

# MAD AS A HATTER!

THE LUTON TOWN FANZINE



Issue 63

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## READY? GET SET...



And, after another few celebrations like this, go...



# **MAD AS A HATTER!**

**THE LUTON TOWN FANZINE**

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## *Ed Lines*

When this page for *Mad as a Hatter!* 63 was written, I was not entirely sure about Town holding on to the top spot in League One. How little faith could I have shown? It seems that the dip in results around Christmas was our bad patch, and once the pressure was on to get wins to hold on to that spot, the good were delivered. Instead, of worrying about maintaining our lead, I don't imagine I am alone in having to pinch myself to ensure I am not dreaming when I say we have 72 points before the end of February. For supporters more used to getting to the magic of the mid-sixties by the end of April, this is quite stunning stuff. The trouble is, it leads us to spend more time than is really appropriate trying to work out which game it will be when we clinch automatic promotion, and then the title. We certainly all have favourites for both of these, but will all have overlooked the fact that the mathematical certainties will be affected not only by our results, but also those of Tranmere, Sheffield Wednesday, and the now wilting Hull City, amongst others.

Another shock is that our current position leads us all to take what is, for some, an unexpected interest in the Premiership, as we look to see who we might be playing next season. It could get worse, we could find ourselves having to will Man Ure or the Arse to a late season win to condemn some poor unfortunates to the pleasure of hosting us at home next season, just because we 'need' the ground (come on down Southampton).

No sooner have you written all that positive, optimistic stuff, than the inevitable happens. We go and lose for the first time in ages. And we're back to a state of angst and anxiety about whether we can hang on. Memories of Bristol City blowing their lead last season surface, and with our squad starting to be affected by injuries... Will it be all right? A point per game should be enough, shouldn't it? Just what we needed, a reminder that the season isn't over yet, and we will still have to look at League tables when April arrives! And then, when the inevitable happens, will we thank John Gurney for appointing Mike Newell?

Speaking of our erstwhile "owner", the current Chairman, one Bill '55' Tomlins, will be the guest speaker at a LTSC meeting on March 14th, taking place at the Riverside Suite at the Vauxhall Recreation Club. It is to be hoped that there will be a better turnout of Hatters fans for this one than the one he did last autumn, and that there might this time be some more solid news of contracts and a planning application for the new stadium. Get along there and ask the questions.

That's it for this time. I'm rather hoping that for the last issue of the season I might be writing an editorial celebrating our promotion. It's a thought that in the event it will be the first opportunity I've had in 15 years of writing these to celebrate. Finally, it looks as if the decline could be over. Could it?



## A GLANCE DOWN THE OFFSIDE

We all think we know the rules, don't we? Certainly we know them better than most of the half-witted officials that turn up at Kenilworth Road (or Huddersfield Town come to that) but despite the hoo-hah over brawls and tunnel bust-ups the most contentious rule of the game remains the OFFSIDE rule. Despite attempts by the authorities to alter the emphasis of the rule in order to encourage a more flowing game and additional goal-scoring attempts, I am certain that all linesmen continue to give the benefit of the doubt to the defending team. This balance of probability exists in cricket (to favour the batsman) but did not appear in the Laws Of The Game of Association Football until very recently, where a 2004 UEFA training seminar for linesmen advised that if the official is not sure then he should not raise his flag. Therefore, I can only call it human instinct which pushes the linesman into making a subconscious decision to rule in favour of the action that will affect the game least. To elucidate: if the flag stays down and one team scores then that upsets the whole match but if the flag goes up then the status quo (bit of Latin for you there) at least in terms of the score remains and both sides continue in the same vein.

Unfortunately, the officials get paid to make such non-decisions and whilst I believe that the average referee makes far fewer mistakes in the average game than the average player: I fail to see why linesmen get their simple task so wrong so often. It must be a mental thing. I can remember running the line for a Saturday team many years ago when I was often a substitute and was hence required to perform this thankless task. Being an honest individual I took to my task with vigour and steadfastness and was roundly abused by my own side for giving repeatedly (accurate) signals when our forwards strayed offside. I don't think the referee could believe his luck when he discovered my integrity but it eventually got me relieved from the unwanted duty when my team-mates refused to let me do it in future games.

I thought you all might be interested in the history of the rule so I put this piece together for the fanzine. The data has been collected from various sources such as my own personal library of football books and the now indispensable internet.

It is said that the word offside derives from the military term "off the strength of his side". When a soldier is "off the strength", he is no longer entitled to any pay, rations or privileges. He cannot again receive these unless, and until he is placed back "on the strength of his unit" by someone other than himself. In football, if a player is offside, he is said to be "out of play" and thereby not entitled to play the ball, nor prevent the opponent from playing the ball, nor interfere with play. He has no privileges and cannot place himself "onside". He can only regain his privileges by the action of another player, or if the ball goes out of play.

Contained below are the actual written rule changes and not the aforementioned changes of emphasis that occur during pre-season FA briefings to officials. As you will see, it was not deemed necessary to alter Rule 11 for sixty-five years until the live television (or maybe satellite television) era seemed to force FA/FIFA/UEFA to set up annual rule-change meetings who apparently feel obliged to justify their own existence by tinkering with the laws on an annual basis. I firmly believe that if we could take the laws of the game back twenty-five years and simply make sure that they are applied properly then things would be much better. The back-pass rule was supposed to speed the game up but all that happens now is the goalkeeper hoofs the ball up-field or more frequently into the stand which involves a further delay and improves the game not one iota (bit of Greek now).

YEAR	RULE CHANGE
1848	The first rules are drawn up at Cambridge University and allow forward passes but include the rule that a player is not allowed to touch such a pass unless three opponents are nearer their own goal-line. 'Loitering' between the ball and the opponent's goal is expressly forbidden too. These rules were not used everywhere, however.
1856/57	The Sheffield rules are drawn up by the first official football club which was founded in 1855 [ <i>don't write in as I know this date is disputed</i> ]. In these rules there is no offside at all so goal-hangers or 'kick-throughs' as they were called are common place. Later, the Sheffield rules required a mere one opponent to be between the player and the goal in order for him to be onside.
1862	The Uppingham School rules at this time still outlaw the forward pass (similar to Rugby) so offside as we know it today is impossible.
1863	The original Football Association is formed and its rules on offside agree with the Uppingham method.
1866	The FA adopts the Cambridge rules where a player is onside when three opponents are nearer their own goal-line.
1873	The rule is modified so that a player has to be offside when the ball is kicked or otherwise touched by a team-mate, which is how we know it today.
1877	The London Football Association and the Sheffield Association agree to use the same rules; these include a player being onside when three opponents are nearer their own goal-line.
1882	The International Football Association Board is established to look after the rules for everyone. The rule that a player cannot be offside from a corner kick is introduced but this was pretty obvious anyway as you cannot be nearer the goal than on the by-line!
1898	The number of official rules reaches 17 of which Offside is number 11 (and still is).
1907	The rule that a player cannot be offside in his own half is introduced.
1920	The rule that a player should not be penalised unless he is interfering with play is introduced. This has undergone many subtle revisions and received myriad enforcements in the rule book but still seems to confuse people!
1920/21	The rule that a player cannot be offside at a throw-in is introduced.
1925	The rules are amended so that a player is onside when only two opponents are nearer their own goal-line. [ <i>This precipitated a feast of goal-scoring in subsequent matches.</i> ]
1956	The minor appendment that a player should not be penalised if he steps off the field of play is introduced. Caveats regarding a player feinting such a move are written in.
1979	The stipulation that a referee must raise his arm above his head to indicate an indirect free-kick is introduced. [ <i>Cannot find a reference to when indirect free-kicks were actually separated from direct ones.</i> ]
1990	Players level with the penultimate opponent are now onside. [ <i>This has made no discernible difference to the application of the law in practice - see below.</i> ]
1995	The rule is modified so that a player must gain an advantage by being in an offside position not just be 'seeking' to gain an advantage. [ <i>A subtle semantic amendment maybe but one that goes against the spirit of the law in my opinion.</i> ]

So the famous case of Don Revie fuming about a player who was not interfering with play occurred about 50 years after the law was modified to include this text. The one single thing that has always bothered me about the 'interfering with play' part of the law is that a forward can go unpunished if he is not interfering but a defender who is not interfering is deemed to play an opponent onside; even if the defender is clearly injured and on the other side of the pitch! This is unfair and maybe Mr. Revie had a point.

One thing I did learn during my research for this article was that you cannot be offside from a goal kick. Is this a new rule? Why do both teams congregate around the halfway line if this is the case? I am sure that I have seen free-kicks given for offside from a goal-kick; is my mind deceiving me or am I remembering an old rule? 1978 is the earliest I can find a reference to this part of the rule but this date was not the introduction of it as far as I can see. Answers on a postcard to the usual address. For the rest of you who would like a reminder too, here it is.

#### LAW 11 – OFFSIDE - THE CURRENT RULE –

A player is in an offside position if they are nearer to the opposition's goal line than both the ball and the second last opponent. However, you can't be offside if:

- ◇ you receive the ball directly from a goal kick, a throw-in or a corner;
- ◇ you are in your own half of the pitch;
- ◇ you are level with the second last or last two opponents.

Furthermore, the 'new' interpretation of the offside law says it is not necessarily an offence to be in an offside position. An attacker can stand in an offside position so long as they are NOT involved in active play in any of the three following scenarios:

- ◇ interfering with play (such as touching the ball);
- ◇ interfering with an opponent (including blocking the keeper's line of sight);
- ◇ gaining an advantage by being in that position.

To explain further the idea of a player being 'level' with an opponent I have taken the following text (and corrected the typos for them) directly from the FA Website: [www.thefa.com](http://www.thefa.com). Exactly what part of a player has to be level I hear you ask, well read on.

"The correct interpretation of this judgement is that the player's body and feet are taken into account. The easiest way to explain this is to consider the situation on the half way line. If a player's feet are on the half way line I think we would all recognise that he is in his own half of the field of play. It is very difficult for a player in motion to be bolt upright so it is almost inevitable that his torso will be in the other half of the field - but that would not change our judgement.

When judging offside we should use the same criteria. The best advice for the match officials is therefore to consider the offside line in the same way as the half way line. Players moving in opposite directions may look to be in a different line if we only consider their bodies. That is why it is important to concentrate on the body and the feet and decide whether attacking players are nearer their opponents' goal line in which case they are in an offside position - or level with the opponents and not in an offside position. Carry the centre line principle in your mind when judging."

So that clears that up then.

*Cliff Saunders*

## WORST TOWN PLAYERS... EVER?

One thing I notice this fanzine has never printed was the undeniable charms of a 'Worst XI' team. You know, the players who even their mothers would turn a blind eye to at birth. The individuals who never had one foot, let alone being able to use two. The players whose idea of being "left back" should have remained in the changing room. And there are the goalkeepers that allow Wenger to rest easy at night he deliberates over the excruciating choice of Lehman or Almunia to fill his goal, knowing they're not THAT bad. Hell, there are even the Jamie Campbell's of this world...

Personally, I am not going to comment on my worst ever Town XI, but simply introduce you, the readers, to a group of players that I've had the pleasure of watching since my debut in 1982. The idea is to encourage you to write in with your own thoughts and nominations for a Town worst XI. Those of you with knowledge of players from the '50s, '60s and '70s (or maybe earlier) feel free to write in. I'm not really interested in best XIs, they're not nearly half as much fun, but this is where it all starts. So, folks, here's a few clueless lads for starters. Let the debate begin...!

**Nathan Abbey** Young keeper who was prone to the odd howler. Every game. Remember Bristol Rovers a few years back when we lost 4-1? I'm sure he's never forgotten it...

**Merv Day** Now assistant boss at Charlton, Merv arrived in 1993 for 4 league appearances, none of which we won. Was around 60 years old when he signed for us.

**Kim Grant** Season 1995/96 saw the girlie named bloke arrive in front of the Kenny fans. Arrived with a half decent reputation from days at Charlton. Left without one.

**Andy Kiwomya** Played season 1996/97 and made 5 appearances. Which, based solely on his abilities on the pitch, was 5 too many. Though did curl in a 25 yarder against Walsall. But then so did Bontcho Guentchev.

**Chris Allen** Making 14 appearances in 1997/98, and one goal against Bristol Rovers, Allen was a slightly better version of the aforementioned Kiwomya. But then, that isn't saying much...

**Paul Holsgrove** Strange this one. The name will ring a bell to most Town supporters of the last 15 years, but he actually only made 1 start and 1 sub appearance in seasons 1990/91 and '91/92. Which is enough to say he was useless

**Darren McDonough** More affectionately known as "McDonut", it was his injury that allowed Kingsley Black to play in the Littlewoods Cup Final of 1988 at short notice. And we all know what happened there... Hail McDonut's injury!

**Kurt Nogan** Perhaps known for scoring up at Anfield in a 2-2 draw, Kurt was, to put it nicely, crap. His brother was even better than him a decade later. I know, I hear you all cry, it really was that bad...

**Steve Thompson** Arriving in 1991 with a reputation from Bolton as a bit of a playmaker who could "see a pass", he left the Town shortly after only 5 starts. A Luton "career" cruelly curtailed by injury Thankfully, from what I saw, we were spared any more cruelty.

**Imre Varadi** Another arriving in 1991/2 (what dark days they were) Varadi too made 5 on loan appearances, scoring once against Wimbledon. Wasn't that good, and pretty ugly to boot.

**Ian Allinson** Made 26 appearances in 1987/88 with 4 goals, and boasted an awful 'tache, which is even more reason to dislike him. Thankfully, Kingsley Black came along just in time.



**Raphael Meade** Making only two appearances for us back in season 1988/89, it's amazing to think that this guy played for Arsenal. And, for the record, those games were against QPR and Coventry, both drawn. Says it all really.

**The Norths** Can't remember a great deal about either of the two, but Stacey was blond and a defender, and Marc was not, and was a forward. Stacey played more times (24 in 5 seasons) than Marc (14 over 2 years). And that's why I know nowt about them from 20 years back.

**Robert Wilson** Turned out 20 times for the Town, with one goal, in the late eighties. I was still a youngish lad, but remember all the lads who used to sit by the old dugouts screaming obscenities at him every game. Which, by definition, is good enough for me.

**Micky Droy** After making his debut against Manchester United in 1984, only appeared twice more, one of which was the cup-tie at Sheffield Wednesday when Andy Blair scored a hat-trick of penalties to knock us out 4-2. Blair's; always arseholes, eh?

**David Geddis** Making his debut in 1982, away at Everton (losing 5-0!), and then following that up with a home win over W\*tf\*rd (attendance 21,145!!!), this striker/winger certainly must have had mixed emotions after his first two games. But two games later was gone.

**Gavin Johnson** Strange this. Is currently doing a decent job down at Colchester in midfield, and in his early days at Ipswich was earmarked as having great potential to deliver big in the game. And then he came to Luton, delivering nowt.

**Rob Matthews** Famously unpopular for knocking in the two goals for Notts County in 1992 that denied us our place in the inaugural season of the Premiership, and also a winner for Hull (1-0) a few years back - oh, how times have changed! Call him what you like, winger, striker... There's plenty more I called him!

**Vidar Riseth** Amazing story this lad has. Arriving in 1995/96, the Norwegian only ever made 6 full appearances, primarily because he was awful. Leaving Luton the following year, the boy was slumming it up north of the border for Celtic and Champions League football!! Aaahh... what a sweet story.

**Johnny Vilstrup** Arriving and playing in the same season as Riseth, meant that our season was never going to be the best. Which was proven when we finished rock bottom of Division 1, with the only consolation that we dragged W\*tf\*rd, who finished a place higher, down with us. But back to JV, who on arrival was hailed by Terry Westley as having a thunderous left foot. Must have missed those 6 games then, I reckon.

**Geoff Aunger** David Pleat always tells the press that he can spot a player. How does that explain him taking a liking to this one then? Just 5 games and 1 goal, amazingly with his first touch in English football away to Palace when we still lost. But it all ended in tears soon after as the blond Canadian crept onto football's most unwanted list.

**Jamie Campbell** Brought through the youth ranks at the club and always on the fringe of the squad during the early 1990s, it's now common knowledge that this lad was a bit of a donkey. Smart hair, good looks and decent build, he should have been the original David Beckham. Alas, t'was not to be...

**Chris Kamara** Has found his niche in life now, and appears to be genuinely decent and enthusiastic in his media career, which gets nowhere near the truth of his Luton career. Actually appeared 50 times for the Town, it was only his ability to kick lumps out of the opposition that handed him his place every week. A lesser version of Kev Nicholls, but with the Afro.

**Sean Farrell** Making 16 starts with numerous bench warming roles too, Sean was never going to be what Jimmy Ryan was looking for - a striker. Strong and determined, but

lacking the requisite ability to hit a cow's arse with a banjo, this lad may well end up close to the reckoning for your worst Town striker.

**Damian Matthew** Arriving in '92/93, a lad who'd played for Chelsea and had a reputation as a creative passer. But when you've got Preece in your side, that's all you need. Three appearances later he was gone.

**Frankie Bunn** On the Town books for 5 years in the early 1980s under Pleat, he made around 50 starts, during a period that the team was really quite good. I vaguely remember him taking regular childish abuse from my early days, but he is more recognised now for holding the record for individual goalscoring in the League Cup, with 5 in a match for Oldham.

**Wayne Turner** "Wayne the Wanker" as he was affectionately known by many of his own fans. But, will always be remembered for netting the winner against W\*tf\*rd in the 1985 FA Cup 5th round second replay (*ahh, those were the days -Ed*). Always had scruffy hair and a dodgy 'tache. A bit like your dad.

**Dean Brennan** Arriving as one of Ricky Hill's 'starlets' from Wednesday, together with Peter Holmes, I'll be honest and say that I can't have much of an opinion as, like the rest you, I hardly saw him play. But footballer who hardly ever play, are hardly any good, are they?

**Lee Nogan** Better than his brother Kurt, but still one of the worst players I've had the dubious pleasure of paying to see. Had all the hallmarks of the Nogan clan, notably the inability to get the ball anywhere near the opposing goal, and cost us an FA Cup tie four years ago with a careless handball against QPR in the 89th minute. Plonker.

**Graeme Tomlinson** Fortunate enough to be present when he made his debut for the Town up at Sheffield United in 1996, he was less fortunate when making his full debut at Port Vale exactly a month later. He broke his leg, left the pitch in an ambulance, and was never seen again. Shame then that we would never know how good our signing from Man United could have been.

**Tresor Kandal** Dilly dallied around the first team squad for a couple of years at the turn of the century after coming through the ranks, TK was clearly in the mould of a Farrell/Nogan type. And that is all try, no ability (*in TK's case without to much of the try - Ed*). Cousin of Portsmouth star Lua Lua, the nearest TK ever got to a move to the South Coast was when he jumped on a train for the journey. Without a ticket...

**Robbie Winters** Playing in the Scottish Premier for Aberdeen, Winters built himself a reputation as a neat little player who could score the odd goal too. Arriving on the opening day of the season against Peterborough a couple of years back, Winters was thrust straight into the side on the left wing. Was clearly either not match fit, or not good enough. Or simply both.

**Herve Bacque** And last, and by every means least, comes everyone's favourite. In Jeff Stelling's recent book was named as the worst Town player EVER. Herve was everything a footballer isn't supposed to be. Arriving from France looking like a second rate Ginola, he impressed pre-season five years back with a brace against Coventry. But then a trialist from Monaco should. Will always be remembered for possibly the worst spot kick I've ever witnessed, against Walsall in the Auto Windscreens - it was shite. Never played for Town again. Moved on a short term deal to Motherwell, last thing I heard he was in Norway. Vote now for Hervé!!

So there it is. This is not a definitive, nor exhaustive list, but is just a few of the players I can vividly remember over the last 23 years, as being unable to grasp the very basics of what should be the beautiful game. It would be great to read of your nominations and start some debate on the subject. This is just the tip of the iceberg. Hell, I didn't even find space for ol' Bontcho.

*Tony Allbones, the Kempston Hatter*



# Mad as a Hatter: Is it the End?

The European Union is to ban all football fanzines and imprison anyone who buys them, several reliable "red top" tabloids have recently reported. According to the new EU 25th Directive, many of the rags currently sold near football grounds and pubs across the country are "at best offensive, at worst humourless".

Mandy "Butch" Mandelson, the European Commissioner for naked leap frogging, has called for fanzine editors to rephrase many of the articles submitted by their contributors, and come down heavily on those who step out of line. One of the first fanzines to go, Ms Mandelson said, could be *Mad as a Hatter!*, the unofficial Luton Town fanzine.

"This rag is blatantly discriminatory against teams on the opposing side," he explained. "We should be encouraging fans from both sides to work together for a better balance of articles, perhaps through arbitration or group brainstorming. I see no reason why they should criticise Watford FC just because they are wearing the wrong coloured pee stained shirt: in my book that's quite a pretty little outfit, which matches exquisitely the yellow dusters, Ronaldo, my Brazilian maid uses to "French" polish my old organ".

Other articles to go could be those criticising the Plymuff Gargoyles, the QPhaha Pikeys and the Hartlepoolieville cross dressing four fingered web toed mutants. Similar stories insulting the validity of Andy D'Urso-Bee's Brentford Nylons, the plethora of fat unfit myopic linesmen whose unfailing incompetence monopolise the post match attention of all fans and the opposing team's star player for being a drunken gambling womaniser and the offspring of ladies of the night, will also be banned under the proposed new regulations.

Nonetheless and notwithstanding and without more ado, many regular contributors to fanzines claim any new regulations would be "political correctness gone totally bonkers". Dame Sir Maggot Moron MEP, VC, the saviour of Vauxhall Motors and Luton Town FC, long-time Millwall fan and regular contributor to football fanzines across the globe, exclusively told MAAH in a thought-provoking and rational discussion, "We are not f\*\*\*\*\* offensive and certainly not f\*\*\*\*\* funny. That slimeball toady faced git can take his EU regulations and shove them up his barn door".

The MAAH editorial team, urge all of its loyal readers to show solidarity against this proposed EU legislation by boycotting the forthcoming Macclesfield vs Rushden fixture on Saturday May 7th. Hopefully the absence of any regular *Mad as Hatter!* reader at this fixture will show the Eurocrats in Brussels exactly what we think of them and their stupid rules and regulations. Instead, the editor and his team urge all true Hatters to trek to sunny Doncaster, to watch the rip roaring 'los invincibles' play their last match of this magnificent season.

TWOC

# RUMOURS AND SPECULATION

The one problem with success is it attracts interest in your club, often unwanted interest. I don't mean interest from gutter papers like the Sun and the Mirror, I mean interest from proper papers such as the Guardian which cover Endsleigh or Nationwide or Coca-Cola (whatever it's being called now) teams. This has been a problem for Mike Newell, as he has been struggling to hold on to his stars and Paul Hughes. Here is a list of transfers that never happened during the transfer window, but very nearly did...

## 1. *Steve Howard to be captured for £500,000 by Burnley*

Once again, Stevo was the subject of unwanted speculation. This time it was free-scoring Burnley who wanted him, no doubt to replace Robbie Blake. However, all hopes they had of signing him disappeared when they offered a derogatory £500,000 or thereabouts.

## 2. *Curtis Davies to move to Spurs*

The form of our defence has seen Curtis attract attention from so called bigger clubs, but none of these 'bigger' clubs have been named. The only reason I chose Spurs specifically was because they seemed most likely because of their determination to buy every promising youngster in Britain, but Curtis didn't want to move to Spurs, and decided on staying to develop his runs from the defence under the tutelage of Marvin Johnson. In a few years time, it could be just like having Marvin back, so lets cross our fingers and hope I'm wrong.

## 3. *Paul Underwood in move to Man City*

Every English football fan knows that Shaun Wright-Phillips is the best right winger England have had since David Beckham. He is quick, has a good eye for goal, can beat players easily and puts devastating crosses into the area for Robbie Fowler to boot out the stadium. Therefore, Keegan wanted someone even better on the left hand side to take the pressure off Ian Wright's adopted son, and where better to look than Luton? Sadly, he had to settle for an unknown called Kiki Musampa, as Unders didn't fancy the move up north, so stays in a proper team for now.

## 4. *Brkovic subject of swoop by Southampton*

Harry Redknapp started to wheel and deal during the transfer market in a bid to keep the Saints up, and this involved signing ex-Pompey player Quashie. However, Harry also tried to sign Israeli Eyal Berkovic from Pompey but failed. On hearing that Southampton were after Berkovic, one journalist wrongly assumed it was Ahmet he was after, thus starting this rumour. Luckily for us there was no truth in this and the Hull hero stays at the Town.

## 5. *Marlon to move to Gunners*

High profile mistakes by Lehmann and Almunia meant that Wenger was looking for a new keeper during the transfer window, and his search led him to Kenilworth Road for Luton vs Port Vale. Expecting to see Beckwith (once a target for the Gunners) in goal, Wenger saw Marlon instead, and was impressed by what he saw. He went down to Ashton Gate to watch Marlon again, but his interest stopped there. The reason? Wenger looked in the programme at his player profile and saw that Beresford was English, deeming him unsuitable for Highbury. Obviously, two English players is enough for any team, especially an English one.

## 6. *Paul Hughes to return to Chelsea for £12m*

Since his arrival at Chelsea, Mourinho has cut back on spending greatly. However, one player he was looking to spend a large amount of money on was Paul Hughes, and he tried to arrange a move back to Chelsea for him. The reason is not apparent, and rumours that Jose wanted to shine the floodlights onto his head and dazzle the opposition are unfounded.



## 7. **Kevin Nicholls to replace Gerrard at Liverpool**

As time passes by in the football world and Liverpool's quality decreases, it looks inevitable that Steve Gerrard will leave. Rafa Benitez is therefore looking around for replacements, and is reportedly keeping tabs on Kevin Nicholls (or was it Dean Brill?). This was probably made up by a Watford supporting journalist trying to unsettle our captain, and luckily for us his efforts didn't work, although it does make sense that Benitez is after Nico.

## 8. **Steve Robinson wanted by Blackburn**

Apparently, Mark Hughes wanted some new blood to replace Barry Ferguson and partner Savage in midfield, so he started to look at Robbo. His only problem was trying to convince the Northern Irish international to move up north, so he tried to convince Robbo that he lived closer to Blackburn than he did to Luton. Unsurprisingly, it doesn't work with someone who has a brain, so Robbo remains a Town player. For now.

## 9. **Chris Coyne chased by Real Madrid**

This season has been frustrating for fans of Spain's supposed superpower. Jonathan Woodgate signed and still hasn't recovered from his injury. Wanderly Luxemburgo was therefore looking for a centre-back to partner Argentinian Walter Samuel, and Coyne obviously fits the bill. Luckily, one thing wrong with the Real chairman is his attacking mentality - he doesn't like his team to spend millions on defenders, and after the Woodgate affair he has a point.

## 10. **Sol wanted by Norwich and Baggies**

No offence intended, but Norwich and West Brom are rubbish and are looking likely to be visiting Kenilworth Road next season. Both clubs wanted to sign Sol to try and bolster their lacklustre squads (in Albion's case they wanted to replace ex-Scummer Paul Robinson) and tried to unsettle the left-back before his contract expired. However, the Hatters faithful then invented a song appreciating the efforts that Sol made, and he decided to sign a new contract with the Champions instead of signing for the teams not worthy of Premiership status.

## 11. **Owen's Madrid nightmare to end with exchange deal**

It may surprise you, but Owen is Madrid's second top scorer this season but has only actually started 7 league games. In short, his move has been a nightmare, and the Madrid gaffer nearly ended his nightmare with a shock move for Enoch 'The Daddy' Showunmi in a money plus cash deal with Owen. But Newell thought that €20m plus Owen for Enoch was a disgraceful offer, and personally I would agree.

## **And the most ludicrous of all...**

## 12. **Hatters to be given go ahead to build new ground**

Rumour has it that we will be given the all clear to start building the ground in the next few months, but frankly whoever invented this rumour should be ashamed of themselves. How dare they build up the hopes of loyal Town fans like this, and this was probably circulated by the same person who kept saying we'd be out of administration next week throughout last season.

Thankfully, you can breathe easily, as the transfer window has closed and any deals will have to be left until the summer. Incidentally, if you're wondering why none of these players were mentioned in papers about moving, then it's because they aren't real and I made them all up, so you can stop worrying about seeing Unders at the City of Manchester Stadium, or Enoch at the Bernabeu.

*Peter Bulkeley*

# **REALITY CHECKS PLEASE...**

"But we're too big a club for this league." Yeah, heard that one before? Take your pick from school playgrounds, railway stations, the workplace, dodgy radio phone-ins (you know, the one where the Man City fan has supported them "all his life". From his armchair. In Belfast.). Even the waiting room in your local clinic appears to be rife with claims from every simpleton going that their club is just too damn good for where they currently sit, and ultimately, should be brushing dirty shorts with the elite from the Premiership.

Why, for instance, can't a Wolves fan be content with the trappings of the Championship, still high on quality at times, but always cursed with the glance back in the history books that promptly show three league championships in the 1950s. Which was 50 years ago.

If we examine the status of the football league today, and discount all twenty current Premiership teams (all of which, bar Fulham and Norwich, have capacities of over 25,000), it is amazing to see the quality of the clubs outside of the elite. It has long been rumoured now that the bodies that run the game would like to further reduce the top league, probably to eighteen clubs, allowing more direction and a dedicated approach to solve the game's largest problem, and that is the lack of our national team's success, which in truth has been non-existent, barring one piece of glory, since the beginning of the game. In the 19th century.

So, the problem lies with this list. Sunderland (capacity 48,000), Leeds (41,000), West Ham (38,000), Sheffield United (30,000), Wolves (29,000), Derby (31,000), Nottingham Forest (29,000), Ipswich (30,000), Stoke City (28,000) and Leicester City (30,000). Here are ten examples of football clubs that have capacities well in excess of 25,000, which in the eyes of their fans deems that they are worthy of a place in football's elite. Gimme a break. Only two of these teams (writing this at the end of January) are realistically playing for the Championship title - Ipswich and Sunderland - with West Ham and Sheffield United inconsistently trundling along for a play-off spot. That folks is the reality, and these are the facts. With Leeds and Forest both scrapping for points in the bottom half of the table, it's a sad indictment of some fans' pleas that "we're too good for this division". These are just shallow rants with blurred visions of their clubs glorified parts.

Bearing in mind that the original list above only includes Championship teams, and that Wigan, elevated in status with financial backing from Dave Whelan, the local entrepreneur similar to Mr Abramovich in bypassing youth products for a quick fix, Burnley and Preston have historic traditions, and Reading boast a brand new 25,000 all seater, and it becomes apparent that most fans are led to believe that these are indicators to the promised land. And we then throw into the mix the likes of Sheffield Wednesday (40,000), Bristol City (the perennial under achievers - "But we need a club from this great city in the top flight"), and then Bradford City (4 years ago in the top flight, capacity 28,000) and Hull City (24,000), you start to wonder who the hell has the right to play in the top echelon of England's fine game.

With the exception of the current teams, a further list of eighteen clubs have been mentioned here, who claim a right to warm up on the same pitch as Henry, Lampard, Gerrard and Rooney at 2.45 on a Saturday afternoon (sorry, 1.30 on a Sunday, this being the Premiership); on the basis that they have up to date all seater stadia or FA Cup tradition, European tradition or, more pertinently, a lack of any real success over the last three or four decades. Or more...

So, if we magically place Wigan, Sunderland and Derby into the Premiership right this moment, who do we take out? Middlesbrough, Chelsea and Birmingham (all in the top half) base on the fact that they've never won anything meaningful? The answer is not simple!

In concluding this timely piece, I'd like to bring my own club, the club that you and I go to



watch every weekend, into the equation. Sitting top of League One, we have never had a better opportunity to return to the level of football last seen in front of the Kenny in 1996 which, yep, was a decade ago.

With the home straight coming into sharper focus, and the jockey intent on using the whip now that he can see the finishing line in the distance, the dark horse that is Luton town is holding its own on the rails. Glory could be ours.

In assuming we get that promotion we need look further to next season, and that means identifying the players who could consistently (that is the big word) play at a higher level. Though my allegiance to the club goes above and beyond the call of duty, I can only realistically see three players (one of them being the keeper) being good enough to maintain the quality and consistency of performance that, at the very least, would prolong the Town's position in the Championship for a second season. And Steve Howard isn't one of those.

So, when all is said and done, and we may end up struggling next season of course, stop to think about where your club lies in the grand scheme of things. The Championship will be wonderful for the players and supporters, and assuming Mike Newell remains top man, his remit for next season should be "21st or above". Sure, it would certainly mean seeing a whole lot less success than this season (thus far), but one year's consolidation will be amore meaningful long term strategy than most of us could wish for.

So, when your colleagues at work (you know who they are) keep spouting on about their team's false position and "ten year's worth of Anglo Italian Cup wins," inferring they really are better than their league placing suggests, remember that your club, our club, my club may, hopefully be struggling next season, but in the best league we could possibly imagine playing in. And that's talking realistically...

*Tony Allbones, the Kempston Hatter*

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## **RAVING MAD!!!**

Dear Mad,

May I through this great periodical thank and congratulate Ahmet Brkovic for proving me right. You see from the beginning, I knew he had great talent albeit slow at first, has now certainly demonstrated his skills with many goals to boot!

My son, (who incidentally suggests I should grow up and just stick to cleaning and cooking!) did not agree with my prophecy but now will not accept that a mere mother can be right!

Please do not show my identity, as the said son will probably never speak to me again.

My dream is to watch the game as a VIP in comfort, rather than listening to the commentary every week on the radio. I wonder how would he react to that?!!!

Regards... a silent supporter!

PS. Ok so I was wrong about Fotiadis !!

Dear Mad,

Information obtained from usually impeccably reliable debauched drunken sources very close to your editorial team, leads me to believe that, under the guise of good taste and family values, you have been not only editing, but actively censoring many articles submitted by various regular contributors to your erstwhile fanzine.

I regard such actions, Stalinist, dictatorial and morally reprehensible. As a result, I am actively considering taking out an annual subscription to your wretched rag so that I may cancel it in disgust with immediate effect.

Yours,

**Disgusted of Lutonia**

**TtWC**

**We interrupt this fanzine to bring you the latest news  
update on the Luton Town official Website...**

The club can confirm that Tony Thorpe has left Luton Town Football Club and has signed for Queens Park Rangers for £50,000. We can also confirm that Mike Newell has signed Gary McSheffrey on a months loan. More news on this story will be posted on the official website sometime during today. Or maybe this week. Or maybe this month.



## Bert Holdstock - an obituary

It is with regret that I inform you of the death of that great all-round Town sportsman, Bert Holdstock. Bert will be remembered by cricket aficionados as the first professional on the books of Luton Town Cricket Club, and one of the greatest all-rounders that club has ever produced. Bert died at home in Bedford in 1965, at the age of 86 years. As it wasn't reported then, it's only right that it is brought to your attention now.

Herbert (Bert) Frederick Holdstock was born on 29 October 1879, at Spencer Street, St Albans. His great grandfather, Samuel Holdstock, was the Stopsley village blacksmith, and his grandfather, Joseph, and father, Frederick, were both born in Stopsley. By 1885 the family had returned to Luton, where Frederick owned a hat factory in North Street.

By the start of his teens Bert was already representing his town and county at both football and cricket, at schoolboy level, and on leaving school went to work for his father, and played amateur football for Luton Star. Professional football had only just been introduced (Luton Town were, famously, the first professional club in the south in 1891).

Under his leadership Luton Star won the Luton & District 1st Division championship in 1895 and 1896 (It must be remembered that the next higher league was the Metropolitan League, then the Southern League, then the Football league). Bert also started playing regularly for the town's cricket club in the summer.

A 6'3" skilful and athletic centre-half, Bert was the talk of the town, and Luton Town FC came calling. Bert was in the team that won the Bedfordshire County Cup in 1897. After a couple of years in the reserves, 20 year old Bert signed on professional terms and made his first team - and Football League - debut on 2nd December 1899 - a 6-0 loss at future champions Sheffield Wednesday, in front of 10000 spectators. He didn't play again in the first XI until 6th January 1900, again a loss, this time 3-1 at Woolwich Arsenal. He only missed a couple of more games that season, and scored his first goal on March 10th, in a 4-0 home victory over Gainsborough Trinity.

At the end of the 1899/00 season Luton Town reverted to the Southern League, and Bert played only sporadically - 20 first team games in the next four seasons. Now, the Holdstocks are a pretty enigmatic bunch (I myself was once described in the Luton News as an "enigmatic punk rocker"), and what happened next was a huge enigma: Bert was transferred to top Football League club Nottingham Forest! He made his Forest debut on 18th April 1905 at Newcastle (lost 5-1). And he never played for them again. I have tried to piece together what happened, but it's seems to be lost in the mysteries of time. Nobody knows. We can surmise, however, that cricket was his real passion, and in May 1906 Bert became the first professional cricketer at Luton Town Cricket Club, ten years after making his LTCC debut. He was also appointed head groundsman.

From 1908 to 1928 (aged 49) Bert was the clubs leading batsman and bowler, scoring 13456 runs and taking 1100 wickets, at an average of 12 runs per wicket. He was granted four benefit matches, in 1910, 1922, 1924 and 1927. 1920 brought another enigma: "Where Is Holdstock?" screamed the Luton News headlines. Bert had gone missing again. The report implied that he was not being properly valued by the club, and was only playing for Luton as an accident of birth - had he been born in a bigger county he would be playing his cricket at a lot higher level. Whatever the outcome, Bert was back the next summer, again topping the averages. Not quite being able to forget football, however, he was appointed reserve team trainer at Luton Town FC in 1927!

Nearing his 50th year, Bert started to slow down and accepted the position as head groundsman at Stewartby Brickworks sports club, which he carried on until retirement. He moved to Bedford, where he passed away in 1965, aged 86.



Bert Holdstock, Luton Town FC 1897 - 1904, 42 appearances, 2 goals.

*Roger Holdstock*

## REACTIONS

### The original post match reaction of Hell City manager Peter Taylor

(with a special appearance for the font Estrangelo Edessa):

"Under 21's midweek ... moan ... no time to prepare ... moan ... biased ref ... moan ... Barmby ... moan... hostile towards Hessenthaler ... moan ... Barmby ... moan ... deserved a draw ... moan ... lucky late goal ... moan ... Barmby ... moan ... won 3-1 on aggregate ... moan ... rubbish ground ... moan ... Barmby ... moan ... deserved a win ... moan ... robbed ... moan ... did I mention Barmby? ... moan ... bigger club ... moan ... erm, will this do?"

### Mike Newell's post-match reaction

"We played well, and if we keep playing like that, I think we might have a chance this season."



## Kevin Foley - Republic of Ireland Under-21's

Youthful Kevin Foley is one of Luton's brightest prospects for a long time. He's talented. He's got a footballing mind and has shown this by performing so soundly in the midfield recently when asked to move up from defence. For a kid he has done it with such ease as a tadpole would show in swimming. He started off with Luton and is Luton through and through, playing wise. From the youth teams to the first team at the end of the 02/03 season he has cemented his place in the first eleven without any doubt. He has racked up over 60 appearances for The Super Hatters, which isn't something easy to do. Getting into a team like this means you need skill: this term we have already turned away such players as: Dyer, Van Nistelrooy, Beckham, Owen and Lampard (As well as Gazza and Thorpe). Kevin has broken in the Republic of Ireland Under-21's also and this is more than deserved. By all accounts he has settled in well and has put in fair performances so a world cup is around the corner for him. He has even scored the same amount of goals as super striker Gary McSheffery has for us this term.



So all in all, this lad has skill and here's a plea to everyone, make him welcome, give him a new contract keep him here for many years to come. The Premiership clubs are already sniffing around him, but we need the young life and soul at Luton. And hey, let's also keep the other young blood at the club (Davies, O'Leary, Keane and Co.) in addition to Kevin so we can push further and further. They are all developing and they are the next players of the Premiership.

*Dan Strobe*

## UNBEATABLE, AGAIN!

18.12.04 BRISTOL CITY 1 MIGHTY HATTERS 2

### *Oh Frabjous Day!*

Callooh, Callay indeed. After 23 years of my living in this benighted city the boys have finally won here. We have come close before. A few years back in Div 1 we led 2-0 only for a ludicrously offside goal to complete a comeback for City. And two years ago, also on the Saturday before Christmas, City equalised in the time added on for Sol Davis's sending off with the clock showing five past five. We never win at Rovers either. But I don't mind that. I like Rovers. I don't like City.

This season promised little more than usual. With Stevo suspended and City showing a bit of form it was with our usual pessimism that we set out for the match. After the customary skinful in the Merchants' Arms however we were in better frame of mind and were even able to make the usual predictions of a large Luton win.

The first half was a dream. The boys were in complete control and Coyne's headed goal was meagre return for the total superiority. It was appropriate that the goal came from a defender because for all our midfield domination we lacked a cutting edge up front.

The second half continued in similar vein. Then, on the hour, City made three changes. Suddenly the game changed and we were under the cosh. Lita scored a superb equaliser. Maybe Curtis should have prevented him getting the shot in, though it would have been hard to defend against such a good bit of skill...

The expected City onslaught never materialised. Having equalised they sat back. Maybe they thought that a draw would be a good result. But the lads took control again without really looking threatening. Then on 90 minutes Underwood did well on the left to get a cross in. The keeper and two City defenders looked well placed enough to deal with it comfortably but there, suddenly, was Enoch and the net billowed.

Enoch, I love you. You cannot comprehend what this win means for us exiles. Work the following Monday was, for once, a pleasure. City fans avoided me while Rovers fans dropped by to discuss the match. It is now nearly 5 years since City beat us. Maybe City will now start to see us as their bogey team.

*Clark*

26.12.04 CHESTERFIELD 0 TOWN 1

The promotion run continued here at Saltergate with Luton securing an impressive but deserved win over the Spireites and maintaining our five point lead at the top of Division 3/2/League 1. However, nothing is ever straightforward with Luton and we had to rely on yet another late goal to seal the win. The match was pretty even in the first half, with Chesterfield managing one shot and Luton managing five or six. Without Howard and Vine up front, we couldn't score though. Enoch was not living up to his 'genius' status that I gave him in last season's fanzines, and Andrew played quite well but looked more like a Vine type of forward - good player and hard worker but can't score. The defence was once again superb, with Perrett filling in well for the suspended Curtis. The second half was less even, with Chesterfield recording no shots and Luton recording another six or seven. Again we couldn't score, and Enoch's performance began to deteriorate slightly. I nearly started a few fights with Luton fans criticising Enoch's genius, but with five minutes left I was spared from the embarrassment of losing these fights, as Holmes had an awful shot; Enoch got his head to it and diverted it past Muggleton (the second best keeper in the League) and

into the back of the net. Once again he proved his genius, and I just hope that the Arsenal and Chelsea scouts weren't watching. We held on for the final minutes, condemning Chesterfield to their first home defeat of the season. Tranmere also dropped two points, so we increased the points margin between us and promotion. The support by the Luton fans was terrific, as only a few teams in this division would take over 1,000 to Derbyshire on a cold Boxing Day when there had been some snow to a team who had previously been unbeaten at home, plus Howard, Vine, Robbo and Curtis being either suspended or injured, and their efforts were rewarded by a good Town performance, particularly from the back five players.

*Peter Bulkeley*

## **28.12.04 TOWN 2 COLCHESTER UNITED 2**

To paraphrase the late, great Bill Shankly: football management is a simple game, made difficult by those managers who wish to appear to have a deeper understanding of the game. Listeners to TalkSport will be familiar with the comment made by both Ray Houghton and Alan Brazil when they are cornered in an argument, namely "But you have never played the game!" So can someone please explain why Mike Newell dropped a man who had scored two late winners in two consecutive games and was just getting match fit, for a man who was returning from another three-game lay-off and who is not known for his natural fitness anyway? We had a neutral with us for this game: a man who had heard about the Hatters through his friends and was looking forward to seeing the Football League's top team in action. So what was his opinion of Steve Howard? "Rubbish, he did absolutely nothing all game. For a man that size to not win a header in the match is appalling." Of course, us regulars jumped to his rescue didn't we? Actually no, because Howard's misuse of perfectly good space and time during this particular ninety minutes was indefensible. Not content with a time-served clean sheet, Howard's only contribution to this game was yet another needless booking for a reckless tackle on the halfway line; when will he learn? I know Enoch Showunmi is not a world-beater and has a sort of Marvinesque cult status but he is unpredictable and I think that is a useful quality when our opponents are studying our pattern and playing for draws every week.

Fortunately, Rowan Vine had his best game in a Luton Town shirt not only scoring twice (and missing an easier one as usual) but by winning headers and linking well with the midfield. Vine's movement off the ball was good but he still lacks a trick in the dribble and was outshone by the Colchester United number nine who had a stupendous game and deserved a goal for his second period performance. In fact the whole Colchester side played well, with new midfield signing Danns from Blackburn Rovers and the tall Halford up front standing out for me. Halford got the second for the U's when Chris Coyne and Marlon Beresford got into another of those no-mans-land mix-ups and the Colchester man got in between them to head over the stranded keeper. This was a shame on Beresford as his handling and shot-stopping had been excellent throughout. Colchester's first goal looked like an own goal to me and was totally against the run of play but the second half was another story.

Coyne left the field late on to be replaced by Russ Perrett who could easily have started the game following his outstanding contribution at Saltergate; however, I don't think too many people would criticise Newell for reverting to the centre-back pairing that have served us so well this term. Some people did criticise Newell for other decisions though and I was one of them. Peter Holmes had a fabulous game against Chesterfield in the centre of the pitch but was moved to the left wing to stand-in for the injured Paul

Underwood and was replaced in the centre by Steve Robinson who was returning after injury. Regardless of your personal preference for Holmes or Robinson, I simply cannot understand why managers make two changes when they only need to make one. If our sole left-sided midfielder is unavailable then replace him with another player and ask them to do their best, whilst hoping that the rest of the team retains its poise and balance and copes with the change. Don't move a man who was playing well in one position and bring back a man who has been out of action to fill the gap. Maybe Showunmi could have been tried on the left wing, but Holmes was certainly restricted in his influence (to the point of substitution) and Robinson was off the pace. Furthermore, what was the point in bringing Showunmi on as a third striker when this ploy hasn't worked in the past, and in doing so replacing a midfielder when it was the midfield area that was losing control? Oh sorry, I remember - it is illegal to sub Steve Howard, sometimes I think he is the Chairman's favourite son. I reminds me of W.G. Grace who, on being given out, stood his ground and informed the umpire "These people have come to see me bat, not you umpire." and so continued.

Next up is Sheffield Wednesday who have the best away record in the division, and whilst they will not be as fresh as Col U (sounds like an American Defence Secretary) Luton Town will have to be better as two games in three days will be no excuse this time and Hull are closing the gap. Oh, and we had the third incident of fabulously feigning injury in as many games. It seems the foreign ponces in the Premier League have an influence on this level in terms of player behaviour. What a pity the lower-league authorities don't go through the same motions as the top flight and call these players to account after the event, using video evidence to prosecute pathetically patent pretenders.

*Cliff Saunders*

## **01.01.05 TOWN 1 SHEFFIELD WENDY 1**

A full house packed into Kenilworth Road meant that for the second home game running I couldn't get a seat in the Kenilworth Road End and instead had to squeeze my 6ft4 bulk into a too small Main Stand wooden seat with its restricted-by-posts view - and all for only a few quid more.

Sheff Weds for all their numerous fans and past glories are no longer a 'big' side (in fact there are no 'big' sides in our division; if they were 'big' they wouldn't be in this division!) and a draw was disappointing.

Curtis "Little Rio" Davis didn't put a foot wrong in a single game for the first half of this season but for the second match running made a error and it cost us a goal before halftime. Normal service returned just after halftime with a Howard goal but we seemed to run out of ideas after that and a draw looked probable and so it ended.

We remain top of the league (just) on goal difference.

*B Dave B*

## **03.01.05 PETERBOROUGH UNITED 2 TOWN 2**

It takes a superhuman effort to be outplayed for longer periods by a side as awful as Peterborough, but by jove Luton managed it today. It was a grotesque performance, easily the worst of the season, in a match of such poor quality mere words do not do it justice. For long periods, you would have struggled to pick which was the top of the league side and which one was near the bottom.

We only produced two moments of quality, a stunning curling Nicholls free kick to open the scoring and an equally sublime cross from Underwood straight on to Howard's forehead to



power home a barely deserved leveller as the clock ticked down.

As promised Newell shuffled the pack. However he dealt himself a hand which contained more jokers than aces. One fact, today confirmed, when we at our full strength we are a good side. When 3 or 4 are missing, we are distinctly average.

The first half was played almost exclusively in the air, we sunk to Peterborough's level. Rather than getting the ball down and play to our strengths, we lumped the ball which was meat and drink to Peterborough's back four who are all central defenders. Howard and Showunmi were being well marked. Enoch made a couple of decent razzle dazzle runs but his contribution was negligible. The midfield lost most of the second balls and creative prompts weren't there. We never threatened Tyler's goal in the first period. The only plus points of the first 45 minutes, Perrett and Davies were defensively sound and Beresford's handling was assured. Peterborough knocked everything long and their main threat were Legg's long throw, most of which were of gargantuan proportions.

Both teams squandered early chances in the second half. Robinson and Vine were brought on to replace O'Leary and Showunmi. The move paid dividends. Vine looked lively although a corpse probably would after the first half. Plummer once again, pushed Howard in the back. Nicholls from 25 yards, curled the free kick into the right hand corner, with pace to give Tyler no chance. Instead of pressing home the good fortune of leading, Luton sat back and invited Peterborough's aerial bombardment. It was all Peterborough. Farrell's long free kick, went through a mass of bodies before Willock fired over at the far post. A goal was on it's way and it duly came. Newton's cross from Legg's throw, was flicked on by Thomson and Willock unmarked nodded home. With 10 minutes remaining, they went ahead. Another Legg long throw was hooked in by Willock.

Luton awoke from their slumbers and a quality cross by Underwood, picked up Howard at the far post to level matters. Another a good move by Vine and Davis, slipped in Underwood but his cross cum shot was held by Tyler.

A disappointing afternoon all round was completed by news of Hull and Tranmere both winning. I understand Newell's having problems with the league getting a loan signing in but needs to rectify that before a major slump in form appears.

PDW

#### 07.01.05 AJAX CAPE TOWN 1 BLACK LEOPARDS 1

In the magnificent setting of the 50,000 capacity Newlands Stadium, this game was well matched to the size of the crowd. In front of around 2,800 people the Premiership sides served up 90 minutes of what we would term Conference standard football. The first period was a show of poor attacking by the home side against a sturdy defence, with the visitors relying on the counter attack to offer any threat (a tactic which failed miserably). The atmosphere was almost non-existent, apart from a bunch of English cricket fans desperately trying to bring some life to the place. The second half saw a slightly better standard of football on show, but it was still nothing to write home about, although the tedium was broken slightly by Ajax taking the lead after 72 minutes. Predictably, the equaliser came just 4 minutes later, and the sharing of the points was a fair reflection of the game.

As a follow up, the home side played their Dutch namesakes a few days later in a home friendly, in which they were defeated 3-0. Comparisons with our own 4-0 defeat at the hands of the Dutch side should not be drawn. Note to Mike Newell: if anyone suggests checking out any South African players, you will probably not find them playing in South Africa!

KFH

#### 08.01.05 TOWN 0 CUP CRAZY BEES 2

My mum's dog, a West Highland Terrier named Woody, is a bit past it and blind, and sometimes just stands in the garden annoyingly barking away at thin air. Give Brentford manager Martin Allen another six months to go completely white haired and you won't be able to tell the difference. Yap, yap, yap, bark, bark, bark - all the game and completely ignored by his players. There's a guy who needs to take a deep breath, sit down in a darkened room and take up yoga immediately.

We were rubbish in this game and despite controlling the first half without playing well, Brentford eventually realised that we weren't playing well and got a couple of second half goals as we pressed forward in numbers. Out of the cup we went to CONCENTRATE ON THE LEAGUE etc etc.

B Dave B

#### 15.01.05 TOWN 3 FAKE HATTERS 0

With previous fixtures worryingly not resulting in wins, this was a game that we were always going to win and did. Stockport looked awful and probably need to start worrying about possibly going out of the league next season if they don't improve.

Goals from Coyne, Howard and a Nicholls penalty brushed them aside but this match marked a return of confidence in how we played. A nervy start was soon forgotten and by the end we were looking like champions again. Fittingly we returned to the top of the league (on goal difference) as Hull drew (and nearly lost) against lowly Peterborough.

B Dave B

#### 22.01.05 COLCHESTER UNITED 0 TOWN 0

Congratulations are in order for Rowan Vine, I heard this week that he has been nominated for both an Academy Award for Best Impersonation of a Football Player and for a BAFTA for Best Unsupported Pratfall in a Penalty Area Outside of the Premiership. For a man who provokes apathy from the fans at best, I really don't think this new tack of diving for anything and everything is going to increase his standing (*pun intended*). Now Trotters fans might be willing to put up with El Haj Pouff, or whoever he is, cheating to get them results (and their cartoon dog of a manager applauding his player's actions) but I do not want to see such pathetic measures at Luton Town. If Vine is that desperate to score he should spend more time working on shooting with his left foot and less time practising tripping himself up with it.

Conversely, the much-maligned Steve Howard had an excellent game at Layer Road where he won more headers than in the last six games put together. If only we had a striking partner for him, to feed off the flicks: now where did Carl Griffiths go?

Nice to see Colchester open the other terrace up this year. Clearly the part-time snack-bar attendants for the left-hand side had turned up so we could spread out a bit. Naughty me though - I entered the wrong terrace! Imagine my shame and embarrassment when the turnstile operator pointed out the anomaly. "Your ticket is for Terrace 1!" she exclaimed in horror with a face like Judas Iscariot just after he had realised his mistake. Fortunately, the Emperor of Colchester was having an amnesty day and my normally inexcusable faux pas was pardoned by imperial decree. It was a tight squeeze on Terrace 2 with one extra body but the Luton faithful showed true bulldog spirit and made the best of it without grumbling. Fortunately no-one was killed.

Where were the bloody rest of us though? A guy in the bogs was talking on a mobile and telling his telephonic confidante that we had sold out 1300 tickets! As we were only given

1000 and there were empty seats at the other end I did wonder if he had wandered into the wrong stadium. Stadium is too grand a word for Layer Road of course, but the oldest recorded town in England obviously feels the need to have the most antiquated football ground as some kind of evidence. I think it qualifies in the 'longest walk to a pub welcoming to home fans category' too, not to mention an entry in Long Walks in East Anglia for the trek from and to the railway station (*If you had been sat in the stand at the other end, you'd also have nominated it for the "longest walk to find a toilet whilst remaining within the same ground" category - Ed*).

The game was mostly rubbish with neither side worthy of a win despite a couple of hairy moments for us late on. The Hatters battled hard for a point which was put in some perspective later in the week when Col U (simply the most ludicrous abbreviation in football) hammered Walsall 5-0. The Town were better after Peter Holmes had replaced Paul Underwood (hamstring strain) but how come he wasn't in the starting line up and Keith 'where am I' Keane was? I am in favour of giving youth a chance but Holmes is hardly past it and Keane is clearly not up to it. We already have two youth teamers at the back so putting more in midfield is just asking too much: as has been shown before in this season. Colchester are one of those annoying teams like Brentford who seem to do well against us but flatter to deceive elsewhere. Hopefully we can raise our game against the forthcoming opponents of Tranmere Rovers and Hull City. I would love it if we beat 'em, just love it.

Cliff Saunders

## 29.01.05 TOWN 1 TRANMERE ROVERS 1

With our once huge lead now whittled down to just a point and most of our flair and confidence seemingly vanished, I believed only a victory would do today, to open up a gap to the play off places. Having drawn, I wasn't quite as annoyed as I thought I would be.

The Town got off to a dreadful start when a poorly marked Hume was allowed to head into the box, Dadi's run wasn't followed and he just had to prod it past Beresford. It would be Rovers last shot for about seventy minutes. The Town responded to the early setback in the way that we'd have all hoped by playing some quality football and keeping Tranmere penned in their own half. Their man-mountain centre back looked a touch nervous, as did Big Ears in goal who at one point, under no pressure, ducked under a chest high cross and let it go out for a throw. It was all Luton but we're not quite getting the breaks that we were early in the season and it was frustration for all as we got a little bit panicky as the half went on.

I don't recall us tearing into them at the start of the second half, but we were given a huge helping hand eight minutes in when Stevo was bundled over for a penalty. It was more clear cut than theirs was at Prenton park but the Rovers fans gave the linesman plenty of grief for the rest of the match. They should have taken their wrath out on the defender, though. Howard was never going to score from the position he was in and he had no support. Bloody Scousers - it's always someone else's fault. At least Nico spared them the agonies we suffered at their place as he converted it expertly. After the equaliser both sides looked happy to settle for a point. You can't blame Brian Little and Tranmere for that attitude away to the league leaders, but I would have liked to have seen a bit more endeavour from our boys. In the end I was quite relieved to hear the final whistle. We were stretched a few times during the latter stages and sloppiness from Tranmere and a brilliant sliding interception from Sol Davis kept it at one all. Rovers had made three substitutions during the match and they looked much the better for it - something we're unlikely to see with our thin squad.

Their is an air of confidence within the squad gained from how difficult we are to beat and we have an excellent defence (not just on paper - Coyne, Davies and Davis are the best defensive trio in the division). If I was a fan of one of our promotion rivals, I'd say Luton are definitely going up because we are hard to beat and have conceded the fewest goals. However, years of watching the Town have moulded me into something of a pessimist and I reckon we'll struggle to get the ten-ish wins we need if the team is not improved. What's happened to the attacking football? There are a few parallels with events of eight years ago, the last time we were in this position in this division, when we dropped into the play-offs late in the season. Obviously I worry too much, but I'm sure even the most optimistic fans would tell you that the Town are in a rut and need a new face up front to spark our attacking play and excite the crowd. There's not much to spend, so a quality loan might have to suffice. Newell is a good judge when it comes to signing players so, despite our heavy ongoing losses, Tomlins should trust him in the transfer market. The right man could bring the confidence flooding back to the players and fans, and we may yet see a return to our early season brilliance. We must act soon though.

Richard Ward

## 05.02.05 'UDDERSFIELD TOWN 1 TOWN

Snaking up from the west, the M62 leaves the murk of Manchester behind and enters the rolling green carpet of the mist covered Pennines. Light drizzle then helped to obscure the now brown moorland of Saddleback, a name dripping with infamy. At a height of 1221 feet this is the highest stretch of motorway in England. Could be handy knowledge for a pub quiz. Nestling down to the right, on the banks of the River Colne can be found the old mill town of 'Uddersfield. Today it has one claim to fame, a stadium fit for a high class of football. But it takes the talents of a classy southern team to bring the best out of it. Not so much in the style of Sir Norman Foster, no, the John Smith Smooth Flow Stadium, or whatever it is called, is more from the school of Mike Oldfield, in his Tubular Bells period (*I think he only had one period - 'long and slow'. - Ed*). The site is only ruined by having open corners, occupied by hideous concrete based floodlight pylons. Apart from that it's not bad. So, when will the fine followers of Hattersville get their spanking new palace of football? Well, fat chance I say, while the lumbering Prescott of Hull is involved!

After another team huddle, I'm glad Luton have not gone down this route, the match kicked off. Three seconds later the first throw in came about. Every week the same thing, hoof it straight out of play.

A good open game, not rough and plenty of passing by the orange and blues became more and more broken by a whistle happy ref. While the Hudds had most of the forward play, Luton contained them well, with that Marlon taking everything with ease. One of their tactics was to use the long through ball, but Marlon just picked every single one out of the air with ease. They just never varied this approach the whole 98 minutes.

Good to see Russ Perrett on the green again, and he had a fine game linking well with the ever improving Davies. The hunks of Hudd were always well marshalled. This allowed Foley and Davis to make run after run up the wings, which the locals never really adjusted to. Once again nice man Kevin Nicholls had a great game, silky skills and incisive passes. Mike Newell has certainly brought out the best in him. Word on the terraces is that Beckham is coming to see our Kev for penalty training. So, my shocker of a statement: Kevin Nicholls for Player of the Season. Maybe a bit early, but apart from one red card he has hardly put a foot wrong. It's about time someone in the team's engine room got the award anyway.

Back to the match. Penalty ref, "no way" he said, "wrong coloured shirt" as Howard was



chopped down in the box, after only 5 minutes. Funny thing about northern folk, they are full of grit when handing it out, but as Corporal Jones would say, "they don't like it up 'em". As usual our chaps received the yellow cards while the locals escaped.

The Hudds offside trap was finally broken by a move up the right wing, Foley got another fine cross in for the Croatian sensation to slide it in. The ball that is. It was one of those days for Howard, working hard, running for and winning the ball (no joke, he did), but in front of goal he was late, miss cueing or heading straight into the goalie's hands. Just a quick thought, sell Howard and get McSheff. I know which one is the quality Div 1 player.

The second half was much of the same. Hudds coming forward, the Town defence holding well, and then good counter attacks to left, right and down the centre. For a change Vine did not spend all day running at top speed to the corners, instead he was twisting and turning and going for goal. At tis point it all went wrong, he should have sealed it for 2-0, but blasted high into the visitors end, with only the keeper to beat. This was only a few minutes after Foley had missed a glorious chance from a more difficult angle. Then to cap it all Robbo was hacked down by a high boot in the area. Guess what? No penalty. It would have been different at the other end of the ground, I am sure.

This was followed by every incident being given by the ref Hudds way, even when Brko was chopped down in front of us the kick went to the stripes. With 90 minutes gone and 4 bonus ones to come, MN brought on the subs. But why was Vine taken off and Andrew brought on? Surely with Vine still running well, Howard should have gone off and Enoch used to confuse them t hell.

As it was the show ended with the ref allowing enough time for the Luton defence to be split once, leaving Marlon in two minds of what to do. Stay and defend the line or rush out and cut the angle. So, a lob, a goal and two points lost. A thousand plus travelling Hatters silenced. Then came the worst chant of all... "Yorkshire, Yorkshire". I have nothing against the county, it is far better than Lancashire in not having Manky Utd and Burnley, but I really hate that chant, as every town up there hates the next one. It just sounds so third world.

On a final note I must say what a really good programme Huddersfield do. Three pages of life stories and facts on the away team, followed by a further two pages on the visitors dream team. Here we had Ricky Hill, Malcolm MacDonald, Bruce Rioch, Mick Harford, Brian Stein and Paul Walsh all lined up together. Though the 3-3-4 formation would have put the wind up Sven.

Then when I finally got out of the car park, it was an awful drive down the M6 in the rain. I hate that road.

*Normski, the Cheltenham Hatter*

## 12.02.05 TOWN 1 TOOTHLESS TIGERS 0

Now, there are goal celebrations and there are goal celebrations. There are not many strikes that cause "pandemonium" (as the Luton News described it) among Hatters fans. Nico's penalty at home to Plymouth in the Div 3 season, Springy's screamer against the scum, and Oakes' third against West Ham in the FA Cup replay are ones that spring immediately to mind.

Now Brko's last-minute header against title "rivals" (given the current league table I use the term loosely) Hull can be added to the list. From what I remember, when the net rippled I launched myself over two seats, grabbed hold of a random guy, yelling "GET IN" over and over again at him, while my pal Joey Deacon was hanging off the metal fire escape

railings behind us, celebrating equally dementedly.

The goal was no more than we deserved. The first half was the best football we'd played in months - and how Hull made it to the interval still on level terms is anyone's guess. Indeed, how a team second in the table and just a point off the champions-elect can take 40 minutes to muster a shot is a mystery as well! The second half was a bit more even with Hull proving they do actually know what is meant by "attacking". But, just when we looked like being held to our seventh draw in eight games, up popped Brko to nod in Robbo's cross at the near post.

As I said at the time, GET IN!

*Scoop*

## 15.02.05 HARTLEPOOL UNITED 2 TOWN 3

There is an old football cliché, which goes something along the lines of "You can't count yourself a true fan until you have experienced Hartlepool on a cold Tuesday night in February". With this in mind, a few hundred diehard Hatters descended upon the frozen tundra of the north, to Poolieville, a town where wild monkeys roam the streets and innocent visitors are kidnapped by errant taxi drivers. The lucky hordes witnessed the Town put in a rip roaring performance that was beyond mere superlatives.

The Luton fans travelled from far and wide; from God's chosen county of Bedfordshire, from Devon, from Cheshire, from Greater Manchester and even Buenos Aires via Madrid. Buoyed by a moral boosting, tension lifting, Brko inspired last gasp victory over the Humberside hoofers on the previous Saturday, Luton were simply magnificent, tearing the hapless Hartlepool defence to pieces. We stretched them down the flanks and ruthlessly exposed their soft underbelly in the middle. The team were unstoppable; it was a night when no team in this division, and very few in the Championship, could have lived with us.

The home fans were stunned into silent admiration as they watched their unbeaten home record destroyed by a rampant Luton team. The away fans, housed in a stand with a low roof which aided the acoustics sang their joyous hearts out, at times mesmerised by a performance that even outshone the victory and exploits at Swindon earlier in the season. To their credit, in the local hostelries after the match, the four fingered, web toed local mutants were magnanimous in defeat, to a man, describing the Luton performance as the best by any team at Victoria Park for many a season.

Luton Town fans have had over fifteen years of broken dreams and false promises, at last we have a team we can be proud of, I urge you all to get down to the Kenny as soon as possible, and to support the team on their travels as the season reaches its climax. We are witnessing something special this season, savour every moment while it lasts.

*TtWC*

## 19.02.05 BRADFORD CITY 0 TOWN 1

Obviously, the main topic of discussion prior to the match was whether I would get to see all 90 minutes this time round. Personally, I did have a slight fear that BCFC had banned me from their ground, without taking the trouble to tell, but such fears proved unfounded. Any hopes of anonymity were foiled by the regulars at the Corn Dolly, who greeted me royally, recognising me as "the bloke who was chucked out last year". Apart from a minor dispute due to overcharging at the tea hut, the match passed without event. Which, after the first ten minutes pretty much sums up the match as well. A disputed penalty, and a rare Nico miss from the spot, was followed up by a well struck Vine effort, which also struck the post rather well on its way into the net. And that was pretty much that. With three

wins in a week, post match thoughts were turning to where and when promotion would be sealed. All in all, a grand day out.

KFH

## 22.02.05 TOWN 1 ELEVEN MEN BEHIND THE BALL 0

I hate teams who come to Kenilworth Road to defend, and I hate Walsall because I live there. On our performance, we wouldn't have deserved to win many matches, but we were marginally better than a poor Walsall side, and if the local papers start saying that just because they held the top of the league team at Fortress Kenny for 85 minutes (who were playing badly at the time) then that makes them world beaters like they did in October, then I will write into them and put them straight. The first half was ok. We dominated and had quite a few chances, Howard and Vine missing two good ones in particular. Walsall did have a few counter attacks but still defended for a lot of the half. The second half was dreadful. Both teams were evenly matched, but the pessimistic Brummies made their intentions clear and were playing for a point for most of the second half as well. We dominated in the last few minutes and won a penalty with five minutes to spare after Emblen pulled Coyne down in the area. The Walsall players then did an Arsenal and surrounded the ref trying to get him to change his mind, and this meant that the penalty was taken in the last minute. The Albion reject keeper dived right, and Nicholls put it left. 1-0 and Walsall had to attack. It was then us who could give them a taste of their own medicine as we slowed the game down and frustrated them. If they had attacked in the first half then they may well have got something from the game, as we didn't play that well, but Coyne and the defence were superb, restricting Walsall to half chances outside the area, and Beresford had virtually nothing to do. Emblen deserved his booking at the end, as he made a few bad challenges before that, and the ref had quite a good game. He may not have got every decision right, but he only booked two players and kept control of the game well - other refs would probably have still booked four or five players. The Walsall support was terrible; perhaps the local press will refine their view that Walsall belong in the Championship after that turnout, but I doubt it very much. Overall we deserved the win (just about) and if another Walsall fan who wasn't at the game says to me that the penalty was dodgy without watching the replay of the foul first, then I might regret the actions I take against them.

Peter Bulkeley

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

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## UP, UP & UP. DOWN UNDER

It just had to happen. Twenty-four hours previously I was driving back down the M1, becoming increasingly more alert to the weather that was typifying the day I'd had. The rain thundered down, making conditions treacherous, speeds of 40 mph the norm. Now, of course, this wouldn't have been too bad if I'd had a corker of a day and been pleasantly smiling inside. Problem. I wasn't. You see, I'd just seen the Town get murdered at Hull, and decided after 22 years of watching them, and visiting my 85th club (and 91st ground), that enough was enough. I would leave before the final whistle for the first time ever. It was cold, dark, damp, and no, we're not talking about the Town's six yard box that day. We'd lost three on the bounce. Had our bubble burst?

Forgetting the nightmare day before, I'm now on a plane for a month's break Down Under, sampling the delights of Australia's east coast. And then I start pondering - next game at home to Bradford, they've won five straight... and we haven't. I thought this was the perfect chance to get away. After all, would we even be in the top three when I arrived back? Yeah, it just had to happen. A month away, and it **all** happens. Four straight wins, sixteen goals scored and only two conceded. Could I get to see any of this wonderful football? Not a chance in 12,000 miles. Consoling myself with the knowledge that I was basking in the sunshine on Bondi beach with an afternoon cruise sweeping through the beautiful, mesmerising views of Sydney Harbour, I tried to put things in perspective. I got the news that we'd stuffed Bradford about 3am local time in Brisbane. But I was drunk, and my first thought resembled the one where the fit blonde across the bar looks you up and down and then smiles in your general direction. "Is this happening?" Confirmation on my mate's 'souped up' Vodafone a few hours later helped me enjoy my birthday. News of the 3-0 Cup victory at Southend was given to me as I meandered to Circular Quay - the gateway to Sydney Harbour. "Hell," I thought, "two in bloody two." The result of the Wrexham game came as we ran to our hotel at the vibrant destination of Surfers Paradise. "Tony," Rob screamed, "you're 4-0 up, and it's not even half time yet!" This, as we ran our hearts out through the most incredible of rainstorms. Oh yep, we did get wet! Out there, when it rains it don't stop. We found out the hard way.

The 4-1 victory at the MK Dons came as I enjoyed a leisurely drink in a Sydney city pub, and just after paying a small fortune to get into an official Celtic Supporters club to see the "old firm" derby. I was dressed in a lovely pink shirt and trousers (*pink trousers?* Ed) ready to hit the town afterwards. The other three hundred weren't. They wore green and white hoops. And despite me trying to put on a cross breed accent of Scot/Celt/Aussie and/or Kiwi, I just didn't fit in. Sore thumb and stick out. Still, at least the whole of Parkhead knows who Ahmet Brkovic is, I thought...

On the way home, we enjoyed a night's stopover in Tokyo, and thoughts began to form of my first match back at my beloved Kenilworth Road. The anticipation of a cold afternoon watching one of those most attractive of sides, Doncaster, was only deepened by the fact that I was currently learning the art of Sumo on the hotel's cable TV channel (still, I thought Steve Howard might fit in, bless him).

As the plane touched down at a grey, cloudy Heathrow, the reality hit home. "Three days to go, and I'm back," I thought, with the sort of warm feeling a six year old gets first thing on Christmas Day. and so onto Doncaster. You know, I had a feeling about this game. Would my return have an impact on the result? Surely not, the way the Town had been playing for the previous month.

Doncaster were well organised, and the old Hatter Michael McIndoe was giving Foley a right going over and made our young right back look as though he'd been on the sherbets. Surely it was supposed to be the other way round? An entertaining game sprang into life even more when



Kev Nicholls curled a lovely 20 yarder into the top corner, right in front of me in C block. Indeed, it was hit with a subtlety not often associated with the man whose own idea of the word is the last thing I saw him do before my travels - a little elbow in front of the ref up at Hull. "Nice one skip" I recall thinking as me and my mate Matt gave each other the look to suggest that we'd be on the M18 before the final whistle. But a month on, and Kev had slipped in a beauty. And nice work to earn the free kick Mr Brkovic. Donnie equalised near the end to send the majority of the bumper crowd home disappointed.

But then on the way home, I started to realise just how good this lad Davies is. "Yeah, nice left foot, come of age this year. Even scored his first career goal a few weeks back." I hear you all mumble. Nah, as good as he's been this year, we're not talking Sol, we're talking about a man who oozes soul. I must confess to not knowing too much (ie. anything) about him before this season, but remembered a decent performance against Plymouth in March last year when in a poor game in a blowing gale he looked the part.

Assured, confident and reliable, Curtis looks like he will be a wonderful addition to any Premiership squad. People I here in the Kenny end are constantly comparing Boycie and Curtis, overlooking the fact that they are different types of player. Curtis appears naturally more of a libero, a relaxed defender who likes time on the ball and has that assured touch. I always had a feeling Boycie was a wing back, and so it proves with his performances this season at palace. Congratulations Emerson. And though in recent weeks our performances have tailed off slightly and Curtis himself has made one or two mistakes (Wednesday and Brentford), I'm in no doubt that this young, confident footballer will make it to the very top, higher indeed than our former roving full back Emerson Boyce.

So Curtis, if you're reading this, keep playing your game, keep your head, never think past the next game and forget about buying the *News of the World* or *The People* on a Sunday morning. Because then you'll believe that you're worth £5 million and that'll be the ruin of you. What we as Luton fans want is the Championship as your platform for a great career ahead of you, which most of us would never begrudge, away from our beloved club. And if you're ever thinking of having a month away, like I did, when you're retired, remember: August until May should never be an option Down Under. F\*\*\*\*\* over, more like...

*Tony Allbones, the Kempston Hatter*

## 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!

## Sharpe Angle

So, what is the correct etiquette when winning the half time Golden Gamble draw at Kenilworth Road. Is it to act as though nothing has happened before slinking off quietly and unobtrusively to grab the ill-gotten gains, or is it to let out an ear-splitting shriek, dance up and down on the spot, waving the ticket in the air, yelling "Yes, that's my number, ohmigod, yes..." Well, in the New Stand on the Tuesday night of the Walsall game, the latter was the strategy adopted by young Angela, she of the white hat featuring the cross of St George. And she was not about to wait around for her winnings, either. No sir, she stormed straight down to the pitch, knocking out of her way the steward who, reasonably enough, asked "and where do you think you're going?" When she got to the man with the dosh, who asked her, "would you like to take the money with you?", he had barely finished the sentence before she had grabbed the cash. When Angela returned to her seat she realised that she would now have to secrete the money somewhere in order to avoid walking out of the ground trailing banknotes behind her with each step she took. She spends much of each game chatting to my wife Sheila, who later told me that Angela had come up with a cunning plan to ensure that she did not look conspicuous as she took her winnings home with her - "She stuffed it up her jumper."

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Thanks very much to those readers who responded to my request for information about former Town player and character, Graham French. One or two have supplied some interesting info about the talented but wayward player and if anyone else out there has anything to add, I would be pleased to hear it - you can email me care of Keith Hayward if you have further details to pass on.

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One of my greatest pals is, for his sins, a Chelsea fan and it was hard to keep a straight face as I sat with him watching their FA Cup defeat by Newcastle. But John's other claim to fame is that he just happens to be the brother of one Bill Tomlins.

Now, Bill, brother John has plenty of dirt to dish about life as a member of the same family as Luton Town's chairman - and, Bill, if you don't want the sordid details to emerge in a publication such as, for example, this one, written, for example, by someone such as, for example, me, then it could be in your best interests to send round a plain buff coloured envelope stuffed full of cash in order to ensure that instant amnesia sets in. You could always disguise it as the winnings of the half time draw, which, as we have already seen, is now frequently won by residents of the New Stand, so no one would be any the wiser.

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Something of a TV first, I think. One of the main characters in the new series of Caroline Quentin's entertaining ITV series, *Life Begins*, introduced himself to a couple of the other characters as he arrived to work in their new travel agents branch - "I am X years old, I used to be such and such, I like this and that, oh and I support... Luton Town". I waited for the sarcastic comments from the others which must inevitably follow - but none was forthcoming. Whether this element of the character will be pursued in future episodes I have no idea, but congratulations to the writer - whose name I have been unable to glean from TV Times, for not opting for an easy laugh - as yet, anyway.

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Remember that programme the Moral Maze? Each week the panel was asked to discuss a particular dilemma and decide how they would react when confronted with a certain situation. I have had to face my own moral dilemma and have yet to resolve it at time of writing. We have been invited away to the wedding of friends' son and fiancée on the same Saturday as the home game against Bristol City.

Well, as far as I'm concerned, it's a no-brainer. Show willing and turn up to the hotel the night before, mingle with friends and family, have a nice meal and a few drinks, up for an early breakfast next morning, quick charge back to see the game then return to wedding for evening reception. QED. I can't imagine that the pair getting wed will give a damn whether we are there or not - can you remember everyone who was at your wedding, if you had one? I know I can't - in fact, we banned most people from coming to our wedding - didn't stop them, though, they turned up anyway. But we did things the proper way - and got married when there was no football going on. Why can't everyone be so considerate, I ask myself? As you might suspect, however, Mrs Sharpe Angle seems to think this would in some way be a snub to our friends and their son and intended. Fine, no problem, she can stay down there representing the pair of us.

I suspect it will end in tears of one kind or another, probably mine.

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As someone who has edited, written and lost his job over football programmes I believe that the current 'Luton' effort, edited by Steven Dove, is a decent enough offering. I must say, though, that the Bill Tomlins column in the Walsall programme was absolutely littered with grammatical, punctuation and spelling mistakes which do not reflect well on our top man - while the current policy of not identifying either the players featured in photographs or the incidents taking place at the time they were taken, is unhelpful, misguided and irritating.

*Graham Sharpe*

## STAT ATTACK

### Sat 5th Mar Bristol City (H)

There have been 26 previous meetings, with the Hatters holding a 10-7 lead with victories, with a remarkable 9 draws! The goal scoring is fairly even with the Town leading 39-32. Luton held a run of 9 meetings without defeat until City won 4-1 in October 1963. This match marked the first encounter for 27 years, and it avenged the previous high scoring defeats, including 4-0, 4-1, and 3-0 (twice). The highest scoring game was in January 1933, when the Hatters won a 9 goal thriller, 5-4!! City had been undefeated in the 8 previous meetings until the last time out.

Last time: 17 Apr 2004 Won 3-2 (Steve Howard, Emmerson Boyce, Keith Keane)

### Sat 12th Mar Swindon Town (H)

Luton have a great home record against Swindon, with 17 victories, to just 4 defeats, and 6 draws. Most of these matches were played in the 1920s/30s with Swindon winning only one of the opening 20 encounters. Luton had some convincing wins as well, 6-0 in April 1932, and 6-2 a year later with Andy Rennie scoring a hat trick! The opening victory for the visitors came in October 1933, when they secured maximum points with a 3-2 scoreline. Luton won the next four games but since then have only managed 3 victories from the last 9 fixtures.

Last time: 12 Apr 2004 Lost 0-3

### Sat 19th Mar Oldham Athletic (A)

Luton have 6 wins from 20 trips to Oldham, and have lost on 9 occasions. They've managed less than a goal a game, with only 17 scored and 26 conceded, so not the highest scoring fixtures around! Luton were unbeaten in the first 6 fixtures, winning five and drawing one. Remarkably they have only won one fixture since, from 14 visits! The Hatters won 2-1 in December 1953, and recorded two wins during 1964 without conceding a goal! Only once has there been more than 3 goals in the match, this came in April 1992 with Oldham winning 5-1. The solitary victory for the Hatters since 1977 came in October 2002, courtesy of goals from Andrew Fotiadis and Tony Thorpe in a 2-1 win.

Last time: 27 Sept 2003 Lost 0-3

### Fri 25 Mar Barnsley (H)

Luton have lost on the last four occasions that these sides have met at Kenilworth Road, so manager Mike Newell will be hoping that poor run comes to an end in front of the SKY TV cameras! Prior to those 4 defeats Luton had won 5-0 in October 1993, courtesy of a brace from Scott Oakes, and further goals from John Hartson, Julian James and Scott Houghton. Luton have a very impressive scoring record in this fixture, scoring 4 goals on 3 occasions, 5 goals on four occasion and a 6-0 victory in March 1953! These goals go some way towards the total of 63 that the Hatters have in this fixture, having only conceded 29! From 24 fixtures Luton have taken maximum points 14 times, the visitors on just 5 visits.

Last time: 20 December 2003 Lost 0-1

### Mon 28 Mar Torquay Utd (A)

Would it be tempting fate to say that there has never been a goalless draw in this fixture?! In fact there has been 46 goals from just 14 matches, therefore averaging 3 goals a game! Luton won the opening fixture 4-0 in April 1928, having won the home fixture 5-0



just 3 days previous! Three draws followed before the Hatters won again, 2-1 in November 1931. The biggest defeat came in September 1934 when the home side won by 6 goals to 2! That match was the start of a 6 games and 68 year gap between Luton victories! The last time Luton played at Plainmoor was in the promotion winning season of 2001/02. Last time: 2 Mar 2002 Won 1-0 (Ahmet Brkovic)

#### **Sat 2 Apr Blackpool (H)**

You have to go back 107 years for the first league meeting between these two teams, and it finished in a 3-1 victory to the Hatters, thanks to a brace from Tommy Little and one from James Coupar. Luton won again in March 1899, this time 3-2, before a wait of over 55 years before they returned to the 3-1 scoreline! Blackpool won their first match in January 1957, and recorded their second in August 1959. It was 13 years later that they won again, although it was the next visit after the previous victory! Blackpool had to wait 31 years and 10 matches for their next win. Luton have won 12 of the 19 matches, and only lost on 4 occasions mentioned. The draws have all been different, 0-0, 1-1 and 2-2! Luton's most convincing win came in March 1978 with Alan West, Ron Futcher, Phil Boersma and Lil Fuccillo all on the scoresheet in a 4-0 victory. This match was the third in a run of seven where the visitors failed to register a goal!

Last time: 13 Mar 2003 Won 3-2 (Emmerson Boyce, Peter Holmes, Enoch Showunmi)

#### **Sat 9 Apr Bournemouth (A)**

Luton have only registered 5 wins from the previous 24 encounters, and you have to go back to 1969 for the last one. In the last 6 matches since that victory the Hatters have only managed one draw, in 97/98 when Dwight Marshall scored. Luton actually won away at Bournemouth twice in 1969, firstly 2-0 in February and then 1-0 in August. Fred Jardine, Laurie Sheffield and Malcolm MacDonald were the scorers. The opening fixture between the sides back in 1923/24 saw the visitors 3-2 winners, but it took 5 draws and 3 defeats before the Town won again this time 2-0 on Boxing Day 1932. They didn't have long to wait for the next victory, just 2 years in fact when George Martin, George Stephenson and William "Buster" Brown all scored in a 3-1 win.

Last time: 21 October 2003 Lost 3-6 (OG, Paul Hughes, Adrian Forbes)

#### **Sat 16 Apr MK Dons (H)**

Wimbledon, under their new identity of Milton Keynes Dons, come to Kenilworth Road for just the seventh league meeting. There's an exact average of 2 goals a game, although the Hatters have a 7-5 lead with 2 wins, 3 draws and just 1 defeat. The first match came in 1986/87, and it ended goalless, but Luton took maximum points the next season with a 2-0 win courtesy of goals from Brian Stein and Danny Wilson (the current MK Dons manager!). Draws followed in the next two meetings, 2-2 (Kingsley Black and an OG) in 88/89 and 1-1 (Roy Wegerle penalty) in 89/90. Wimbledon earned their only win April 1991.

Last time: 4 April 1992 Won 2-1 (Imre Varadi, David Preece)

#### **Sat 23 Apr Wrexham (A)**

One win and three draws from 14 matches is not a particularly good record for visits to the Racecourse Ground. Luton have managed only 9 goals in these fixtures, and have conceded 23. The home side won three of the first four fixtures by a 2-0 scoreline, and won again by 2 goals, this time 3-1 in December 1979. After a goal-less draw in March 1981 Luton recorded their only win at Wrexham in October of the same year. Mal Donaghy and Steve White scored in a 2-0 victory that was one of nine away wins in their Championship winning

season! 5 defeats and only 1 draw have followed since that victory, with the solitary point coming courtesy of a Ray McKinnon goal.

Last time: 24 April 2004 Lost 1-2 (Steve Howard)

#### **Sat 30 Apr Brentford (H)**

Just where do you start with the information for this fixture, where there has been 31 previous meetings. Luton have 21 victories, with draws and defeats both standing at 5. The Hatters have hit 65 goals whilst only conceding 31. Luton went on an amazing 17 game unbeaten run, before Brentford finally won, 2-0, in October 1951. The first three fixtures in the 1920s saw Luton improve by a goal each time, starting with a 2-0 win in December 1920. Further victories included a 3-1, 4-2, 5-2, and 3-0, but possibly the most amazing match ended in a draw. The date was February 1 1933 and the match ended 5-5, the only time that Luton have drawn a league match by this scoreline! There were only two goal scorers that day though, as Arthur Nelson scored a brace and Tommy Tait hit a hat-trick. Interestingly that was also the only time Brentford have scored more than twice in a game at Luton!! The last draw came in 1992/93, with 4 victories and 2 defeats for the Hatters since then.

Last time: 21 Feb 2004 Won 4-1 (Emmerson Boyce, Enoch Showunmi (3))

#### **Sat 7 May Doncaster Rovers (A)**

The final of 46 league fixtures will see Luton travel to Doncaster for the first time since October 1969! They will be hoping for an improvement on that day though as the Hatters lost 0-2, as they had done 2 years previously as well. Luton had won the opening game in April 1948 by the same scoreline, thanks to Bobby Brennan netting twice. Doncaster went on a goal spree 2 years later, winning 5-2! This game was certainly a one off for Doncaster as they've only managed 2 goals twice in the 7 games since! Luton have scored 3 on two occasions, firstly in November 1953 when Doncaster managed one themselves. The following season the Hatters notched the three without reply, Peter MacEwan notched a brace and Jim Pemberton the other, in a match that was also the final one of the season! Oh, and Luton promotion with that win!!

Last time: 11 Oct 1969 Lost 0-2

*Simon "Statto" Pitts*

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

## **THIS FANZINE NEEDS YOU!!**

Yet again, another issue filled with quality writing, so the secondhand dross has gone in the bin. With your help, the next issue will be as good (we've already got some good stuff in store for you), and on schedule. We plan to bring it out on Saturday April 30th, which gives a deadline for contributions of Sunday April 17th (as ever, 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.



# BEHIND THE SCENES OF STEVE HOWARD'S CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS

So Steve are you going to sign this new contract or not?

My name isn't Steve ... it's Stephanie! Stephanie Howard and I AM A LADY! I cannot sign a football contract as I am a lady and ladies do not play football. It's far too rough! & we ladies are far too busy shopping and....er...doing other ladies things. I know because I AM A LADY. Stephanie Howard and I AM A LADY!

I knew I shouldn't have bought him that Little Britain DVD for Xmas!!

