody down, including himself, and I hope he learns from it. I also hope that both the crowd (457 from Luton) and performance improve in time for the visit to Swindon Town, though at £21 a seat the former is unlikely.

Cliff Saunders (still tired after extra-time and penalties)

01.10.03 SWINDON TOWN 2 TOWN 2

Or "How do I get back to the Premiership?" by Mr Paul Danson

"Swindon v Luton - I am better than that. I need the reverse camera angle on me as I flourish a red, send a manager from the dug out, or order a penalty to be retaken. I need my public to appreciate my undoubted talents, what other referee brandishes a card with such panache? My strategy is annoy them early, make them angry, and then I can demonstrate my authority. It was easy to get rid of Newell, turning down the penalty and booking McSheffery for diving soon got him going, and then give a few dodgy decisions, so sending him off was like taking candy from a baby! Get the home crowd angry at the start of the second half with a puzzling sending off! They must know I will even it up with another red! Penalty save - I'll show them, take it again! Now they are baying for blood. I'll even it up with a dodgy free kick - I know Perrett's tackle was okay. Listen to 6-0-6 for a reaction - Premiership Return soon! Great day at the office!"

Actually despite Mr Danson's performance both sides played some good football in patches and there were two quality goals by Forbes and Milliner. The Red Cards certainly brought to life the second half. Hughes played superbly in midfield tackling competitively and using the ball imaginatively. How we desperately miss Howard to hold the ball up, just like at Plymouth without that skill the ball comes back far too quickly and we end up conceding late goals.

The Frampton Hatter

06.10.03 TOWN 3 TRANMERE ROVERS 1

A televised game on a cold night attracted fewer than 200 away fans by my reckoning but unfortunately the home turnout was not great either. It is only my opinion, but I think that a club that musters that few followers on the road deserves the poor away record that Tranmere Rovers has always had.

Starting brightly, Luton Town dominated possession in the first period knocking it about with confidence, but as usual lost patience as the half wore on and became more direct. A nice header from man-of-the-match Perrett broke the deadlock just before the interval and sent the players in with loud applause from the small crowd instead of the frustrated cries that they were expecting a minute before.

Tranmere came out all guns blazing in the second half and played football way above what they had looked capable of in the first 45 minutes. Typically, when the opposition are on top Luton panic and ship a soft goal or two: fortunately only one in this case where Beckwith, Perrett and Coyne all missed a cross and for once none of them could think of a reason to blame one of the others!

Having weathered the storm, though, Luton picked up again and the result was never in doubt after two good, opportunistic goals from the front two of McSheffrey and Forbes. I wish Luton strikers scored more opportunistic goals. Firstly, McSheffrey capitalised on Boyce's excellent wing-play (he ran his heart out all game and constantly looked dangerous) with a toe-poke along the ground into the bottom far corner. Later Forbes also had Boyce to thank as the Luton right back ran straight at the Tranmere defence and, following a couple of blocks, Forbes pounced with a well-struck shot from ten yards leaving the goalkeeper no chance. It finished 3-1 only after a late goal from Chris Coyne was adjudged to be handball instead of a far post header; television left me undecided but at 3-1 up who cares?

A comfortable win against a poor away side but Luton's defence still need to communicate better and Courtney Pitt needs to learn that the other white shirts are his team mates.

Cliff Saunders

11.10.03 TOWN 3 WYCOMBE WANDERERS 1

Arriving late for this game meant that I missed the early cock-up by debutant keeper Dean Brill, which apparently resulted in the visitors having a shot that hit the crossbar. As a result, I was able to say that the youngster had a good game, and left us all assured that Nathan Abbey's presence was purely to act as a bench warmer.

The first half was a tight affair, and by half time a draw was looking the likely result, although this soon changed with the award of a slightly dodgy penalty for Wycombe early in the second spell. As soon as this hit the back of the net, that draw was looking like it would be a welcome bonus. For almost half an hour Wycombe held up well, got away with some hard "tackling", and looked like they might go away with the points. What we needed was something to change.

After what seemed like an eternity of standing by the dugout waiting to come on, Mike Newell made a double substitution. On came Mansell and, more significantly, Enoch. The latter was bound to cause problems for the Wycombe defence, if only because they wouldn't know what he was going to try and do (after all, if we don't know, how could they?). And so it proved. First we had a piece of luck, as two of their players collided on the halfway line and gave the ball away, and moments later Enoch had passed (?) the ball for McSheffrey to stab home from 6 yards. That was it – the turning point. When Russ Perrett headed home for his second goal of the season (just after TBBM had commented on how rare it was for him to score) the result was beyond doubt. We could relax.

However, McSheffrey had different ideas and rounded things off with a stunning goal from something like 25 yards out, a goal that seemed to come out of nothing, to give us a second 3-1 win for the week, and 6 points out of 6 against just the sort of teams we should be getting maximum points from.

P.J. Smith

14.10.03.1 STEVENAGE 0 TOWN 1

After finding distinct lethargy (*that was apathy – Ed*) amongst the usual suspects which I thought strange for such an accessible match, I found myself travelling solo for once to an away game, wondering if our support was going to be sparse. I needn't have worried as upon entrance to the ground the away end looked about 80% full. Near full the Luton end may have been, but the supporters were very quiet all night.

Predictably Newell had made lots of changes for this meaningless match. This was my first sighting of Barnett who looked pretty impressive, Okai looked anything but. Up front Enoch Showpony and Brko provided the entertainment. Between them they contrived to waste chance after chance after chance after chance. Just how did Brko grab a hat-trick last season? Surprising to me, considering they were playing such esteemed local opposition, Stevenage were dire and made very few chances for themselves until the last 10 minutes, by which time the Luton fans had had enough of Enoch and Brko and were baying for Forbes' introduction. In fact as the game drifted towards extra time, it was quite mystifying why Newell didn't bring Forbes on to kill Stevenage off. Surely he didn't want extra time? Then after Sol Davies did what he does best to a Stevenage player (sent him flying 10 feet into the air!), we finally got our break, Enoch knocked the ball down to the lively substitute Judge, who blasted the ball into the top corner of the net from 20 yards, a superb goal which hardly fitted in with the rest of a dire encounter. Shortly afterwards, Luton got another break as Stevenage had a goal ruled out for offside, and we were through to the next round of this pointless competition, praying we wouldn't get someone like Plymouth away.

Objet

CONTRIBUTIONS PLEASE

Well, that's another one out of the way. This seasons next issue will be coming out after Christmas, in fact early in the new year. This will give a deadline for contributions of December 30th, so please send any articles, match reports, letters, cartoons, photos, press cuttings, or whatever, either by post or email to the addresses below:

Snail mail: MAAH, 195 Cutenhoe Road, Luton, LU1 3NQ.

Email: keith.hayward1@ntlworld.com

Watching Mr Danson

Watching Mr Danson's somewhat eccentric display of refereeing at Swindon led me to ponder on how the nature of refereeing and sendings off has changed over the years.

It used to be so simple. Referees were anonymous, and players never got sent off. Well, occasionally perhaps, but anyone who has seen a video of the cup final replay between Chelsea and Leeds in the early seventies will appreciate what thuggery went unpunished thirty years ago.

Back in the sixties and seventies a sending off was a major event. I can remember them all, a far cry from today when the lads become confused when required to play for the entire 90 minutes with a full complement of 11 players. The legendary Tony Read, then an outfield player, made history at Hartlepool in February 1966 when he became the first substitute to be sent off (Freddie Jardine also received his marching orders in this match). And Bruce Rioch's sending off against Mansfield in 1969 sparked that glorious backs-to-the-wall win which contained that goal from Graham French. The following April, of course, was the infamous end of season match with W*tf*rd where, with nothing at stake, Alan Slough, along with Walley and Endean, was sent off – an almost unheard of tally of dismissals.

So what has changed? Well, I suppose that rule changes may have had something to do with it. But a bigger reason is in the nature of the referees themselves. Back in the sixties they were unknown men in baggy shorts who looked years older than even the oldest players. Their role was to be as unnoticeable as they could and to refuse to give the slightest indication as to why they made a particular decision.

Then one day in the late sixties a bald, pig-like figure ran out at Kenilworth Road. Roger Kirkpatrick had arrived. He proceeded to referee in a style never before witnessed. He acknowledged the crowd, gave signals explaining his decisions, and generally displayed good humour and sympathy with the players. We all agreed that it was a breath of fresh air, and responded accordingly.

Alas, Mr Kirkpatrick wallowed in the atmosphere. Over the following months and years he came to believe that the crowd had come to see him, not the players. Other refs such as Norman Burtenshaw and Clive Thomas followed suit so that soon they were competing to see who could be the biggest "character". Sendings off were most calculated to keep them in the public eye so the number of dismissals began to rise.

At Swindon we saw the result of thirty years of this process. Mr Danson clearly believed that we were there to watch him. If the game ever threatened to develop fluency he would be there to make sure that our attention went back to him. It was a credit to both sides that they produced a good game despite the idiot in charge.

I grudgingly admit that in some ways the game is probably better in some ways now than in those far off days. But I still sometimes grow nostalgic for the time when axing an opponent and burying him in a shallow grave near the penalty spot would bring nothing more than a booking.

John Clark

BACK ISSUES

Most back issues are still available, in spite of my best efforts to reduce the numbers while moving house. We have sold out of issues 10, 11, 22, 24, 26, 27, 35 to 38 and 47, and most other issues are in very short supply. Issue 1 is free, and all others will cost you 40p per copy, inclusive of postage. Cheques payable to *Mad as a Hatter!* Please do not send cash by post as it rarely arrives.

Instant Heroes

Enoch (Showumni) and the Chef (Gary McSheffrey)

Well that Wycombe game was a bit tasty, wasn't it? Actually, 'no'. It wasn't. It was a professional job well done against an average side of cloggers. Promotion form and, when everything clicked, a truly spectacular fifteen minutes, capped by 'one of those' goals.

Other than coo-ing McSheffrey's finishing skills, guessing how many places we'd leapt up the table and looking forward to a pint of Galden Hatter, I did wonder whether the 'cult of the instant crowd favourite' is a good thing. Despite recent departures, injuries and suspensions, the Town continue to play good stuff up front and are ably supported from a refreshingly attack minded midfield. On Saturday, the 5,000 (!) also found themselves two new cult heroes; Enoch and The Chef.

In no time at all, The Chef has come in and filled the vacancy so despicably vacated by Tony 'Judas' Thorpe. Not that the initial signs were good. The Chef was loaned by no less a glamorous outfit than Coventry City. He's such a slight fella, his expansive name had to be spelled in fuzzy felt. He was following in the footsteps of such loaned attacking donkeys like Thingy McSwags and that Winters bloke no one remembers. And yet he's worth of his instant cult status. Let's face it, he's played enough games for a carriage clock and with this own nickname and with the news hacks going ape in trying to outdo themselves with the cooking metaphors, he's almost part of the "kitchen" furniture.

Coventry City clearly need to be told that their boy's bearing up well considering how he's got a gammy leg and lazy eyes. They obviously didn't look too hard at him before letting us have him, so why pretend he's any good, just for them to grab him back now he's reached **boiling point**? And I'm not just **basting** all this on opinion; fans voted him number one player for August and September. And with him frequently **roasting** opposition defences, this **poacher** will keep the goals **frying** in for as long as we can keep him. Chances are that this next time next season, he'll be playing for Coventry City or W*tf*rd, or someone disastrous like that.

And then there's Enoch. The man Pearcey and his mate on 3CR were terrified would get sent off when he played the first half an hour of that away game. Enoch's appeal is based more on the fact of his height, strength and 'raw' talent. Everyone says how he's 'raw' all the time. This is either very apt or inappropriate when you consider he's vying for a place alongside a chef. But that's by the by. He is, at the moment, a demi-cult. The Chef's a full fledged cult, but the expectant gasps and murmurs of disappointed amusement which greet Enoch's every movement do not count as 'his own chant'. And no one raves about him. I think we've seen enough to be able to compare aspects of his play - his considerable height, presence and dodgy timing - to be able to compare him with that other lumbering legend, 'Tommo-tomky' Thompson. And we saw enough of him to be able to safely compare him with an old sofa on springs.

Sadly though, our new heroes face an uncertain future at the Town. It's a sign of the times, surely, that by the time you're reading this, The Chef will have been recalled and forgotten and that Enoch's undoubted enthusiasm and total lack of guile will have been exposed by a better team than he's been tried out against so far. For further parallels, just look at Dean Crowe. Yes, he wanted to leave, so wasn't such a great option when Judas Thorpe left. But, sad to say, like Carl Griffiths before him, he had had a brilliant, sparkling start to his Luton Town career. And now, only about two years later, Griffiths is a distant memory, and no one's really bothered that 'Crowey' decided he'd chance his arm on loan at York City.....

Andy Kingston

SATURDAY TO WEDNESDAY (OR SOME REAL ALE PUBS IN SHEFFIELD)

If you're coming to Sheffield for the Town's game at Hillsborough on 22nd November, here are some places where you can get some decent beer before, after or even during the match (if it's really dire and you have to leave...).

For those coming by train, it's a good idea to catch the tram from the railway station. Buy a Dayrider ticket for £2.20 - as the name implies, this gives you unlimited travel on the Supertram system for the whole day. Catch any tram into the city centre and, if it's a Blue line tram, stay on it as far as West Street. Otherwise, change at Cathedral to a Yellow or Blue. From the tram stop in West Street, walk on in the same direction as the tram as far as the Swim Inn. This is a Weatherspoons pub in the old Glossop Road Baths. Unless you are a real Weatherspoons addict, walk straight past and turn left into Victoria Street. Here you will find the...

Bath Hotel. This pub won a CAMRA heritage pub award for the tasteful restoration of its original 1930s Ind Coope interior. The beer is worth a visit as well, as the pub's Sheffield CAMRA branch award for October 2003 Pub of the Month testifies. There is always Tetleys Bitter, usually Timothy Taylors Landlord and Abbeydale Moonshine. Recently there has also been Acorn Barnsley Bitter and two other guests. The landlord, Brian, is happy to take the sparkler off if requested, for those who prefer their ale without a thick creamy head. Leaving the Bath, follow the tram tracks to the next stop, Sheffield University and catch a tram down the hill two stops to Shalesmoor. Almost at the end of the platform is the ...

Cask and Cutler. This pub, frequent Pub of the Month and Year, is well known as an almost permanent beer festival, and this time it really is, because the C&C annual beer festival takes place the weekend of Luton's visit. Oversized lined glasses are always used, and there will be a special half pint glass for the festival (small refundable deposit, or just take it with you when you leave). The beer range is not known at this time, but the landlord, Neil, has promised to consider getting hold of some Goalden Hatter. As well as ale from the barrel and the pump, there are Belgian bottled beers, but don't ask for Stella - it's always a point of honour at C&C beer festivals to sell as little fizzy stuff as possible. It's certain to be very crowded, because some of the extra barrels will be standing in the places normally occupied by drinkers. If it's really heaving, it's worth taking a short stroll to the ...

Fat Cat. Any of the regulars or staff in the Cask will be happy to direct you, and it really is only 5 or 10 minutes walk to Kelham Island. The Fat Cat is the home of the Kelham Island brewery and there are always three or four of their own brews on tap, plus a guest or two and a vast range of foreign beers, fruit wines and ciders. Also well known for its food, the Fat Cat has won awards for its vegetarian meals. (The same owner has the Devonshire Cat, a smart new bar with an impressive range of real ales in a student residence not far from West Street tram stop.) Just around the corner is the ...

Kelham Island Tavern. Re-opened last year after years of neglect, the KIT has quickly established a place on the local real ale circuit. As well as ever-present Barnsley Bitter, there are always four or five guests available. The same owners have the Rutland Arms, five minutes walk from the station, and have won prizes for the gardens at both locations, as well as Pub of the Month awards. By now, it may be getting near to kick-off, so it's back to Shalesmoor for the tram to Hillsborough, or Leppings Lane to be more precise. If you have got time to spare, it's worthwhile getting off at Bamforth Street, turning right at the traffic lights just ahead and then left at the bottom of the hill to reach the ...

New Barrack Tavern. Now owned by Tynemill, the Castle Rock Brewery people from Nottingham, the Barracks has a great range of beers (Barnsley Bitter, Abbeydale Moonshine and John Smiths Magnet, plus a couple of the Castle Rock range and some guests) plus more than a handful of continental lagers. From the Barracks it's about 20 to 30 minutes walk to the ground, or you could go back up the hill for the tram.

Enjoy the game, and I hope to see you for a few pints after to celebrate a victory for the Hatters.

Cheers

Will Larter

RAVING MAD!!!

Dear Mad,

Could you please mention Luton Exiles in your next magazine. We are a group of Luton fans sharing travel to Luton games.

If fans send email and location I will try and match with those living nearby. At present most are in the midlands area.

Thank you

Neil Nash,

email daisys@tiscali.co.uk

Dear Mad,

Congratulations on the return of the fanzine. Good to have you back. For the next issue could you print my name and address, as I'm keen to contact any fellow "Mad Hatters" in the Liverpool/Merseyside/North Wales area.

Keith Brooksbank,

25 Heathcote Close

St Dunstons Village

Liverpool L7 6QA

OUT WITH THE OLD, IN WITH THE NEWELL

A lot has been said and debated on the rights and wrongs of Mike Newell's appointment as manager, the pros and cons of his reign, and a comparison to Joe Kinnear.

It was too early to make any sort of judgement in time for the last issue of *Mad!*, but now, approximately a third of the way into the season, it's possible to give a more considered opinion.

Firstly, let's start with the events of the summer. The way in which Kinnear was sacked, and the phone poll that voted Newell in as his replacement was farcical - there's no other word for it.

The whole country was laughing at us. If "Manager Idol" wasn't bad enough, we then had the astounding statistic that Kinnear was 85 per cent ahead in the poll on a Friday, only to lose by four votes by the Monday. You simply couldn't make it up (well, unless you're John Gurney, of course!).

But look on it from Newell's point of view. He is an out-of-work football club manager, so can you blame him for accepting a job at a managerless football club?

When he took the job, there came the inevitable backlash from sceptical fans, mainly on the lutonfc.com messageboard.

We had to trawl through messages of "I won't support him", "he is only Gurney's puppet", "Newell out now", "Get BFJ back now", "I'm never going while he's in charge", "he almost lost Hartlepool promotion"... etc etc.

The reactions were a little over the top. Jesus, people, give the guy a chance!

Now, I've slagged off managers in the past (in my younger, less tolerable days, during the Westley and Lennie eras!), but I've always given them a chance to prove themselves - and the only way to do that is with results on the pitch.

And how can you argue with our progress so far this season? Newell has restored a "sexed up" passing style of football that was previously lacking, and we're better off position and points wise than at this stage 12 months ago. We should also not forget the limitations that Newell is working under: a threadbare squad and a transfer embargo preventing us from doing anything about improving it (apart from the loans the Football League has let us have).

Do not think that my "pro-Newell" stance is "anti-Kinnear" though - although given the choice at the moment I'm glad the former is in charge.

Kinnear was great for the club. After the mistakes made by Hill and Fuccillo, we were in freefall, but he turned things around, we started winning more often (albeit in the pub league known as Division Three) and we tasted promotion for the first time in 20 years.

He was also a charismatic man who thought nothing of winding up the opposition when speaking. It was usually quite funny, although there is always the danger you can fall flat on your face this way, as I'm sure Plymouth fans would readily remind us.

However, although we were getting the results, how many of us were really overjoyed by the way we were playing? We had one tactic - hoof it up to Howard - and when he wasn't playing, boy did we miss him.

Kinnear's weekly comments in the press did start to get tiresome. How many times did he "hope to get a loan player or two in by the weekend" and not, while he must also be the only man with a season ticket for Wolves Reserves.

He also had a habit of publicly slating the players, too, with Embo the Clown and Ovengloves mainly in the firing line. Ok, what he said may have been what we were all thinking, but what does it do for an employee's confidence if his boss is slagging him off in the papers? That's our job as supporters!

There is a lot more that can be said of Kinnear's bad points, and rumours about certain payments and the like that I won't go into here.

Before I get accused of all kinds, I am not writing this article just to slag off Kinnear. As I said earlier, he was great for our club, but I do not get why he was - and still is - idolised by some. Proof in point is the Joe Kinnear random quote that still appears on the lutonfc.com site. He was our manager, but he no longer is, so people should get over it.

We need to look to the future for this club to survive, and one way of doing that is to get behind the current boss. Thankfully, the majority of fans have - despite the initial rants. We just need to convince the moronic few to do the same.

Chris Lennon

An Assessment of Mike Newell's Signings

Courtney Pitt: Wonder worker on the left. He is a good player, could we keep him? Ironically frozen out of the Pompey side by our very own Matthew Taylor. He has done well and has been the left sided player that we have been crying out for for the last 2 years since MT and Mr Valois.

The Chef (Gary McSheffrey): Way to good for Div 2! Who is Tony Thorp anyone? How Mike got this lad is anyone's guess....this is quality! Mike should be praised for this capture. We must ensure we keep him when we find an investor.

Enoch Showunmi: This guy will do well over time. Emily Heskey type player comes to mind. Without being harsh to a great guy, he is like a donkey, but a very good one at that. He is young and a good find if he gets some match practice he will do well for himself and I can see him becoming a guy on the score sheet fairly often.

Nathan/Tanny/Nathaniel Abbey (Or the guy who lets in more than a few goals): Er...Him. Well, we needed cover and he is a local boy. Mike seemed happy to get him so I'll allow it due to his other 3 signings! Many fans aren't convinced but he is cheap and local for when we need him.

Out of 10 I would give the man Mike Newell 8 for his massive loan and full time signings with NO money available to him.....Well done!

Dan Strode

The Sharpe End

So much has been said and so much written about the plight of the club during the build up to the season and then once it was under way that it has been difficult to get any perspective on the situation. For example, what is Joe Kinnear's position now? Would he win a vote to replace Mike Newell if one were to be taken? Would Mick Harford want Joe to return? Does Mick himself harbour hopes that he will emerge as the manager before the end of the season?

Are there really any consortia out there desperately keen to get involved and chuck more money after what has already disappeared into some black (and white) hole, never to resurface?

I for one have written this season off to all intents and purposes. I can no longer invest the same intensity of emotion when so much of what is happening is influenced by events out of everyone's direct control. Last season I found myself in one of Monte Carlo's finest restaurants about to enjoy a superb meal, when I discovered that we had lost at home to Brentford. The evening was ruined, the meal tasted like garbage. I'm not going to let that happen again this season.

Whisper it softly, but were there one or two of us who might just have regarded John Gurney's efforts to consign the club to oblivion to be our one final chance of getting out of a lifelong pact with the Devil? Had it all gone pear-shaped and the club gone out of business, which of us would be financially worse off? Wouldn't we all have been spared the sheer effort it takes to follow the club and the irrational way in which wrong results cast a gloom over every other part of life?

And then what would we have done? Would we have decided to support another club? If so, which one? Perhaps I am lucky in that I already have another club to follow - Wealdstone of the Ryman League Division One North, where I was once a director. I went to watch them at Leatherhead in a preliminary round of the FA Trophy recently and believe that I can claim some credit for their slightly unexpected 1-3 victory. After over an hour Wealdstone were a goal down until dragging themselves back into the game when a corner somehow looped staright into the net. The great thing about football at that level is that the players can hear every word you say. So I began an admittedly one sided conversation with the hapless Leatherhead keeper who had been bamboozled by the corner.

I pointed out that there would probably be more corners to come and that on his current form he would be unlikely to be able to do much about them. Wealdstone won another corner. Over came the ball, the keeper flapped weakly at it, merely knocking it to a lurking Wealdstone player on the edge of the box who promptly dispatched it into the corner of the net.

I resumed the one-sided conversation with the goalie glumly pretending he could not hear me. I hope the manager of your Sunday team isn't watching, I said, otherwise you won't be getting a game with them tomorrow morning. Careful, I think there's another corner coming up. There was. It floated straight past the keeper into the corner of the net. I spared the keeper further comment.

So, I could always go back to supporting Wealdstone full time.

But I'd miss struggling up the M1 on a wet Tuesday evening. I'd miss driving up towards the ground on that stretch of road which now features the world's most stupid bus lane, in which I have never seen a vehicle of that description and which, it seems, has to be strictly adhered to even at 4a.m. when no self respecting bus is out of its garage. I'd miss having to manoeuvre the car into a parking space at Dallow School which barely leaves room to squeeze out of the door once the car is in. I'd miss having to trek across the school playing field, up and over the walkway, round past the garage where the bloke with the badges displays them on a board balanced on a wall, and then walking up to the ground along a street in which no resident seems to have the slightest interest in the fact that there is a football match about to take place a hundred yards or so away.

A couple of random observations from this season so far..... are Wycombe's supporters the least aggressive in football?.....what is the point of the pre-match 'toss for ends', why, especially in League matches, shouldn't the home side have first choice?.....when will the ridiculous rule insisting that players injured in challenges with opponents who are subsequently penalised, have to walk off the pitch and stay there until the ref deigns to invite them back, thus giving an advantage to the side which committed the initial foul, be changed?.....does Steve Howard model his accent on the bloke in the garage in Alan Partridge?

Graham Sharpe

LUTON TRAITORS XI

I would like to say that this list was inspired by Tony Thorpe's departure to QPR but it stemmed from the boredom of a return journey from Swindon on the Bobbers. So here goes, we've got subs and a manager as well.

- 1 **Alec Chamberlain** - Left us for Sunderland and ended up playing for the scum.
- 2 **Matty Taylor** - Followed the bright lights to Pompey.
- 3 **Steve Davis** - Headed back to Burnley, prodigal son style.
- 4 **Chris Willmot** - Believed his hype and went to Wimbledon.
- 5 **Tim Breaker** - Went east to West Ham.
- 6 **Jean Louis Valois** - Rejected a new contract to play for Hearts.
- 7 **David Preece** - Took his testimonial money to Derby.
- 8 **Paul McLaren** - Another who left for more money and Division 1 football.
- 9 **Graham Alexander** - Wouldn't sign a contract so went to Preston.
- 10 **Tony Thorpe** - Captain - No explanation needed.
- 11 **Phil Gray** - Waltzed of to Sunderland.

SUBS

- 12 **Jurgen Sommer** - Joined West London Rangers SCUM.
- 13 **Ray McKinnon** - Bugged of to Scotland after a year.
- 14 **David Oldfield** - Joined Stoke on a Bosman.
- 15 **Scott Oakes** - Went to star for Sheffield Wednesday reserves.
- 16 **Lars Elstrup** - Went a little crazy and bugged of back to Scandinavia.

MANAGER

David Pleat, bugged of to manage Spurs.

Baz & Pratt

Wish You Were Here?

While Judith Chalmers jets off to report on the Bahamas, dedicated Luton Town fans travel to less exotic locations. Here are a few reports:

Brighton

A run-down and overcrowded seaside resort with outdated facilities. Expect queues, especially on Bank Holidays. Local rules are strict. Punishments range from a heavy fine for swearing in public to banishment for playing ball outside the designated area.

Shepherd's Bush

Despite the rural name and the in-bred appearance of the locals, this is really a deprived city suburb. The heavy-drinking natives are extremely hostile. Common crimes include theft, fraud and grievous bodily harm. The cheeky bastards will then report you to the authorities if they think you are not leaving fast enough.

Peterborough

A booming tourist location, where the visitors outnumber the locals by two to one. This fine city boasts a cathedral dating back to Saxon times. The toilets at London Road are even older. Although the gents have now all but disappeared, the ruins contribute towards the unique atmosphere. Expect massive queues during busy periods.

Hillsborough

Situated on the edge of the People's Republic of South Yorkshire, this is a tightly controlled police state, where walking is permitted in a clockwise direction only. Financial mismanagement and economic collapse have caused its spectacular demise. Natives will tell you that they are a Big Club. Do not be intimidated by this. Remember they are also Completely Crap and failed to beat Arsenal the last time they met them in a cup final.

Wrexham

Cunningly hidden just behind Crewe, Wrexham is a town trying hard to deny its Celtic heritage. The slopes of the Racecourse are sparsely populated as sheepish locals disguise themselves in Liverpool and Moan United shirts. Nobody is fooled by this: they're Welsh and they know they are.

Hartlepool

Built by uncivilised Vikings, Victoria Park is laid out in direct line with the North Pole. Pagan locals worship the Arctic winds by removing their shirts and sacrificing small hairy primates. Occasionally these savages have been tamed and converted by southern missionaries.

Irthlingborough

A small, secret place cunningly hidden among the rubbish and dustbins of Northamptonshire's shoe industry. Even local village people were unaware of its existence until recently. Some say that like Brigadoon, the Nene Stadium miraculously appears through the mist once a year, resting on a pot of gold. Others say it's just a load of old cobblers.

Basford Hatter

Ten Reasons why...

Marvin Johnson is better than Tony Thorpe

1. Marvin Johnson actually scored in a Luton v W*tf**d game. I'm sure all of us remember his twist and turn and volley past Chamberlain (except me of course, as I was looking for my seat).
2. Marvin is actually a Luton fan, and he's proud of it, like 5,000 of us.
3. Marv had never left the club for a chairman with a larger wallet than Evans/Kohler/Watson-Challis etc. And a player with his talents surely had managers queuing up to buy him(?)
4. Marv gave fifteen years of service to the club, whereas Thorpe gave less than five.
5. Marvin has made a lot more appearances than Thorpe, which must mean he's better than him (mustn't it?), if he's picked for the best team in the country?
6. Marvin has had to put up with receivership, administration, Evans, Kohler and Gurney, as well as Westley and Lawrence, but Thorpe hasn't dealt with Evans and administration (his loan spell doesn't count, as he was being paid by Bristol City).
7. Marvin went on runs that made the opposition dread him. He would twist past the first man, turn past the second and then beat the third before finally losing the ball. How many times did Thorpe do that?
8. In 2001-02, Marvin came on and changed the games against Hartlepool and Carlisle, but Thorpe never came on and changed the game (getting desperate now!)
9. He could even find time to score for teams like Aston Villa and Wolves whenever he felt left out (the brace at Molineux was apparently brilliant (I can't remember it as I was about five at the time!))
10. He just is, alright?!

Peter Bulkeley

EYES DOWN!



Mike Newell, pictured at the Goalden Hatter launch, considers the prospects for the season. Looks like he's thinking of the double