

# MAD AS A HATTER!

THE LUTON TOWN FANZINE



Issue 63

December 2004

## CRAZY LARS ASKS BIG QUESTION...



Please, Fairy Godmother, can you make sure we get promoted this season?  
And, by the way, will you marry me?

# **MAD AS A HATTER!**

**THE LUTON TOWN FANZINE**

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## *Ed Lines*

On the pitch, everything is still going pretty well, and as I write this we are certain to be this year's number one team in League One. However, the early lead has been whittled away by other teams, particularly Tranmere and Hull, and there is no certainty what the league position will be when I next see the mighty Hatters in mid January. The spectacular start to the season has, however, rather overshadowed some concerns off the pitch.

I'm not talking about Big Mick's move to Forest, or Stevo's unsigned new contract and BFJ's attempts to unsettle the man with the wayward elbow (pause here for lack of sympathy at BFJ's demise). Results have given the new owners of our beloved club an easier ride than they could ever have wished for, and we can be sure that in the midst of all the peace they have been getting down to the nitty gritty of running the club on a sound financial footing, and beaver away to get the plans submitted for the new ground at Junction 10. Can't we?

Well, at the moment, no we can't. If anything, things have been a little too quiet on that front, and whilst we can accept that they don't want to say too much, for fear of giving the opponents of the stadium development a head start, it would be nice to know that something is being worked on in the background. This is not the end of the concerns though. When the Tomlins consortium took over back in May, part of the deal, we were assured, was that 10% of the shares in the new company, Luton Town Football Club, would be owned by Trust in Luton, and that an elected representative of the Trust would take a seat on the board. And as we all know, Kelvin Dunn was elected to that position.

When Bill Tomlins spoke to Luton Town Supporters Club members a couple of months ago, he named Kelvin as one of the five members of the board, but explained that his appointment as a director was awaiting ratification by the Football League, but two months (or more) later this has still not happened. And there is increasing conjecture that TiL does not have it's hands on the shares either. Time perhaps for some explanation? The Trust was instrumental in bringing down the Gurney regime, and in supporting the Tomlins takeover. If they are now being betrayed we should be told.

The Trust, however, are not totally innocent in this. If things that have been promised are not happening, they need to inform their members, in order that pressure can be applied on the guilty parties. Let's have some public comment from both sides, and hope it is what we were promised.

To round off here, I would like to say thanks to all who have supported the fanzine over the last 12 months, whether by writing for or buying it, and wish you all a very happy new year. Onwards and upwards!!

# A TRINITY OF TRIPLE-POINT THROWAWAYS

## HUDDERSFIELD TOWN, WALSHALL AND HULL CITY

Well, well, well. When Luton Town slip up they do it properly: head-over-heels they go, tumbling down the precipitous terrace of failure that leads to the moat of disappointment. Earlier this season, we (the usual mix of half-cut football fans) mused that for once the luck seemed to be going our way. Now Gary Player and Gordon Strachan might tell you that the harder they practise: the luckier they get, and over the course of a season that is probably a sound philosophy. However, over the course of one or two games it is not always apparent that just desserts are the reward for well-founded recipes. Against Hartlepool United we were lucky to go in at 1-0 up and we pressed home our advantage in the second half. This fortune was balanced against Huddersfield Town where we did not deserve to go in 2-0 down but could point to missed chances that should have had us at least one goal closer to parity. In the second half against the Terriers, Luton were much the better side but failed to press home the advantage in a similar fashion to Hartlepool's failure the week before. Unbeaten run at an end, we panicked not and looked forward to stuffing Walsall in revenge.

Many fans left the Bescot Stadium both sober (thanks to their social club having five staff fewer than the requisite complement) and angry: blaming everyone from Coventry City for not letting us have McSheffrey to Dino Seremet for not having x-ray vision. A few days later, after the fallout had settled, however, it seems to me that we were a little unfortunate at Walsall too. Granted they played some nice stuff at times with Paul Merson pulling the strings and Darren Wrack looking as good as ever against us, but if we had knocked the ball around in their way and failed to score we would have been critical. Both goals for Walsall were ropery but for different reasons. The first started with Kevin Foley being a little slow to spot their left-winger's main restriction (he only had a right foot) and letting the Walsall wide-man get a cross over; then Curtis Davies completely missed a header he didn't need to attack; and finally Merson scuffed a shot which crept in at the far post. Seremet was slow getting down to it but he was unsighted so benefit of the doubt applies; and we still had 83 minutes to come back. Not long afterwards, Steve Howard blazed over following an exquisite chest trap-come-turn when he just had to make the keeper save it, and a frustrating match followed. The Saddlers dominated possession in the first period without adding to their lead but another of Mike Newell's seemingly effective team talks led to the Hatters getting much closer in midfield and more than matching the men from the Midlands in the second period. In fact, Luton looked the more likely to score when a well-struck Saddlers shot seemed to smack into three different players pinball style and shoot into the net with the keeper flat-footed and helpless. I proposed three changes following this match but Mr. Newell was not listening.

So we came to the not-so-holy spirited Humbersiders in the oft-renamed East Yorkshire (as if anybody cared) feeling pessimistic. The Town team remained unchanged save the suspended sensation Ahmet Brkovic who sat it out. If bad luck comes in threes then the looping, long-range, left-footed cross from the Tigers left-winger must be the last piece of misfortune for some time. Anyone who tells you that Dino Seremet was out of position is an imbecile, as nobody could have got to this fluke which was even luckier than Goofy-faced Ronaldinho's effort against David Seaman in the last World Cup. During the second half I ventured to the toilet where a fellow fan remarked on the Luton goalkeeper's prowess as if he was single-handedly at fault for the fact that we were three down. Following our verbal exchange, Seremet managed to pull off a

string of point-blank saves to keep the score down to a less-embarrassing level so 'vindicated' is the emotion I feel. Hull City's second was a ludicrous but oh-so-predictable own goal by Paul Underwood in the style of Coyne-Emerson or James-Sommer and so on. It could be that the keeper didn't call, we would never have heard from the stand, but I find it hard to believe that Underwood could not see the keeper standing right next to him when he looped a header over Dino. The Hull prop-forward did actually put the ball in the net but it was a moral own goal by any standards. The real blame for this mishap should lie with the management however, as Chris Coyne was off the field receiving treatment at the time, and we had three different people at centre-back in a ten-minute spell which was extremely poor organisation. Personally I feel that a centre-back should be instantly replaced if injured, especially when you have a ready-made stand-in (Russell Perrett) on the bench. Can anyone else remember the home game against Arsenal (I think, may have been Spurs actually) when Steve Foster was off for 15 minutes to receive stitches and that was when we conceded the only goal we did in the game? Anyway, two down in this match was always going to be enough as Luton's front two look about as deadly as stinging nettles. Second half was better as Kevin Nicholls was sent off for an elbow which I missed due to the aforementioned call of nature but as it was Nicholls I will assume it was deserved. Strangely, we played better with ten men and better still after Steve Howard was substituted – and I thought it was illegal to sub Steve Howard?

So the answers are these: team changes. If Gary McSheffrey is signed he should be first name on the team sheet but we have to assume he won't be. Matthew Blinkhorn needs to start for a fresh face as much as anything but also because Howard and Rowan Vine have proved they are not a partnership. Blinkhorn and Vine appear to be on the same wavelength in the glimpses I have seen so give it a go Mike and show the same patience with the Blackpool man as you have with the man from Hartlepool. Howard is not quite the lumbering oaf that some may suggest but he is half the player he was without decent crosses; and without Taylor, Forbes, Valois and Boyce we just aren't providing those crosses. A new philosophy is required up front which negates the need for the wingers we don't have and that leads me to Steve Robinson.

Robbo has played pretty well since he came back into the side last season but he is stagnant now. We need more ideas, more skill, more directness and more shots from midfield. We need less headless-chickenism and fewer regressive balls out to the left flank when we are in a prime location in front of the target area (eight yards by eight feet and bordered with white wood in case any players are reading this). I would include Peter Holmes, who was the outstanding player at Swansea City in the reserve-team trophy and who has been playing well in the second eleven apparently. Successive management teams have kept faith with Holmes despite his lack of first team selection, so I cannot be the only one who sees something in him? Of course, with Nicholls now suspended for three games he may get his chance without the manager having to make a decision (God forbid) but just don't put him out wide! I would like to drop Underwood as well but there are no replacements lining up so we have to just hope he recaptures his form and pushes the left-side partnership with Sol Davis (outstanding at Hull) onto higher things.

At the back we have Davis and Coyne who are consistent and reliable and experienced. We also have Davies and Foley who are inexperienced and prone to the odd lapse. Don't get me wrong, I like both young players and they have great careers ahead of them but whilst Foley has little competition for his place, Davies has a ready-made stand-in in Perrett. Perrett is now fit (thank the Lord) vastly experienced and one of the best defenders in a Luton shirt for twenty years. Only Mal Donaghy has shown the same composure in my experience, both in his own box and when on the attack. Perrett has scored a few goals for us whereas Davies seems to have little instinct

for goal-scoring and we need to capitalise on set-pieces as that is looking our best attacking ploy at present. Furthermore, Perrett is on good money and we need a return on our investment! If we drop Davies now before he makes a monumental howler which shatters his confidence we can keep him in reserve, rested and raring to go: his time will come.

So we have conceded goals at the wrong times and missed chances at the wrong times. Stephen O'Leary could and should have scored at Hull before they did and the game could have been so different if he had. Luck evens itself out and Newell was neither getting carried away when we were on a winning streak nor when we lost two in a row. However, after three defeats and the denudation of our once impressive lead one thing is for sure – inertia is no longer an option.

*Cliff Saunders*

## Spot that Shirt!

I wrote in the last issue of *Mad* my surprise at seeing a Luton shirt in Gloucester. The day after that letter appeared in *Mad* I was at a conference for work near Gloucester. I was sitting in a room attempting to appear that I was listening attentively when I noticed a man across the room wearing a t-shirt with HATTERS emblazoned across it. To wear a t-shirt at a conference like that was cool, but to wear a HATTERS shirt how cool is that?

I spent the rest of the lecture speculating on another Town supporter nearby and then doubts started to creep in; could the t-shirt be for the counterfeit Hatters that we played earlier in the season. It did turn out to be Town supporter although his games were intermittent because of family commitments. Days later when sitting on a coach and talking football it turned out the driver was a Town supporter living in deepest Gloucestershire. This was like buses – you don't see any for ages then they come in bunches.

This got me thinking of unexpected sightings of Luton shirts of various types (not ones connected with yourself!). We all have worn them on our travels. We probably all have had our photos taken in wide flung places (saddos that we are – I had my picture taken outside Napoleon's house on St.Helena – how sad is that!).

What is it that compels us to wear football shirts when our team isn't playing or when visiting far flung parts of the world? Is it tribal identification? Is it that we are inadequate, pathetic humans who find it difficult to choose our own clothes? Or is it that we haven't got anything else to wear? I am sure a professor has done some research on this.

I have seen Town shirts in France, and at the Sydney Test Match (but everyone wears a football shirt with Barmy Army away). I am sure *Mad* readers have seen them in popular holiday destinations, but where have you seen them in unexpected places?

What I want to suggest is that *Mad* has an occasional section "Crazy Sightings" where readers note where they have come across amazingly unexpected sightings e.g. Antarctica, some wild Cossack riding across the Steppes, some hot chick coming out of a shower wearing only a Town shirt (in my dreams!), deepest India, on the moon, some impenetrable jungle, etc. How about it editor?

In the interests of research I am happy to work on the hot chick angle! We could even set up a fantasy "spot the shirt section" imagining where we would like to see Town shirts!

*The Frampton Hatter*

# PORTUGUESE DIARY OF A HATTER

Last summer I went out to Portugal to visit relatives, (Kerry and Rose) who had moved out there and I was surprised to find that they were close to Coimbra, one of the venues for Euro 2004. This year I went back to Portugal, with my friend Sue, because I had managed to get tickets for England v Switzerland, and this is what happened...

**Monday 14 June** - 7.30 a.m. and time to leave home, meet Sue, and get the coach for Heathrow airport and our flight into Lisbon. All in all it's an uneventful flight lifted by the joys of a long hot cheese ciabatta type thingy and a glass of Stella.

We're met at the airport by the hotel courtesy car for the first of many hair-raising drives through downtown Lisbon - 80 k.p.h in a bus lane at one point, with the driver taking great delight in pointing out that it's 34°C in the shade. "Esta muito calor" (very hot) becomes the phrase of the week.

Arriving at the hotel Fenix in central Lisbon we are greeted by a bunch of Bulgarian supporters getting ready to board their bus to tonight's game against Sweden at the Jose Alvalade Stadium in Lisbon.

Checked out our room, which has all the required facilities, air con. Multi channel T.V., mini bar, safe, etc. etc. I can't find the Gideon bible or the Corby trouser press but I guess I can get along without them. As for the mini-bar all I will say is that it's well stocked but €2 euros for a kit-kat!! (€1 = 70p) forget it - but it is a good place to keep the food and drink that we bring back later.

So what do you do in Lisbon when the Euro Championships are on and you're looking for food? Answer: head for the fans park which is in the Parque das Nacoes, near the Oriente train station. So it's off to the metro, and three trains, two changes, and 14 stops later we arrive at what will become our spiritual home for the next few evenings, the Vasco Da Gama shopping centre. And still in search of food we do what any ordinary Portuguese family would do on a night out - Pizza Hut!!

Afterwards we have a leisurely wander round the shopping centre. It certainly puts the Arndale in its place - multi floored, shops of all kinds, a restaurant area with a dozen different styles to choose from, cinema complex, and it stays open to well after 11 at night!!

Eventually its time to head back to the metro and Lisbon's underground is incredibly clean, and light compared to London with very little graffiti found. The first train arrives and it's a riot of blue and yellow as it's packed with Swedish supporters returning from the match. They're a miserable looking bunch so it's a bit of a surprise to hear that they have won 5-0, what the hell will they look like when they lose?

Back at the hotel we find ourselves waiting for the lift with a couple of very sad looking Bulgarians. The door opens and as we get in one of them presses for the second floor and then, with his finger poised, looks at me as if to ask what level do I want? As I raise a spread out hand to indicate the 5th floor it suddenly occurs to me that this wasn't the most diplomatic thing I could have done after such a heavy defeat.

**Tuesday 15 June** - Today is set aside for sightseeing before our trip north to see my relatives tomorrow. So it's into the lift (ironically made by Schindler!) and down for breakfast. By the end of today we will have made a total of 14 different train journeys, some on the Metro, some by

train, and been on 21 different trains, once you take into account all of the changes. Thankfully it's very cheap - a 10-journey ticket on the metro is only €6; while the longest train journey of half an hour only costs €1.30 (90p)

First photo opportunity is the Stadium of Light, home of Benfica. Unfortunately we can't get too close as the underground walkway is shut off and guarded, and there's no chance of crossing the road in light of the lunatic traffic, so we're limited to exterior shots only.

Next stop is the green and yellow painted Jose Alvalade stadium, the new home for Sporting Lisbon - and what a great venue this is, I wonder if there's any chance of shifting it to Junction 10. This time we can get inside the stadium, but not to see the pitch. Oh no. Instead we find that there is an inner ring of cafes, shops, escalators etc. with a magnificent club shop set on two floors. Fantastic.

Eventually we have to leave and get back to doing the touristy thing so its off to look at the Elevador de Santa Justa; then ride the Elevador da Gloria to check out the views of Lisbon; then visit the famous Monument to the Discoveries, and still find time to nip along to Estoril to check out the coast.

After all this travelling there was only one way to spend the evening, and after a quick freshen up at the hotel, and a more Portuguese flavoured meal, (bacalhau com nates - salted cod in a cream sauce, highly recommended), we headed for the fans park.

Entrance is free, just ask for a ticket at the office near the gates, then all you have to do is negotiate the four security checks that include electronic scans of the ticket you have just been given, plus walking through one of those electronic metal detector doorways you get at airports.

There's a lot to do in the park, which is ironically a large concrete plaza. Things to do include a beach football set-up complete with mini grandstands; 5 a side pitches, try your penalty skills, power of your free kick, etc. But we were headed for the big screen, which sits at the back of a large stage, as tonight's match is Germany v Holland. There's a fair size crowd watching, sitting on the stepped area in front of the stage and some way back on the plaza, all drinking alcohol free Carlsberg, (the Official Beer of the Tournament).

It's soon obvious that the majority of the multinational crowd is backing Holland, as I can only see a small group of four German supporters. Germany are already one up, so the biggest cheers of the night go to Van Nistelroy for scoring the Dutch equaliser, and to Jaap Stam for upending a German. It's a rare excuse to cheer for some Moan U players, although this far from Manchester I suppose it's the norm. When the Dutch score the area in front of the stage is suddenly illuminated with banks of floodlights, and the crowd go even more mental with their celebrations. I now know that this is the point where back home Gary Lineker is saying "...and this is the fans reaction in Lisbon". At last famous for fifteen seconds!

So, with the game over it's time for a leisurely wander round the Da Gama centre and then back to the hotel to see the highlights from the Czech/Latvia game played earlier.

**Wednesday 16 June** - time to leave the hotel and head by taxi to the Oriente station for the trip north to Coimbra. On Monday I was able to use my very limited Portuguese to make the compulsory seat reservations on the train, and what a superb service it is (WAGN take note!). We travelled by Comfort Class on the top level Alfa Pendular service and it is clearly the only way to travel.

The trains are very fast and tilt on the journey. The coaches are fully air-conditioned, with an a la carte menu available with meals served at your seat if required, or failing that you can use the trolley service. In fact it is more like being in a large plane cabin than a train - even the blinds are electrically operated! Plus you get free headphones to listen to the onboard radio/T.V. service, and there are updates and announcements on the speed, destination, and expected arrival times. **AND THE TRAINS GET THERE EITHER ON TIME OR EARLY!!!**

We're met by Kerry in Coimbra and have another exhilarating taxi drive, (150 kph on open roads!) to the apartment that he is renting whilst his house is being built.

A big treat is in store for the evening - in the nearby coastal town of Praia da Mira is an Irish themed pub run by Portuguese and we arrive in time for the live screened match of Russia v Portugal. A game that Portugal has to win. The place is packed, with about ten of the football nations represented, Holland, Russia, Portugal, England, Swiss, France etc. (I can't see any Latvians), and the four of us squeeze ourselves into a corner next to a couple of Russians. Kerry and Rose are regulars to the pub and know the owners and staff well and after introductions and a mutual agreement that if we support Portugal tonight they will support England tomorrow, we settle into the game. Service in the pub is tremendous - drinks are brought to the table by the waitresses, who are continually moving around the crowd and who have an uncanny knack of turning up just as you finish a glass - in fact you only have to get up to go to the loo or go home!

The game ends with a 2-0 win for Portugal, which all of the bar are happy with except for the two Russians who with a resigned shrug of the shoulders, move outside to drown their sorrows. So with the football finished it's time for celebrations to begin - and what else do you get in an Irish pub than music and songs, and pretty soon it's almost impossible to hear yourself think as everybody joins in with the choruses banging their glasses on the table at the right moments. Highlight of the evening is that well known classic - 'Living Next Door to Alice', and I am pleased to say that all nationalities joined in as loudly as possible when it got to the chorus of, "Alice, Alice, never f\*\*\*ing Alice!" It gives you a warm feeling to know that British 'culture' has spread, and a true sense of what Eurovision could really be like.

After the music the football chants began with all nationalities taking turns, but all done in the best possible taste! The Swiss and the English are teasing each other with possible scores, the French and Dutch, are singing their songs, and even a lone German pipes up with the cry of "Germany, Germany" at every pause, taking great delight in knowing that no one will object as he appears to be half the size of Bavaria when he stands up! For me it was a night that summed up how universal the game of football is, and the camaraderie that can develop when some uncommon people share a common cause. No risk of trouble, just a very happy night in a friendly atmosphere. But by 1.00 a.m. it's time for bed, especially when you've got tickets for the next game and the Swiss are predicting a 5-0 win...

**Thursday June 17** - a leisurely morning followed by a drive into the nearby town of Cantanhede where we were supposed to be met by a taxi driver to take us into Coimbra. In the end we had to organise a different taxi and so we had the usual breakneck trip in a Portuguese car (what the hell would they do on the M25?)

We were dropped outside the Cidade de Coimbra Stadium with just under a couple of hours to go, and with the temperature over 30 degrees we headed for a shop to pick up bottles of cold water. Slowly we headed past the first barriers and ticket check to get closer to the stadium in the hope of finding a wide range of souvenir sellers, but apart from the official tent, and one or two selling

drinks, I can honestly say that I've seen more at Loftus Road (for those that were at the match, and 10 different people spoke to me, including a bunch of passing St Georges in chain mail, I was the one in the Luton 'Travel Extras' home shirt).

The next security check was taking bottles off people so we decided to sit in the shade and have a drink before going in. As we rested we noticed that armed guards were lining up and then we heard the sound of a police outrider. We looked up the road to our left and saw the England coach arriving and watched as it swept down the road past the security guard and pulled into the open door of the stadium in front of us. The players I saw looked deep in thought and Beckham in particular looked quite sombre. After a few minutes, and with the back of the England bus still visible inside the stadium we heard more sirens and in the distance we saw the Swiss team coach arriving. This was held up, out on the street, as the England coach reversed and drove away, and then it was the turn of the Swiss coach to sweep majestically towards the stadium its proud slogan of "Switzerland is right on time" gleaming in the sunshine. The coach slowed as the front entered the stadium and then stopped. Wonder of wonders the Swiss, well known for their precision engineering, had forgotten to tell the stadium designers the height of their coach and the doorway was too low for the air conditioning unit on the roof!! So to the crowd's joy the Swiss team had to get out in the hot sun!

The seats when we found them had excellent leg room and happily were in the shade. At the other end of the horseshoe shaped stand it was the Swiss that were left to bake in the sun. For me the highlights of the match were the singing of the national anthem prior to the start, definitely a goose-bump moment, Wayne Rooney's goals, which took the pressure off, and a chance to see Frank Lampard and John Terry in the flesh. Gerrard was useful but Beckham looked to be playing well within himself.

After the match it was time to head home, and yet another eventful journey. It started with a long hard walk from the stadium back into town passing the Coimbra Parque station. Plenty of taxis went past but all were full, until Kerry spotted a free cab at some traffic lights. To the drivers surprise we all piled in the back and gave instructions to head for Cantanhede. Unfortunately there was a large breakdown in communication and spotting the football shirt and our talk about the score he took us 400 yards across the river into the fans park! When we did make ourselves understood he made up time in the traditional way of all cabbies - speed!

Back at the apartment we cleaned up and went out for a meal and a drink, and what turned into a long, long, discussion about the difference between a swordfish steak, as we know it, and the "sword fish" that the restaurant sold us. It turns out that his sword fish is actually a scabbard fish and is long and thin, and so nothing like a proper swordfish. I think I'll stick to the salted cod.

**Friday June 18** - our train back to Lisbon is due to leave Coimbra at 15.20 so we have the morning to check out one of the local coastal towns, namely Figueira da Foz, and its 15 kilometres, (yes fifteen!), of very wide white sandy beaches. Apparently the World beach football competitions are played here.

The trip to Figueira is on a long straight road, which passes through wooded areas, and as we drive along I notice two obviously attractive and overly well dressed women, one on each side of the road about 200 yards apart, (think dodgy night club style). It appears Portugal, apart from having licensed brothels, also have local "working girls". I have a feeling that walking must be a very popular local hobby; it certainly gives a new meaning to "just popping out for a tramp in the woods!"

After lunch it's time to head for Coimbra and the train back to Lisbon, so we say goodbye to Kerry and Rose and take a taxi to the station for the 15.20 train. True to it's reputation it arrives 30 seconds early, and as we board the Comfort class coach we find that free bottles of water are available due to the heat. Only in Portugal!

Arriving in Lisbon I am able to give directions to a couple of other tourists before Sue and I head for a taxi and the quick trip to the Hotel Villa Rica, another over the top and very classy hotel. This one has all the usual fixtures that we have come to expect including 21 channel TV, (free porn on the German channel after 11), and a glass wall to the bathroom!!

For what will be our last night in Lisbon we head back to the fans park, stopping for a farewell visit to Pizza Hut, and the big screen thrills of Italy 1 Sweden 1. With no German side to hate it appears that the majority of the crowd are with the Swedes, whilst the Italians hold their heads in frustration at their usual underperformance.

Reluctantly we have to leave the park as it shuts, and so we head for the shopping centre for a chance to buy a few souvenirs.

The final late night Metro ride is as entertaining as always as like all cities you get the usual mix of beggars and buskers. On the underground and mostly in the evening you find that at each station a blind beggar gets on and once the train is moving they tap their way with their white stick down the carriage asking for helping and waving their money box. On this particular trip the guy that got on waited for the train to move before producing a mouth organ, which he then played one handed, whilst using his other hand to tap out a very complicated and fast rhythm with his stick, and still walking the length of the carriage. Very skilful indeed.

**Saturday June 19** - And that basically was that. With check-in for the flight home at 11.00 I decided to get up early and hit the streets of Lisbon for a last look around. So by half past seven I emerged from the Campo Pequeno Metro station in search of Lisbon's famous bullring, which is renowned for its Moorish architecture. The good news was that I found it; the bad news was that it is currently undergoing refurbishment and won't be finished for two years. However as I was struggling to take pictures through and over the surrounding fences I was spotted by one of the builders who let me into the work area for a closer look.

Heading back to the hotel for breakfast I discovered that the standard of driving still borders on lunatic even early in the morning. At a clear crossing with no traffic in sight, and a green light for pedestrians showing, I started to cross the road to find a 4x4 racing towards me from an unseen slip road with hooter blaring, now I know how the coyote feels in Road Runner cartoons. Thankfully the rest of the days travel went smoothly, even the usual breakneck speed of the taxi from hotel to airport felt normal, and an easy flight home saw us back in London by 5 o'clock. In fact the longest part of the day was the tube and then train from Heathrow back to Letchworth, but on the bright side I still made it home in time to watch Czechoslovakia's 3-2 win over Holland...

And the rest of the tournament, as they say, is history. Greece surprised everybody, Portuguese hearts were broken, and England were... England.

If, (sorry), WHEN, Luton get into Europe and providing they get drawn against Benfica or Sporting Lisbon I would definitely recommend that you go. It's a beautiful country, and the people are very friendly and very, very helpful. But failing that I now have my eye on the World Cup in Germany 2006... What chance of seeing Kevin Foley lining up against Enoch???

# WHO IS YOUR MANAGER IDOL?

You don't have to be a carbon copy of another manager to be as successful as him. Bob Paisley was a completely different style of manager to Brian Clough, but both achieved domestic and European successes. Mike Newell is different to Alex Ferguson in managing styles, but Mike is only just a better manager than Sir Alex. So which manager do you model yourself on? Are you the type who is noble in defeat, or maybe you think that there is never enough injury time. Are you always missing important incidents in your matches, or are you always winding up the other team, usually to the detriment of your own team. To find out, answer these questions, and you will find out that your idol is one of three managerial legends, or the other one.

**Your team has just beaten another team in your league 2-1 at home. What is your reaction?**

- A. 'I did not see the incident which led to our last minute penalty.'
- B. Spend a minute praising your team, and then another five slagging off Arsenal.
- C. 'It was a good win, but there are definitely aspects of our game that we can improve on.'
- D. 'We murdered them.'

**Half of the season has gone already, and there are two teams clear at the top of the table – one of which is yours. What do you say about the other team?**

- A. Criticise them as much as you can without getting into trouble.
- B. Criticise them as much as you can without getting into trouble.
- C. Praise them and say what a good team they are, resulting in their manager doing likewise.
- D. Start a rivalry with the other team, and say 'I'm glad we'll be playing them next season because that's at least 6 points we'll get.'

**You are interested in signing a striker. How do you go about it?**

- A. Sign him when he is young and unknown, and turn him into a world beater.
- B. Publicly declare your interest, unsettling the striker and annoying his team's fans at the same time.
- C. Do everything in private, so that no one else suspects anything.
- D. Criticise the club that he plays for and then expect the same club to accept a dreadful offer for him because you used to manage the club.

**It is pre-season. Who do you sign?**

- A. A couple of French youngsters for the future.
- B. An Argentinean misfit for £28m.
- C. Two goalkeepers and two loan strikers, whilst developing your youngsters.
- D. An ageing useless left-back, an overweight striker with a dodgy hairstyle and a brilliant central-midfielder who you play out of position on the right.

**What is your youth team policy?**

- A. Sign every promising continental player that you possibly can.
- B. Make sure that at least half your team are home grown.
- C. Always give them a chance and keep faith in them.
- D. Youth policy? What youth policy?

**Your keeper has just played badly. How do you react?**

- A. Refuse to drop him for over a year before finally replacing him with a Spanish youngster who is just as bad and has a similar dodgy hairstyle.
- B. Drop him for your Northern Irish international keeper.
- C. Refuse to blame him, but sign another keeper on loan to take his place.
- D. Publicly criticise him, pretend to keep forgetting his name by always referring to 'The Other One' and use your 'contacts' at Wolves to try and get a keeper.

**What is the financial system at your club like?**

- A. It is all going towards the new ground, so I can't buy world class players.
- B. We have bottomless wallets due to our worldwide attraction, so we are always gaining money and I can sign whoever I like.
- C. Money? What's that?
- D. Ok, but deteriorating due to my large wage packets.

**What is your reaction to winning the Manager of the Month award?**

- A. Not bothered – you have won a lot of those recently.
- B. 'Put it over there with the others.'
- C. In the programme notes, 'We also managed to win the Manager of the Month award.'
- D. I don't know why it has taken so long for me to win this.

**What is your reaction to a few defeats on the bounce?**

- A. Refuse to panic and refuse to change anything, meaning you continue to struggle as a result.
- B. Kick a boot across the dressing room at your star player, cue his summer departure to your rivals for world domination.
- C. Refuse to panic, and calmly work out what is going wrong and solving it.
- D. Lock the players in the dressing room for three hours and take away all of their holidays until Christmas.

**What would the nature of your departure be like?**

- A. Departure? I'm not going anywhere!
- B. Retire popular with my fans, a knighthood and seemingly unlimited achievements.
- C. My departure would probably be a little harsh, but I wouldn't make too much of it.
- D. Depart in acrimonious circumstances, which has nothing to do with the fans, but I think I'll criticise their club anyway, even when the guy who sacked me has been chucked out.

**So, how did you score?**

- Mostly A's – Your idol is Arsene Wenger.
- Mostly B's – Your idol is Sir Alex Ferguson
- Mostly C's – Your idol is Sir Mike Newell
- Mostly D's – Your idol is Joe Kinnear

So there you have it. Usually, you would expect some witty comments about the three legendary managers and the other one in the section above, but I'm not doing that because this is the only way that I can keep this damned thing onto two pages.

Hidden in the ether behind a week's football headlines dominated by vile Spanish racial abuse and yet more of Wayne's teenage tantrums, a small story broke to warm the cockles of every true football fan.

Tucked away in a barren wasteland of concrete Cows, mini roundabouts and grey facades, far removed from the traditional lower league football heartlands of Rochdale and Stockport, and a million miles away from the glamour and glitz of the Premiership Prawn Cocktail brigade, without fuss, a dignified band of football supporters, made their own personal stand against the Franchising of football, the official sanctioning and betrayal of the fundamental principles of our national game.

Whilst others opted for the delights of Kingston, the new home of AFC Wimbledon, and hundreds more regular fans stayed at home and boycotted the short journey up the M1 to Milton Keynes new town, a dedicated group of die-hard Luton Town Fans, forsook the opportunity to watch their team leave the National Hockey Stadium with an inevitable three points to peacefully protest outside the stadium against what they perceive as a bigger issue than one single game.

Totally disenfranchised from the leaderless bungling incompetent Football authorities who market themselves as the custodians of our game; disgusted at the raping of a once proud club's history and identity, and fearful of the long term impact that a franchised MK Dons will have on other teams in the region, Luton Town fans marched proudly from the Central Square to stage their protest.

The protest itself was a success, local and national media highlighted the protester's fight and despite confident claims from MK Dons of a first ever full house, huge swathes of empty seats were clearly visible within the ground. Many Luton fans inside the stadium refused to buy matchday programmes and refreshments, much needed and anticipated streams of vital income were denied the cash strapped MK Dons, an illegitimate offspring of a club.

Something very special is happening at Luton Town. On the pitch, Mike Newell's side, a mix of exciting young talent and seasoned professionals are playing with a panache and consistency not seen at Kenilworth since David Pleat's total football side of the 1980's.

Off the pitch, buoyed by a successful fan driven campaign to rid their club of John Gurney; yet another unscrupulous property developer whose take-over of a once proud club was originally sanctioned by the football authorities, the actions of Luton Town fans mirrors much of what is happening in the lower leagues. What these true fans have done is to rediscover and reclaim the true meaning of the game, its heritage and its future.

Unlike a majority of the 'bigger' Premiership teams whose precarious financial outlook rests solely with the fickle finger of declining satellite TV ratings, these fans from, Wrexham, Bournemouth, AFC Wimbledon and countless other clubs have fully realised that the future of the game does not lay in the hands of fly by-night profit orientated property developers, franchisees, foreign business magnates, the whims of megalomaniac club Chairmen, greedy disloyal ill-disciplined millionaire players and unscrupulous agents, but instead within a myriad and succession of partnership between the local club, the fans, local business, local communities and local authorities. ■

The true spirit of football is alive and well, and sitting imperiously perched on the top of league 1. Up the Hatters!!

TiWC

## CAUSE FOR CONCERN

Any one who saw that motley crew of us waving our Luton colours out side AFC Wimbledon, pictured in the *Herald & Post* on 25th November, must have thought what a sad group we looked. If that thought went through your minds then let me say that the visit to the Fan's Stadium demonstrated what a great job those highly committed people have done in such a short space of time.

AFC Wimbledon are far too big for the level they are playing at. Their players are better paid, trained, and enjoy facilities which are at least Conference standard and their support is as good as the support clubs at our level take away, just look at the numbers they took to Dunstable last October. As a true fan of football it was an honour to be amongst them. I'm not having a go at those fans that went to MK, after all it was an easy journey and an easy three points; that hopefully will send them down. But while the physical presence of the 30,000 all seater Denbigh Stadium is now becoming a reality we should be constantly reminded that Kenilworth Road is not capable of holding football at our current level, let alone the next level up where hopefully we will be playing next season and where traditionally clubs at that level can bring with them much bigger followings. Until the club is physically playing on the land at junction 10, LTFC could be prey to the people behind the Denbigh stadium, be it the current chairman of MK Dons (who at least will be able to put his Pop concerts on there even if his club eventually, with or without Danny Wilson, crashes (hopefully) back into non league football) or a successor. How often recently have the media reported that talks have taken place between the Chairmen of Liverpool and Everton? And talk of ground sharing as been around in Edinburgh for years.

Remember that everywhere in the South-East land is scarce and any land that becomes available, other than at Junction 10, will either go for housing or retail; so as supporters our chances of emulating AFC Wimbledon could be remote; unless a deal is done at Barton Rovers or Dunstable, but then could we call ourselves Luton Town?

Brian Ellis

## THIS FANZINE NEEDS YOU!!

For the second time this season, we've got an issue out on time, and packed with good stuff, so we still haven't had to use some of the secondhand dross that we keep in case of emergency. With your help, the next issue will be as good, and on schedule. We plan to bring it out on Saturday March 5th, which gives a deadline for contributions of Wednesday February 23rd (of course, the more we receive earlier than that, the better). So, please send in any match reports, articles, letters, cartoons, cuttings or whatever else by post or email to the addresses on page 2. Thanks.

# Spanish speed up £8.4bn Abbey bid

## CUTTING REMARKS

They look good now that Mike Newell has told them to keep ball and grass in close proximity. Curtis Davies is a 19-year-old central defender who eats up ground like Linford Christie while reading the game like Bobby Moore. Remember his name. Rowan Vine's well-taken goal secured a 1-0 victory which takes Luton seven points clear after eight games.

Above, from the *Daily Telegraph*, an observation of our defensive star. With reviews like that, he'll be off soon, won't he?

On the left, a headline that shows how underrated our former keeper Nathan must have been. Or is it Real with that spending bug again?

And below, this is taken from the *Hertfordshire on Sunday*. Check out the last result of these, and wonder if this has been typed up by a disgruntled Stevenage fan!

### NATIONWIDE CONFERENCE

|               |   |              |   |
|---------------|---|--------------|---|
| Barnet        | 5 | Dagenham/Red | 0 |
| Burton Alb    | 3 | Gravesend    | 2 |
| Canvey Island | 2 | Forest Green | 1 |
| Crawley       | 0 | Northwood    | 0 |
| Exeter        | 0 | Carlisle     | 0 |
| Farnborough   | 1 | York City    | 1 |
| Leigh RMI     | 1 | Stevenage    | 2 |
| Morecambe     | 3 | Tamworth     | 0 |
| Scarborough   | 2 | Aldershit    | 2 |

## It's not Football

There is, apparently, a Premiership anthem. Does it rival that of the Harlem Globetrotters I wonder? Probably not, since *Sweet Georgia Brown*, while a dreadful tune, has got to be better than whatever reprobate, jingoistic piffle the money bosses have hijacked the top 3 clubs and clingers on in their league. It needs to be a vacuous song to really reflect the "top league", which, if ever there was one, is a crapbag of coves and psychotic businessmen. The sort of lumpheads who ruin and run from pension plans and want nothing more than to become provincial heroes.

Since last year's 'Division One' was re-branded the 'Championship', you can hear the same fiscal grunting going on in the next league down. I don't make a point of disrupting my Sunday for such clashes as Rotherham v Gillingham or Preston v Crewe, but wouldn't be at all surprised if TV refers to this second footballing tier as 'Championship challenge everything division sponsored by EA Games'. Do pundits have to look to one side, freeze like icepops and pause while an annoying Pentium 4 jingle goes off every time the name of the league is mentioned?

The fan doesn't exist in the premiership. Crowds are shipped in from the same catering companies that service the executive boxes. The Championship might be blighted with weird kick-off times and are moved around to suit the tv cameras, but it's nothing like as bad as the Premiership in its nip and tucking around schedules for the interminably dull and meaningless 'Champions League.' This really IS the end when it comes to Derek Dull and his Desperately Dumb Dumbfest. It's diving and posing like freckin Torville and Blessed Dean.

And yet apparently, and even MORE sensationally, some sadists say that teams like Newcastle and Forever Middle-sbrough still compete in a pretend UEFA Cup complete with knockout, two group stages, a great big mascot fight and the final presentation done on the cheap by John "London" Gurney. If such games take place, I'd rather watch the Conference, or Dunstable.

Premiership players are crooks, and overpaid, advantaged brats, to boot... Luton have 'home-grown' a few talents and since leaving, John Hartson in particular, has gone round the houses and ended up doing good. Gary Doherty though, has all but failed and Matt Taylor seems to be disappearing from first team contention at Portsmouth. Emmerson Boyce has done exceptionally, but for the time being at least, looks like the footballing equivalent of a Star Trek security guard, beamed down with Kirk, Spock and Nurse Chappell.

Players now have to be bankable as well as being footballers. No one really gives a damn about steady performers, because they're not bankable. The problem our 'lower league clubs' have is that we're okay getting these lads to play, but we're not grounding them with anything like enough pig squealingly ridiculous personal problems. Tony Adams and Paul Merson's run-ins with booze and drugs are dreadfully Football League in their aspiration; the model today is for weird looking oilies like Woodgate and Ferdinands selling their brains for a modelling contract, fighting like slags, commanding huge transfer fees whenever they can and playing the odd game of footie in between porridge. Players, teams and managers aspire to the quick sensationalism of 'Dream Team' rather than the artistry of Cruyff, Pele, Best or Ricky Hill.

So, eighteen months on, and if we've still got Brko and Howard (and Newell, Beresford, Coyne, Davies, Davis, Foley, Swiss (Robbo), the 'Nice' Nicks, Underwood etc), we'll have to make a choice. We're hopefully going to be promoted to a league which is going to be superbly entertaining and competitive, with games against our real rivals and, *very possibly*, a Nottingham 'Irons in the fire' Forest with Fat Boy at the helm. Aside from the occasional inhospitable kick-off time, it's going to be fantastic.

But if we succeed in the 'Championship', do we *really* want to play the corporate division? I'm not so sure. Last time we were in the top flight players like Hill, Harford and Stein and possibly Newell were revered at the Kenny and respected throughout the land. These days, the attacking

stars of West Brom, Charlton and Norwich are Z list. They're surely good players, but they're well down the bill and are either pussied-up to take a tumble for the brats of the bigger teams, or they're acting like crackfed delinquents on their agents' advice and with a view to column inches. At the time of writing, red top front and broadsheet back pages have decided to ignore the plight of Wrexham and other clubs in peril, and, obscenely, still reverberate with that the tiresome feud Dame Alex Ferguson is trying to whip up with 'Moi, je sais rien' Wenger, and El Hadj Diouff spitting.

Nothing, in particular, about any teams' playing. That sort of dead-in-the-bath curio from a bygone age seems a preserve of a few teams, like ours, who don't have the resources or inclination to become some weird, non-viable conglomerate.

K1

## Enoch

### *At Plymouth*

Tall, gangly, shambling his way onto the pitch

Raw, uncoordinated an unlikely saviour

As our sparse striking force has an injury hitch

Booking is earned by clumsy behaviour

### *Later after the hat trick*

Glimpses of brilliance, lights the crowd's fire

His tricky, mazy runs leave defenders in shock

Starts to relieve the summer's deep mire

A new Hatters hero to acclaim, "Enoch, Enoch"

## TROUBLE AT THE TOP

The documentary "Trouble at the Top" finally aired since the last issue of *Mad as a Hatter!*. As someone who had no real idea of what happened in the dark Gurney days it was a complete eye-opener. Personally, without links to behind the scenes at Kenilworth Road or Trust-in-Luton, I realised for the first time how deeply Luton were in trouble. Real trouble.

At the time, very little actual information was given about what was happening either in the newspapers or message boards. With all the legal wrangles and Gurney slight of hand, it was kept quiet. Then Luton went into administration, Gurney was gone and it was all over. And with Mike leading of our team upwards it all seemed a lot of fuss about nothing.

Wrong. Watching Trouble at the Top – very wrong. There were times when I couldn't bear to watch the documentary and see what had happened to our club. For those of you who missed it, the documentary portrayed Gurney as a profiteering evil chancer who got his grubby mitts onto Luton in a quick sale with his own promises of non-existent far-eastern monies. A business man ready to make a killing on the LTFC earmarked land next to the M1, and without caring if the club went out of existence in the meantime. And he nearly succeeded.

Fortunately the heroes of the hour were Cherry Newbery and Trust in Luton. As others watched at the club being ripped apart (especially when no-one was paid) Cherry Newbery held things together. For almost two months our between-seasons club wasn't held together by the fans, or the players, or the board, or the manager, or supporters clubs or anyone like that. It was held together by Cherry. Cherry – you're my hero. And she did all this with what seemed like no hope in sight.

And then Trust in Luton was founded. From the documentary, I didn't recognise any of the Trust in Luton founder members from around my part of Kenilworth Road but thank goodness that they are around. As they pointed out, Luton fans aren't all stereotypical mindless yobs – within in our fanbase are company owners, company directors and heads of business. And they saved us.

Forming Trust in Luton they investigated the club's dealing and found out that LTFC had an outstanding business loan. This was running into millions of pounds owing. Trust in Luton (using money raised from themselves and fellow fans – now Trust in Luton members) bought a controlling stake in the company and then called in the loan. Gurney couldn't pay it, and the club went into administration with Gurney no longer in control.

It was a business transaction that saved Luton. Not the fans moaning and stamping their feet. We were saved by a business transaction. Well done Trust-in-Luton.

The documentary finished with Cherry and Trust in Luton all smiles, but with Gurney threatening like a villain at the end of a bad movie hoping for a sequel. Hopefully there will be no sequel.

B Dave B

# DESERVEDLY CUTTING REMARKS

A couple of soft shots at an easy target here. We don't know where they came from, but that's not really the point, is it?

Growing up in north London in the 1980s, the glamour team to support were Arsenal (or Manchester United). But the team we should have been supporting were Watford, buoyed up on the cash of Elton John, in their distinctive vomit-and-mustard kit. As a 12-year-old, it was practically impossible to get tickets to Arsenal (as it is now), but it was very, very possible to see Watford. Watford had a distinctive kick-the-ball-really-high-and-see-what-happens strategy, which unnerved opponents but rarely resulted in victory.

The highlight of most games was

**Although we should all be at work, there are about 20 overweight men trying on replica shirts from the autumn collection**

someone letting off a firework in the toilets. Supporting Arsenal and going to Watford was like being into the Rolling Stones and getting tickets for the Wurzels. It seemed bad, and it was, even at the time.

And here, just briefly, how the unbeatables were viewed by When Saturday Comes.

League One the Arsenal of Bedfordshire drop points for only the second time in a 1-1 draw at Tranmere, who score with a rebound from a twice-taken penalty.

## MY WORST...

Opening a store in Watford was an unmitigated disaster. The costs were too high and sales were too low. We opened the shop in 1992 and were forced to close it in 1996. We kept it going that long to see whether it would take off. But it didn't, so we eventually bit the bullet and got rid of it.

It was only the fourth store we opened, so it nearly broke us. Maybe the timing had been wrong, although our other outlets were all doing fine. If you looked at the demographics of Watford, there was no reason why it shouldn't have worked. And the next stores that we opened also did OK.

The final closure of the Watford store cost us £250,000, on top of the shop's losses of £250,000. The worst thing about it is that it was inexplicable, so I can't learn any lessons from it. I think about it a lot, but I have never come to any firm conclusions about why it happened. It haunts me to this day. I'd take a lot of convincing to open a store in Watford now!

## NOT UNBEATABLE, BUT STILL TOP!

### 23.10.04 JAMMY BUGGERS 3 UNLUCKY HATTERS 0

The very impressive KC Stadium was the venue - and let me tell you that the ground is easier to find from the station than the station is from the ground. But that's another story. This was the day the Town's luck ran out big style. The first goal (after 10 minutes) was a mis-hit cross that looped over Dino Seremet's head, David Seaman-style. Not really the keeper's fault - it was a complete fluke.

Ten minutes later, with Chris Coyne off having a head injury attended to, Steve Howard was filling in nicely at centre back until Mike Newell appeared on the side line to tell him to go forward, with Paul Underwood filling in at the back. Naturally, Hull City punted a hopeful long ball to test out the new arrangement, and the resulting confusion between Underwood and Seremet led to the second goal.

We then had what television pundits and *The Independent* newspaper, no less, described as a perfectly good goal by Kevin Foley ruled out for offside. Almost immediately, a series of throw-ins on our right ended up with Seremet dropping the ball in the box. Result: 3 - 0, with only half an hour gone. Was I the only spectator to notice that both throw-ins were foul throws? For the first, the thrower clearly stepped over the line, for the second his foot cut the line. If I could see it, how come the linesman couldn't? Simple: he was looking **across** the pitch on both occasions, apparently to make sure no Luton forwards were in an offside position - from a Hull throw in our half of the pitch!

After that, the spirit seemed to go out of the side, with Kevin Nicholls opting for an early bath and a three week holiday. A Hull City web site contributor described Luton as having had 70% possession - probably an exaggeration. I can remember the home fans olé-ing their team as if they were Brazil, for a sequence of 18 or so passes entirely in their own half of the pitch - against 10 men!

My marathon trek back through most of East Yorkshire got me to the station in time for the 18.24 (yes, I do know it's only 15 minutes' walk from the ground). Andy the Geordie Hatter from Gateshead was there, and we chatted with a couple of Tigers fans from Goole, who very kindly demolished Andy's stock of cider before they left the train. Let's hope Hull don't go up with us this season - I really don't want to go there again.

Will Larter

### 30.10.04 TOWN 4 BRADFORD CITY 0

Facing the in-form second-placed side is not exactly what you need when you've just lost three games in a row. As it turned out, it was exactly what we needed!

Having been three goals down at Hull in little more than half-an-hour the week before, it was our turn to score three goals before the break - with a superb Brko overhead kick, Howard header and a flowing move finished by Unders stopping Bradford in their tracks.

Now, normally I would be overjoyed at being 3-0 ahead so early - but as I stood to win about £75-odd quid at the bookies on that scoreline, I was probably the only person who secretly hoped we didn't score any more. My windfall wasn't to be though, as Brko stuck in a fourth midway through the second half. He quite literally walked it in - although it would have been much more impressive if he had got on his hands and knees and headed it over the line! Not much else to say about the match, with on-loan debutant Simon Royce having a fairly quiet game in goal for us.

The shell-shocked Bantams were then "reduced" to 10 men for the trudge back to the

dressing rooms as moaning git Lardass was sent off after the final whistle for a second bookable offence.

He was apparently reacting to an alleged "4-0" taunt by referee Joe Ross - who then allegedly went on TalkSport the following day to 'confess' his actions. Or was it an imposter?!

*Scoop*

PS: I was wondering if a certain fanzine editor can let us know what it's like to watch Bradford for a full 90 minutes?

*Well, I'd have to say it made a change. Of course, being provided with a seat certainly helps, but the pleasure was all mine. As long as we can repeat this result in the return fixture I'll be a very happy man! Ed.*

#### **06.11.04 TOWN 5 WREXHAM 1**

Anyone arriving in the ground at the wrong time may have thought that the club had grossly over reacted to the untimely departure of Mick Harford, but it was just a minute's silence for Bill Nicholson - a man who achieved the incredible feat of turning Tottenham into a side the whole country feared rather than laughed at, as is the case these days. It was sad to hear Mick confirming on the radio the previous night that he would be returning to help the fat man at Forest. Obviously he was sad to be leaving us, but said it was the right time because we were top of the league instead of in administration when Kinnear made his last approach. I disagree. We were safe from relegation then and never really looked good enough to make the play-offs, but this season we're clear at the top and there's much more to lose if it all goes pear shaped. Micky Harford is still a Luton Town legend, but he should have stayed to help finish the job that he's played such a big part in. Kinnear's comments ("I'm glad Mick's had enough of Luton") would have struck a nerve with all Town fans. Just remember Joe, it was Gurney who sacked you, not the club. Also, you're a crap manager without Mick Harford at your side.

Thankfully, the players had the pride too show that they are the ones on the pitch, and there is no reason why the great start can't go on. After an early scare when Chris Armstrong missed an open goal, the game was wrapped up before half past three. The opener came on twelve minutes when a long Foley cross found Stevo who headed back across to an unmarked Robinson to run onto it and head into the opposite corner. Four minutes later came a moment to capture in the Davis family Scrapbook, when Sol advanced into the box to chest down a lovely scooped pass from Brkovic and slot under the keeper for his first ever senior goal. Davis is a completely transformed player this season and it was due reward for all the quality work he's been putting in. Just five minutes after this the game was as good as won when, not for the first time this season, Vine stayed on his feet when fouled in the area and centred for Steve O'Leary to finish with ease. O'Leary is the pick of our young midfielders and has taken his chance well. Nicholls should be thankful we haven't suffered in his absence after his silliness at Hull. Just before half time Stevo made no mistake with his head after another Foley cross, giving us a nice, relaxing second half again.

We couldn't sustain our form in the second half, probably because Robinson was soon substituted for Michael Leary. Asking Leary and O'Leary to do the same job as Nico and Robbo is a bit too much and the Welshies were able to play a bit of football from then on, hitting the woodwork and forcing Royce into some good saves. However, the Hatters dominance was increased when Brkovic headed home from about three yards after

Underwood's shot was only parried. How we laughed when the Croatian sensation announced that he wanted ten this season, but how we need him to get far more if we want to stay top of the league. Brko's always had a knack of getting into scoring positions, but these days he has the confidence to put them away. Just by starting this season on the right of midfield has led to better performances, confidence, goals, more confidence, more goals and now cult status. Wrexham scored from a corner which never was - the referee seemed a bit sorry for their on and off field plight and gave them most of the decisions throughout.

It would seem that we have recovered from those three defeats in a week. Whether we will recover from the loss of Mick Harford remains to be seen. I wonder how we'll react to going in at half time a goal down without Harford in the dressing room, or if we can lift ourselves if we lose another three games in a week. Performances like this and Bradford will keep us at the top, though. Our first eleven is the best in this division, but most of our rivals have probably got better squads than us and it turns out that when Nico returns we will lose Robinson because of a hernia operation. Let us pray that the injuries don't mount up and Newell can keep the team focussed and free from complacency.

*Richard Ward*

#### **12.11.04 SARFEND 0 TOWN 3**

Once again, we found ourselves entering the FA Cup at the First round stage. Once again we were drawn away to an Essex side, and once again Sky decide that we must like our Friday night football. Now, I've nothing against Essex, but I would prefer not to have to go there to watch football. Especially on a Friday night.

After last year's tie at Thurrock, there was always a fear that we were going to not only going to find, but play with a banana skin in this match. Fortunately, our fears were short lived, and as habitual late arrivals at matches we were rewarded with early goals having managed to arrive in time for kick-off. The game was barely 10 minutes old when Stevo opened the scoring sidefooting home blocked effort by Brkovic, after good work by Vine and Underwood. Just three minutes later it looked like game over when Vine crossed for Howard to knock in his second.

Southend were proving a rather easier hurdle than Thurrock had done, probably because we were considerably better than a year earlier. It was almost half an hour into the game before Dino Seremet, in the Hatters' goal, was tested by a Southend shot, but it was just a couple of minutes later that the result was tied up when the Croatian sensation, Brkovic, received the ball from Vine, wandered around the home 'keeper for a bit, and tapped the ball into the net. This was Brko's ninth of the season, a number that would not have seemed conceivable six months earlier when most of us would have been happy to have seen him released. Such is the difference in his confidence this season that he seems an essential part of the team now.

The remainder of the half saw a couple more attempts for the Town, who went in to the break with a comfortable lead. The second half was a more tedious affair with the home side coming into the game a bit more late on, but never enough to threaten the Town's supremacy.

The night was rounded off with a fast car back to Luton, to make it back before last orders for some post match analysis with some of those who had watched the game on TV.

*KFH*

**20.11.04 MK DONGS 1 TOWN 4**  
***MK Dons (short for Milton Keynes Franchise penniless Plastic Cows FC who used to be Wimbledon but moved, because we don't give a damn about the fans)***

Not a bad day. I took the day off to catch up on some coursework (we were of course boycotting the match), and once I had done this, I followed the match on AOL Sport, cheered when the final result came through, then decided to clear up the leaves that had decided to blow onto our drive that morning (my way of celebrating) before switching over to Sky Sports News to watch the other scores come through. *The End.*

Ok, I admit it, I went. However, I am proud to say that the only thing that I paid for was my ticket for the match. I had already decided that I wasn't going to have a burger before the Saturday, and I refused to purchase my usual badge (although this is partly down to us not being able to find the club shop. If they are going to pretend to run a football club, then they should at least do it properly). I did, however, join in with the protest taking place outside the ground. Well, to be honest, I stood around behind the barrier for ten minutes before entering the ground. I was distraught to find that the long queue inside was actually for the burger bar rather than the toilet, but my happiness increased when I saw Beresford warming up. The first half was ok, we didn't really play well but found ourselves 2-1 up because of the opposition we were up against, a cracking goal by Vine and because of Howard taking the one chance he got. The MK Cows fans tried a few 'We Hate Luton' style chants, and we replied by singing 'We hate Watford'. The second half was superb. Howard completed his hat-trick and we outclassed them for the rest of the half. In the end, good triumphed over evil, and we went home happy. We won't come here again, because a) They will go down and we will go up, and b) They will go out of business.

*Peter Bulkeley*

A cold lunch time KO bought me to the close ground of the MK Dons, or is it the Hockey team? Anyhow, it very much seemed like the home of football with make-shift stands, long queues waiting to enter, once inside walking up shaky metal stairs and then sitting on cold chairs in a very very light drizzle whilst accumulating grit on your shoes from the stand (apologies for the long sentence.) With Luton fans in two stands less noise was made, but still more than the Dons fans could muster. A wave here and there from Newell and the bench and the game was done without too much to report on.

A Stevo hat-trick and Vine goal killed it. The coldness and hard core Dons fans, who knew only one song, meant for a subdued atmosphere. A lovely Coynie back heel come chip cross, like his friend Harry Kewell did a while back, was a highlight of the game. As well as Unders falling over and getting jeered, then jumping up like a worm without using his arms got an equal sized cheer, but a complimentary one this time. Foley played well and apart from the two front men was my man of the match. A Dons player who caught my eye at least was Rizzo, their new signing from the day before.

A massive attendance of 7,620 was the only plus the Dons could take from the match, as we murdered them and we were looking below par, playing a lesser standard of football than normal. So, well done to the Hatters!

Phil Mitchell, or his real name, Steve McFadden now supports Luton... or at least he claimed to support the winning team in his 'lively' on pitch entertainment before the game. Maybe the Dons should concentrate on their little girl cheerleaders, two cows, ball-boys and random band in the corner of the ground a bit more... NOT! Here's a tip for them: If you

want to stay up concentrate on football not all your pre-match crud! But, now they have Danny Wilson they still have half a chance. However, they will never beat the Hatters. I sense a blossoming relationship between the two clubs now, since I saw 'we 8 Luton' on the back of a Dons fan's shirt leaving the ground. Sadly I also see us and them in different leagues come the next season. Oh well...

*Dan Strode*

**27.11.04 TOWN 1 DONCASTER 1**

Congratulations must go to Doncaster Rovers. They join an elite group of teams, including Peterborough. Bournemouth and possibly Torquay, who came to Kenilworth Road this season with one thing on their minds - to go for a draw. Amazingly, they were the first team out of the above to actually achieve a draw, though how they managed this is anyone's guess. Nico finally broke the deadlock on the hour mark with an accurate free-kick out of the keepers reach, and we had already hit the woodwork twice before that. After Nico scored, there was only ever one team who was likely to score the second goal of the match, and then that team went and let in a goal. After that, we hit the crossbar through the excellent Curtis Davies and Peter Holmes, but we couldn't get a winner, and Doncaster left with an undeserved point.

*Peter Bulkeley*

**04.12.04 WYCOMBE WANDERERS 0 TOWN 3**

Back to the FA Cup, and our fourth away cup tie of the season (and fifth away cup trip with two attempts at Boston). Unusually, this game held few fears in advance, and a win always seemed likely. After a bit of panic in High Wycombe town centre trying to find a cab to get to the ground, we again made it in time for kick off, although late enough to miss the pre-match operatic performance, so not all bad! We were almost rewarded for our efforts when Nicholls had a great 25 yard effort saved after just 2 minutes. Although Wycombe threatened early on, the danger was limited and it was on 20 minutes when Town took the lead when the Forest-bound (if you believe BFJ - does anyone?) Steve Howard headed home a lovely cross from Brkovic. Ten minutes later he headed just wide, and O'Leary came close twice before the break, although Wycombe also had their chances, especially when Tyson managed what few others have done this season and sprinted past Curtis Davies. The Chairboys (stupid nickname) started the second half well and created plenty of pressure and a few chances, but were unable to break through and grab an equaliser, and on 70 minutes Nicholls hit a beauty of a shot from just outside the 18 yard box into the bottom corner. The match was made safe when Howard headed home from another Brkovic cross with 10 minutes to go, for his 4th FA Cup goal of the season, and to send us into the third round draw.

*KFH*

**07.12.04 D'URSO'S BEES 2 HATTERS 0**

After results of previous weeks and Brentford's far from impressive form of late I, like most Town fans, was very hopeful of three points, and if Brentford's efforts against Hinckley were anything to go by, a comfortable three points at that. Funny old game, football, especially as a Luton fan! There's something about midweek away games and Luton that just don't seem to go together. For one we rarely, if ever, win and secondly the performances tend to leave a lot to be desired.

I was rather hoping to be able to compile a match report without having to mention (well,

too often anyway) the officials but, sadly, once again it was the men in black who stole the show. It's easy to see why Mr D'Urso has been relegated from the Premiership. For a so-called professional to be so easily influenced by the home crowd (and players, for that matter) tells its own story. At least Joe Ross had the balls to be bad for both sides, whereas D'Urso might as well have been wearing the home strip for the entire game! Howard's sending off seemed harsh at the time and as I haven't seen a replay of the incident yet I am loathe to pass full judgement on him. All I will say is that it's fair to say that the reaction from Howard when the red card was produced said a lot at the time. He didn't really argue with the decision or show dissent but just plodded off the pitch without so much as a whimper. A possible admission of guilt? Only time will tell. After the rich vein of form he has been in of late and with some crucial games coming up, notably Brizzle away, he will be badly missed.

Sadly for Hatters fans, most teams when reduced to ten men battle harder but we seemed content to defend and hope for the best, although having said that there were too many Town players who had an "off day", and with the exception of Nico, Unders and Vine (who is a relentless trier) few players really stood out. On the subject of Nico, had he been red carded for the challenge on the keeper towards the end it wouldn't have surprised me. He clearly had every right to go for the ball and the reaction of the Bees goalkeeper was disgraceful. To see footballers trying to get their fellow professionals sent off disgusts me but then again if there had been a stronger ref he would have seen the challenge for what it really was instead of having to consult his linesman who clearly didn't have any better view. Cheating and diving seems to be a normal part of the game now and I, for one, am not impressed by it. I'll give Brentford their due, they played well for the most part and took their goals well. Had it not been for Marlon they could well have scored a couple more. I accept losing and let's face it we will lose again at some point, but to lose in these circumstances is very frustrating. Poor refereeing, too many players having an "off day", being reduced to ten men early on and some very unsporting behaviour from the home side leaves a very sour taste in the mouth and I don't just mean my beer being off either. Roll on Port Vale and another three points, then only six more points needed for safety.

*Victor Meldrew*

#### 11.12.04 TOWN 1 PORT VALE 0

After being well and truly D'Urso-ed in London on Tuesday, normal service was resumed at the Theatre of Comedy. Crisis over. Peace in our times. No need then for Harford to come back and leave for the fourth time at his convenience and still be regarded as "God", although he looks like more Bod.

Very sociable of Port Vale to beat Tranmere and hand us three points. My irrational mild indifference towards them has eased a tad now. Not really, I bitterly resent driving 120 miles to watch a pointless team in a hovel mainly floodlit by candle light after parking in street full of paupers.

Injury hit Port Vale cheered on by a tandem of supporters, defended resolutely throughout. In particular Dean Smith and Pilkington were excellent. However, they came for 0-0 showing very little inclination to attack. Johnny No Brainer in goal (sponsored by Faggots) time wasted from the off.

So it made for a frustrating afternoon, until a rare bit of skill provided by "the only Croatian in the village" scored his traditional bicycle kick, as the clock ticked down, to break Vale hearts.

It was a decent performance lacking perhaps a bit of quality and nous to break them down.

A very important win, with tricky trips to Bristol and Chesterfield coming up. Hull and Tranmere are hanging on to our coat tails like rats to Joe Pasquale's Jacobs.

Vale actually had the first shot. Pilkington's header from Smith's corner, fell into Brown's path and his shot was deflected over. Luton, starting slightly hesitantly, got slowly on top of Vale's back to the walls defending. Brkovic won the midfield, and playing in Underwood who was crudely upended by Pilkington's late challenge. Nicholls' curling set piece sailed into Brain's chest.

From Foley's throw, Vine controlled the ball and laid off a shooting chance for O'Leary but his shot was deflected over. From the resulting Underwood corner, Davies' header was cleared off the line by Rowland, the ball fell to Andrew, whose effort was also cleared off the line by Brown and third proved unlucky as Andrew blasted over.

Andrew had a decent game, always willing to run down the line and offered promise for the future, although he still has a lot to learn, but at 17 (or 2, if you go by Bill Tomlins idea of age) he has plenty of time on his side.

Vale's only effort on target in the entire game, was Smith's low shot following a quick 1-2 at a short corner with Birchall, which Beresford comfortably saved.

Nicholls was unlucky not to break the deadlock. Davis' low ball into the box was missed by everyone including Andrew, who got the ball back into play, shifted it back to Nicholls, 25 yards out, and he produced a stinging effort which Brain, did brilliantly to tip wide.

Davis played a low through ball to Brkovic, but he failed to control it as Brain rushed off his line. Davis, again involved, playing a low ball down the line, Andrew shrugged his marker Smith and delivered a cross but Pilkington hacked it away to safety.

It was all Luton, Coyne's header across goal was hoofed over by Vine. Brkovic's header when he was unmarked was goal bound until it hit Pilkington in the shoulder and into Brain's arms, from Underwood's cross. Andrew dragged a shot wide following good build up by Foley and O'Leary.

The second half started poorly. Far too much long ball from Beresford resulting in heading practice for Smith and Pilkington. Vine, not having one of his better games, was clearly getting frustrated by the lack of ball to feet. Nicholls, trying too hard, his passing had all the acumen of a Rubik Cube, trying to knock 40 yard passes, when the better bet was a simple ball.

The one occasion that happened, Brkovic rolled in Vine who took on three defenders, squared it left to Davis who, in oceans of space, got a nosebleed and fired wildly over.

Brkovic and Vine combined again, the latter's low shot was easily gathered by Brain. Port Vale actually entered our half at one stage. Coyne fannied about losing possession to Paynter, but luckily Davies made a fine tackle to deny Eldershaw any opportunity.

Underwood, pulling the strings in midfield, spotted Coyne at the back post and his square cross was headed by Coyne into the back of Paynter and behind.

A decent penalty shout was turned down, Davies appeared to have some heels clipped by Rowland. To add insult to injury, Davies was yellow carded. Brkovic, as ever able to go from the sublime to the ridiculous, headed over, the goal gaping. The ball fell to him as O'Leary was unfortunate to see his header hit the bar, from Foley's accurate right wing cross.

Showunmi on for Andrew, produced one of his marauding runs beating defenders at will, only to get in the box, and mis-hit his shot. If he had run on to it he could have kept in on the field. He's a wally at times, that boy. That said, he didn't do badly today, even won a couple of those collectors items - two (count them) headers.

Vine, doing a Matthew Spring special, almost cleared the Kenny End after Underwood had set him up. Followed by a hairy moment at the other, Coyne seemed to trip Loran up in

the box, after Cummins' clever flick through ball. Cummins was their only creative player, but he lacked any penetration. None of the away fans, who had come dressed as empty seats, appealed.

The goal finally came 7 minutes from time, Coyne won the ball, fed Foley down the right, his cross was met by Brkovic who controlled and bicycle kicked the ball into the net from the angle, leaving Brain rooted to the spot. Relief all around. Luton held out easily and a very important win was secured.

Whilst we got away with it this time, I disagree with Newell not attempting to sign another striker on loan. It is very laudable going with the squad, but the signing of Royce was a luxury, to my mind. Since late October we have relied on Howard and Vine. Howard being ill disciplined is always likely to be sent off. Since McSheffrey returned to Cov, we have lacked a decent cover striker, no disrespect to Messrs Showunmi and Andrew.

If we go to Bristol and win with either of them in the starting line up, I will change my name to Tunny Applebottom. But who knows, it might even be the year we break our Bristol hoodoo, we haven't won a game there since the Ice Age. It will give an opportunity for Sol Davis' elbow to be reacquainted with his "best friend" Scott Murray's cheekbone. I have always thought those two would make a lovely couple.

*PDW*

## The One Minute Silence

Is it just me, or do we seem to have far more one minute silences before football matches than we used to? Don't get me wrong, I fully understand how upsetting a death can be, but death is a fact of life and needs to be treated as such.

The recent silence for Bill Nicholson was a case in point. I spent my youth in the 70s standing on The Shelf at Tottenham watching Bill's teams play entertaining football and winning the odd cup. But let's face it; these Tottenham teams were trying to beat all the competition (including Luton). Can you imagine the staff at MacDonalds having a minutes silence because the Chief Executive of Burger King had snuffed it? Of course not. So why should we honour another club's manger? Leave that to the White Hart Lane faithful.

More bizarre was the tribute to the Chelsea director (Matthew Harding) a few years ago who died in a helicopter crash coming home from a match up north. Most of us had probably never even heard of him until he died! What had he ever done for Luton or indeed football?

Last season I remember standing in silence for the whole sixty seconds at Peterborough whilst we honoured a player who had been on loan at the club for a couple of months some 10 years earlier. I hope when Wayne Biggins eventually dies we honour him the same way.

The tribute should be reserved for key players and officials of the home club, top national football managers and players and international people of note. Or am I just being miserable?

*Russell Bulkeley*

## What's happened to the Luton matchday programme?

It was a matter of some pride when the Luton matchday programme was voted best in the fourth division three years ago. I used to enjoy making a comparison between our programme and the attempts provided by the opposition, on those rare occasions when they hadn't sold out before I got to the ground, our fantastic away support seemingly always taking clubs like Scunthorpe and Darlington by surprise.

Last season was much the same. The statistics and fixtures page, provided by David Newman, was a work of art. It would sometimes occupy a good half of the train journey back to Sheffield. There was the away fans comparison, which was always a bit of a pat on the back for us dedicated Hatters, because our away following, averaged over the season, was always that much more numerous than the away fans in the Oak Road. There were reports of the up and coming young players in the youth teams and of the all-conquering Luton belles; Brian Swain's column; Roger Wash's historical feature; and, last but not least, reports of the latest games, with photos of the action put into context by informative captions.

The end of the season saw Brian Swain's retirement, and if you were unaware of that before, a glance at this year's programme would have told you. The new editor is also the website editor, and perhaps he thinks that cutting down on the amount of information in the programme will result in more hits on the site. The fixtures page is a pale shadow of its former self, with the players' season and career statistics removed to another page, and the majority of the page taken up with repeating the names of the squad each week. According to this listing, Enoch occupied two places on the subs bench against Posh, and against the "other" Hatters, Brko was replaced by both Showunmi and Keane! The away support is granted a column on this page, but if you want to make the comparison of us and them, you'll need a sheet of paper and a pocket calculator.

Roger Wash's page has been cut down to size, with one small black and white picture instead of a colour photo twice the size. The new "features" include "Twenty Questions", where we are informed that Steve Robinson, for instance, was once mistaken for Bobby Gould and that he would like Tom Cruise to play him in the film of his life story. In "Prediction Competition", a terribly lame page which I recall seeing in an away programme last season, we learn that Enoch Showunmi thinks that Mansfield will lose at home to Notts County, whereas John Oliver of the press thinks that the home side will prevail. Fascinating.

Russell Perrett's "Fantasy Football XI" includes Dave Perrett in midfield and Paul Walsh and Steve Claridge up front, but if you want to know if the former is any relation, or why only Chris Coyne of the present Luton squad is good enough to get into Russell's side, you have to visit Hatters World, where you will be invited to pay an unspecified subscription. As if £2.50 for the programme wasn't enough.

But the worst aspect of the new programme is that there are no match reports, and the photos are without captions, so that anyone who missed the game against Peterborough, for example, will not know that the spectacular overhead kick by Brkovitch resulted in Vine tapping in from the six yard line. Or if you were not among the 876 faithful who made the long journey to Birkenhead, you wouldn't know that the photo of Chris Coyne in the programme for the Huddersfield game is of him scoring the equaliser.

One of life's small pleasures is to read through old programmes from seasons long ago, and be reminded of games you saw, or even read about games you missed. That will no longer be possible for Luton fans, and I, for one, am keeping back my £2.50 (for a pint at the Bricklayers Arms) until I hear that the programme is back to being the star publication it used to be.

*Will Larter*

# THE UNWRITTEN WORD

In recent years, the growth in soccer "histories" has been spectacular; from just a handful twenty years ago, to well over a hundred last year. The majority of them have been club histories and 'Who's Who' books. This trend has been the norm of the past few years. My own involvement began in 1995 with Dave Twydell, the owner of one of three football publishing businesses "Yore Publications", asking me to write a book on Luton Town Football Club. To be asked to write a book about my club was a great honour, and something to which I wanted to give my best.

Football writing is a fickle business, and when it became known that Dave's rival Tony Brown was working on "The Definitive", the idea of my own Luton book was dropped. However, Steve Bailey was having problems, and Dave recommended me to Tony, to write "The Definitive". Ironically, by then I was committed to other things, and recommended Alan Shury as author, to Tony. Soon, "The Definitive" was ready to go into the shops and was published in December 1997. But even then publication of "The Definitive" could have been put back when it became known that "A Hatter Goes Mad" was about to be published. As it happened both books sold very well – in fact the "Luton Definitive" was Tony's most successful book.

Bitten by the author bug, I teamed up with the author of "A Hatter Goes Mad", to put together what would have been a part-fictional semi-biography of fans and a history of former players playing for, and supporting, their club. We were in the process of working on just such a history of a current Championship club, when a few things happened that prevented the book from ever seeing the light of day.

Then Tony Brown re-entered the scene. Pleased by the success of his Luton book, he asked me to do another. To protect the feelings of the reader, I will say no more except that the book was almost at the printers, needing only a few photos to finish it, when I got the news that a local author was about to go to press with a virtually identical book. Interestingly, this book, along with a brilliantly researched and written "Who's Who", and his version of "The Definitive" (both books paid for out of his own pocket) did very badly, and he lost a lot of his own money.

My third attempt at authorship should have resulted in a Luton Town quiz book. I got the idea after going to a game at Preston North End. The club, then under David Kohler, was not interested in the idea. My plan would have been to find a printer and sponsor, and also a few local firms and individuals who would have backed the idea. The club would have offered prizes of free season tickets for answering a few difficult questions. I offered the club a 50/50 deal on the sale of the books, but no deal was forthcoming.

My next idea was a Luton Town A to Z. Both Alan Shury and myself approached the Book Castle with different ideas for books. They had just published "Kenilworth Sunset" and I know that had sold well. Despite this the Book Castle's attitude was that they were not going to produce any more football books – this made me decide to try and publish it myself. A member of my family decided to put up the money, and so I went back to the club only to be told that it was about to go into Administration. There was some interest now from publishers, but only if the club went out of business altogether. Once the club came out of Administration I went back to them, but everything seemed to take so long – in the end my relative decided to use the money for something else.

Many people have asked me whether "The Definitive" would be updated. I was keen on the idea reworking it, this time including the Southern League years; however Tony was not interested and so there was no deal.

As a collector of Football books, I have stayed in contact with Dave Twydell, and have spoken to him of my frustration at being unable trying to bring a book out on Luton Town. Dave's "Yore

Publications" have a very good reputation in producing "Who's Whos" for Reading, Oldham Athletic and QPR. Without any sign of anyone else doing a "Who's Who", I was once again asked to produce one for Luton Town. I find it incredible that a club of Luton's historical standing in the game has not yet been the subject of a "Who's Who"! The nearest we have come was the effort from Dean Hayes a couple of seasons ago.

Dave promised me he would produce the book – all I had to do was the writing and the research, and buy, and learn how to work, a PC. I had no idea how to use one, but in January I got hold of an old Windows 98 PC and started with one Nathaniel Abbey.

The problem when doing a "Who's Who" is what to include. I am a great believer in including everyone who has ever played for the club, including Southern League players as well as players who have played for the club in the past few years; hence the proposed title of "The Definitive Who's Who".

Throughout the first five months of the year, I was busy writing up the text. The aim was to get it all together by October – a tight fit considering I still had to put in the statistics – but I thought I could do it. In June I was told that the deadline was to be brought forward from October to August – impossible to meet. I had reached the letter H, which was about half way through the book. I was then told that the publication date was going to be put back a year to Christmas 2005.

So, for the fifth time in six years, a book I have been working on has been put off, and all I have to show for it is a cabinet full of cards about Luton players, as well as a hard drive full of text. I have my own theories as to why this book got pulled, and can understand the reasons for it. It costs around £3 - 4,000 to publish an A4 or an A5 size book, and if the publisher cannot make the costs back on a £14.99 book, that is how much they lose and it can seriously affect other projects. The publisher was not keen on my idea of including Southern League players, stating that a similar work on Leyton Orient at £25 will lose money as it is overpriced, and the book I wanted to publish would have been the same. Maybe if the Southern League players were taken out, publication around Christmas next year could be a possibility, but I have not yet had a letter of intent. For my part I have not done any work on it since early June; it is my intention to do bits and pieces in case Dave Twydell does want to bring it out at that time. This might well be a possibility, unless someone decides to write "A Hundred Great Hatters", or a "Hatters Alphabet".

Finally, does any one know whether the club still keeps much of their archive in a boiler room next to the changing rooms, and what happened to all the photos that the Luton News took of the club over the years?

I will keep the Fanzine informed of developments. Should anyone wish to have a copy of any of the texts I have written thus far, email me at [brian.ellis33@ntlworld.co.uk](mailto:brian.ellis33@ntlworld.co.uk) and I will email them to you.

Brian Ellis

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

*Mad as a Hatter!* is available on subscription at the bargain price of £6.50 for the next five issues, including postage. Cheques payable to *Mad as a Hatter!* should be sent to the address on page 2. Overseas rates are available on request.

# ODE TO A LUTON TOWN SUPPORTER

(©well versed greetings 1996!)

Oh, you are a Luton fan  
They are the team for you  
You'll support them through thick and thin  
No matter what they do!

At their ground at Kenilworth Road  
Is where they do their bit  
They run around upon the grass  
To prove they're nice and fit!

Chasing here and passing there  
They have a lot of fun  
They run after the goalie  
Who's got a wobbly bum!

They've played terrific matches  
As no doubt, you'd agree  
They went and thrashed poor Bristol  
When in division three!

12-0 was the final score  
For those brave footballing men  
Joe Payne was the hero  
Since he went and knocked in ten!

And in the famous F.A Cup  
The team did really fine  
Against poor Clapton  
When they scored a massive nine!

They've had some brilliant players  
Who certainly had the knack  
Gordon Turner, Lars Elstrup  
And what about Kingsley Black!

Managers, have come and gone  
They've sat in the bosses seat  
Jim Ryan, Alec Stock  
Not forgetting, David Pleat!

They've done their best, for the club  
They've showed that they were keen  
To bring glory back to Luton  
And trophies for the team!

So hopefully, in the future  
They will play with skill and zest  
Beat the opposition  
And leave the fans impressed!

Score lots and lots of lovely goals  
Prove they can cope  
So keep all your doings crossed  
And never give up hope!

They'll show just what they're made of  
Bring fame back to the town  
Here's to the good old Hatters  
May they wear a golden crown!

by *Geoff Browning* – good luck to the team this season and well done for the amazing start, keep it up lads! Nice Record Stevo!

## BACK ISSUES

Will nobody ever take these off my hands? We've still got tons of them, and we will almost give them away. The only issues we've actually run out of are numbers 10, 11, 22, 24, 26, 27, 35 to 38 and 47. Issue one is free, and all others up to issue 55 will cost you just 40p per copy including postage, but that will drop to 25p per copy if you order more than 3 at a time. for issues 56 to 60 the price is £1.00 each including postage. Cheques should be made payable to *Mad as a Hatter!* and sent to the address on page 2. Please don't send cash by post as it never seems to arrive - although this should not be seen as a slight on our wonderful postmen!

IT HAS been brought to my attention that there may have been some unfortunate typographical errors on this page in recent editions of *Mad As A Hatter!* which may have encouraged readers to believe that some kind of criticism of Ahmet Brkovic (Brockovich as Sky referred to him recently) was implied. This was clearly not the case as it could not have been possible to refer to the Croatian Sensation in anything other than the most glowingly positive terms as would be clearly obvious to anyone with any knowledge of his ability and quality. I hope this will be an end to the matter!

PS – How was he not awarded the m-o-m award against Port Vale?

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So, how badly missed will Mick Harford be, and why has he gone. Did he expect to get the job of manager at Luton but realised that his prospects were limited because of the current success which, perhaps, hadn't been anticipated at the start of the season?

Does he expect to get the manager's job at Forest when Joe is sacked, which is inevitable should they be relegated? Does he expect to come straight back to Kenilworth Road if Joe is sacked when, it would seem inevitable, he will go, too?

Is he being missed already at Kenilworth Road? Did his influence walk out of the door with him, or will it last and reveal itself in our play for the rest of the season. Could it be that Mike Newell does not need, albeit probably appreciated, Mick's input, so was relieved to let him go so that he could receive proper acclaim for whatever success is ultimately achieved this season?

Would Steve Howard go to Forest like a flash if given the opportunity? Answer (a) yes (b) yes or (c) yes. And what will happen to us without him should that occur this season? Answer (a) help! (b) er, mmm? (c) well, Enoch's still here (d) what's McSheffrey's phone number.

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I know it sounds like after-timing, but I believe that Mike Newell should have started Enoch rather than Calvin Andrew against Port Vale. I accept that Calvi n probably has more scope and potential than Enoch, but the justification used by Newell not to go out and try to bring in a loan player while Steve Howard was suspended was that the other players had been waiting for a chance and that it would be like 'hitting them with a custard pie in the face' not to use them. Fair enough, but surely Calvin hasn't been waiting at all. As such a young player he would clearly expect to be introduced gently to the side. Whereas Enoch, after making such an impact last season, really has had to suffer on the bench almost all season. He may not have impressed the management with his progress over the close season but surely he is nearer to the finished article and more

experienced than Calvin and likely to be de-motivated by being made to feel second best to a novice at this stage. It is difficult for fans to judge how much, if any, progress Enoch has made because Messrs Vine and McSheffrey have already leap-frogged him during the season in the pecking order. Give him a chance with a run in the team, I reckon, giving Calvin a few minutes here and there. Only then, if Enoch clearly can't cut the mustard, should he be ruthlessly discarded and youth preferred.

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One or two of you may be aware that I write books. Apart from horse racing and gambling I like to write about characters – I have a book about the late Screaming Lord Sutch coming out in April, for example, and am just beginning the research for another project about a female eccentric, who shall remain nameless until the publisher's contract is signed! But at the back of my mind has always been the idea of writing about Luton Town's own great character from years gone by – no, not Lars Elstrup or Landry Zahani-Oni, but Graham French. However, there seems to be very limited information about whatever became of him and whether he is still walking amongst us these days. I just wondered whether anyone out there might have any information about Graham, either when he was playing for the club and when he left. If so, and you would be willing to share it you can get me care of this mag or at [pressoffice@williamhill.co.uk](mailto:pressoffice@williamhill.co.uk) Thanks in advance.

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Talking of books, whilst working on the William Hill Sports Book of the Year Award, which I sponsor and organise, I came across an excellent volume entitled *The Little Wonder*, about a turn of the 19th/20th century runner, Alfred Shrubbs, something of a prodigy of his day who held world records times for a vast variety of different distances and beat the best in the world on a regular basis.

The book – published by Desert Island Books – is an excellent read which I really enjoyed, but on speaking to the author, Rob Hadgraft, I was astonished to discover that he is a Town fan of many years' standing – so, obviously, his book deserves your immediate attention and cash, even though the football club does not seem to get a mention in the copy I possess!

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And Rob was present at the recent Brentford game, which he described as 'best forgotten' although it doesn't seem that Chairman Bill Tomlins sees it that way as he was unusually scathing about the behaviour of certain folk connected with the management of the Bees in his programme notes for the Port Vale game. He even intimates that the behaviour contributed to Steve Howard's sending off. As I know Bill to be of a pretty mild disposition, he must have been very upset to commit such remarks to paper and as I wasn't present, I wonder just what went on. Whatever, assuming it is Brentford we will play in the next round of the FA Cup it should ensure a tense atmosphere on and, perhaps off, the park.

# STAT ATTACK

## Sat 1st Jan - Sheff Wed (Home)

Last season's encounter was the first league meeting at Kenilworth Road between the two sides for 13 years, but it was worth the wait for Hatters fans as Steve Howard scored the winner in injury time after the Owls had taken a 2-0 lead! Previously Luton had won 10 matches, and Wednesday 6. The visitors best win came in 1938 when they were victorious by a 5-1 scoreline!

The highest scoring match was in November 1951 when the Hatters came out on top in an 8 goal thriller. Wednesday's last win came in 88/89, which is also their only win in 7 visits.

Last time: 1st May 2004 Won 3-2 (Steve Howard (2), Stephen O'Leary)

## Mon 3rd Jan - Peterborough Utd (Away)

Luton have a great record at London Road, in fact it's nearly 40 years since they've suffered a league defeat there... ok so there's only been 6 games since!! With this and the 4 draws and 3 victories Luton have scored on 8 occasions whilst the home side have managed 7. The Luton victories have been by just a solitary goal each time and by different scores, 92/93 3-2, 96/97 1-0, 03/04 2-1. Peterborough can boast their their only win was by a two goal margin, and without Luton scoring. Andrew Fotiadis scored the only goal of the game that relegated Peterborough in 1997, and then more recently featured for the Posh!

Last time: Feb 28 2004 Won 2-1 (Steve Howard, Ahmet Brkovic)

## Sat 8th Jan - FA Cup 3rd Round

Well even though, at the time of writing, the Hatters opponenets were not known the fact that Luton are in the third round is certain! Of course for many years this as the round where the FA Cup run started, but now The Hatters have played in two previous rounds to get this far! Lee Mansell scored just seconds into his debut at QPR in a replay in 2001, but Rangers went on to win controversially and progress to round 4. Prior to last season the previous success in round 3 came in 1-0 replay win at Bristol Rovers, Dwight Marshall scoring the only goal. In the last 10 years we've seen a 7-1 defeat at Grimsby (1995/96) and a 6-2 replay defeat at Bolton (1996/97).

This will be the 44th home fixture in this round, with Luton having not won in the last 4 home ties! Interestingly the last time they did progress with a home win was in 1993/94, Paul Telfer scored the only goal to beat Southend... and Luton made it through to the semi-finals!!

Last time: (Home) Jan 6th 2001 QPR Drew 3-3 (Andrew Fotiadis, Liam George, Stuart Douglas). (Away) Jan 3rd 2004 Bradford City Won 2-1 (Adrian Forbes (2))

## Sat 15th Jan - Stockport County (Home)

The Clash of "The Hatters", and it's the Bedfordshire, and real, Hatters who come out on top. The visitors have only won on one visit, back in September 1966, by 3-0! Luton have won on 4 occasions, starting with an epic 6-4 victory on New Years Day 1938! It was 28 years before the sides met in the league again, and once more Luton were victorious by a two goal scoreline. Bruce Rioch and Ray Whittaker were the scorers that day. After the only defeat in 1966 the home side took all the points twice in 1969, first with a 4-1 win in April, and then another 2-0 win in October. The points have been shared on the last 3 meetings.

Last time: Jan 17 2004 Drew 2-2 (Own goal, Steve Howard)

## Sat 22nd Jan - Colchester Utd (Away)

Anyone who was at Layer Road on April 21 2002 witnessed a record equalling away league win for Luton, with the Hatters running out 5-0 winners! Steve Howard helped himself to the second hat-trick of his Luton career, with Carl Griffiths and Kevin Nicholls adding the others. This was only the second win in this meeting, having previously lost two, and drawn 3. Luton have the goal advantage by 13-12. Luton have only failed to score in one of these meetings, when they were defeated 3-0 in December 1999. The Hatters did have the disadvantage of playing with 10 men after Efe Sodje, who was later to play for Colchester, was sent off.

Last time: Dec 26th 2003 Drew 1-1 (Lee Mansell)

## Sat 29th Jan - Tranmere Rovers (Home) / FAC 4

Now this could be one of two matches as the Hatters could find themselves in Round 4 of the FA Cup, and if they don't with Tranmere already out it will be the scheduled league match.

So let's start with positive thoughts and focus on the 4th Round!! This would be their 33rd visit to round 4, and they've progressed 17 times, so it's almost progression on every other attempt, and they've failed on the last 2 occasions! Once again we come back to that 93/94 Cup run for the last time that the Hatters found themselves winning a tie in this round... beating Newcastle 2-0... I'm sure you won't need reminding that John Hartson and Scott Oakes were the scorers that night! Luton have been drawn at home in 10 of the last 11 4th Round ties!!

Last time: (Home) Jan 24 2004 Tranmere Rovers Lost 0-1. (Away) Feb 8 1995 Southampton Lost 0-6 (Replay)

Should the Hatters fail to overcome Brentford or Hinckley in round 3 then Tranmere would be the visitors to Kenilworth Road looking for only their second league win in 12 attempts! The opening encounter was back in March 1939 and Luton won 3-0. The next meeting was not for 27 years, but again the Hatters won, 2-1 this time. In fact Luton went on to record 5 consecutive victories before Tranmere eventually earned a point in an enthralling 3-3 draw in September 1992. Steve Claridge scored his first goal for the Hatters, before the visitors took both a 2-1 and 3-2 lead. It was left to Scott Oakes to earn a point for the home side. The visiting fans only had to wait a year for all 3 points, as Tranmere won courtesy of a goal from John Aldridge. Since then Luton have won 3 more matches, with a goal-less draw in April 2003.

Last time: Oct 6 2003 Won 3-1 (Russell Perrett, Gary McSheffrey and Adrian Forbes)

## Sat 5th Feb - Huddersfield Town (Away)

Luton will be looking to avenge the defeat earlier in the season with victory at Huddersfield, and the statistics are good. From the previous 8 league meetings Luton have come away with maximum points on four occasions. There's only been one draw, 1-1, back in August 1960. The Hatters have only won once by more than a goal, a 2-0 victory in 1955/56. The defeats have got "better", starting with a 3-0 defeat in 1952/53, it was 2-0 in 1962/63 and then only 1-0 in 1995/96! Unfortunately Luton win every other match at Huddersfield, and they won on their last visit!

Last time: Sep 21 2002 Won 1-0 (Steve Howard)

## Sat 12th Feb - Hull City (Home)

The honours are even in this fixture with 6 wins each, and 4 draws. The goals scored figure

is also identical, both having found the net 23 times! There's only been one league meeting in the last 27 years, and the visitors took the honours with a 1-0 win in 2001/02. Hull also had a good record when the sides first met, going 3 games before Luton won the fixture. That came in March 1953 with a 3-2 victory, courtesy of a brace from Gordon Turner, and one from Charlie Watkins. There's never been a goal-less draw in this fixture!  
Last time: Nov 20 2001 Lost 0-1

### **Sat 19th Feb - Bradford City (Away)**

Fingers crossed this could be FA Cup 5th Round weekend for the Hatters, so once more let's be optimistic and start there! Luton have only reached this round on 17 previous occasions, and the most recent history is good as the Hatters have progressed at the last 4 attempts, and 3 of those eventually resulted in semi final appearances! In 1985 The Hatters beat arch rivals W\*tf\*\*d, in the days when second replays were needed! A year later the same scenario saw off Arsenal, and it was only two years before another 5th round tie, and this time only one replay was needed to see off QPR!  
Last time: Feb 20th 1994 Won 2-1 (Scott Oakes, David Preece)

Well should the Hatters have narrowly lost out to Premiership opposition in round 4 I suppose I'd better look at the possibility of playing at Bradford! This won't take long as there have only been 4 previous matches, and these were back in the 1960s! Two draws and two defeats mean the Hatters are yet to win on their travels to Bradford. The first visit in 65/66 resulted in a 2-2 draw, with the two John's on the scoresheet, Moore and O'Rourke. The two defeats then followed, 2-1 in 1966/67 and 2-0 a season later.  
Last time: Sep 13 1969 Drew 1-1 (Keith Allen)

### **Tues 22nd Feb - Walsall (Home)**

Luton have a great home record against Walsall, winning 12 of the 18 previous fixtures. Having said that they have failed to win, and even score in the last 3 matches. You have to go back 107 years for the first league fixture, February 5th 1898, and the Hatters were convincing winners, 6-0!! William Stewart scored 4 that day, including a penalty, and Tommy Little scored a brace. Luton went on a five game winning run in this fixture, scoring 20 goals and only conceding 4 in the process. Walsall's first victory came in 1929/30, and they had to wait another 36 years and 6 fixtures before earning maximum points once more. There was a 26 year gap between Luton's 3-0 victory in April 1970 and the next league meeting at Kenilworth Road. Again the Hatters came out on top, courtesy of goals from Tony Thorpe, Paul Showler and a first ever career goal for Andrew Fotiadis.  
Last time: Sep 12 2000 Drew 0-0

### **Sat 26th Feb - Port Vale (Away)**

Luton first played this fixture against Burslem Port Vale, as they were known then, in 1899, losing twice in the same year! It was 55 years before the sides met again in the league, and this time the Hatters picked up a point in one of only two draws between the sides. Goals are certainly hard to come by for the visitors, managing only 7 in the 13 fixtures, and incredibly they've failed to score in 8 of the matches! Mind you Vale have only managed 16 goals themselves, so maybe it's quite surprising there's only been one goal-less draw!! Luton's first victory was back in October 1965, with John O'Rourke and Ray Whittaker scoring in a 2-1 win. A single Dwight Marshall goal won the fixture in 94/95, and it was back to a 2-1 scoreline when Tony Thorpe and Kevin Nicholls (pen) scored in 02/03.  
Last time: Mar 16 2004 Lost 0-1

In case the postponed Hartlepool match is played before the next issue is published here are the stats from the previous away meetings.

The stats aren't good in this particular fixture as the Hatters have only managed one win, and have lost the other 5!! Hartlepool have only won by 2 goals on one occasion though, back in 65/66. After a 33 year wait for this fixture the Hatters won in their promotion season of 2001/02. Dean Crowe and Matt Taylor were the scorers in a 2-1 win. There was a 7 goal thriller last season, but it was the Hatters who lost out to a late penalty. Michael Leary had earlier scored his first league goals for the Club, and an assistant's flag prevented Enoch Showunmi from earning a point in injury time.

Last time: Apr 6 2000 Lost 3-4 (Steve Howard, Michael Leary (2))

*Simon "Statto" Pitts*

[www.lutonfc.com/stattoindex.asp](http://www.lutonfc.com/stattoindex.asp)

## **RAVING MAD!!!**

Dear Mad,

I enclose a cheque for the next 5 issues of your formidable organ. Perhaps this time you could arrange to send it to me rather than to Junior Clark.

On a recent visit to Kirkcaldy, I stumbled upon the wonderful Feuar's Arms. Although the spelling is slightly different this can only have been named after Ian of that ilk. Unfortunately it is at the opposite end of town from Stark's Park, so should the lads be playing Raith Rovers it would not be that handy.

However, I do think that we should try to compile a Hatters' pub team (some might say that we already have a team that resembles a pub team, though that would be harsh, this season at least). Certainly the Howard's Arms is one of the best pubs in Carlisle, and Vines are found everywhere. And there is a Wetherspoons in Glasgow called the "Sir John Moore", surely a prophetic name.

Anyway, I still find the events of this season difficult to comprehend even though I predicted before the season started that we would surely be champions (see also predictions for 1962-63 to 2003-04). No doubt we will cock it up, as usual, at Ashton Gate on 18 December.

Glad the boys thrashed the Franchise. Good debate in the fanzine by the way. Personally I would not dream of going, though I see the point of those who did go. Either way, I think that we can be unanimous in hoping that they drop out of the league, preferably to be replaced by AFC Wimbledon coming the other way.

Enough rambling, you want your £6.50 so I finish.

Clark,  
Bristol.

# GOOD MOVER...



Pictured here is the superb Curtis Davies, indeed a very good mover. We will be hoping that's not in the transfer sense of the term... but is he too good for us to keep hold of?