

# **MAD** AS A **HATTER!**

**THE LUTON TOWN FANZINE**

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**CHAMPIONS!!!!**



Now, it's always good to beat Brentford, but isn't this reaction a bit over the top!



# **MAD AS A HATTER!**

**THE LUTON TOWN FANZINE**

**195 Cutenhoe Road, Luton, LU1 3NQ.**

**Email: keith.hayward1@ntlworld.com**

- Editor:** Keith Hayward
- Editor's PA:** Sue Hayward.
- Executives:** Phil Ivinson, Mark Ivinson, Andy Collon, Jerry Darr, Dave Kirkby, Steve Folliot, Jeff Smith, Chris Lennon, Kevin Wilson, Mark Wilson, and the Brothers Different.
- Casual help:** Steve Tyler, Steve Witchard, Adam & Peter Tice.
- Contributors:** Our thanks to Tiddles the Wonder Cat, Brian Ellis, DEB, Peter Bulkeley, Steeven Sharpe, Cliff Saunders, Simon Pitts, Billy Bradshaw, B Dave B, anyone we've carelessly forgotten to mention.
- Action Photos:** Gareth Owen
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## *Ed Lines*

Well, as we start a new season, we find ourselves subjected to the vagaries of Championship fixture planning, and the whims of the God of football (a.k.a. Sky). As a result, we find ourselves with only one Saturday home fixture in the first five weeks of the season, and yet with two appointments to perform live in front of the cameras within 7 days. For all this we are invited to pay around 25% more than last season, for a product which is, in many respects, less consumer friendly. Don't get me wrong, I am not complaining about paying more for my season ticket, as it gives me access to a better standard of football, and gives a boost to the chances of Town surviving at this higher level, but the fixture list is the downside of promotion. The issue of paying more for our football is one that might come to the fore when I am asked to pay something ludicrous at Ipswich or Southampton – for the moment Palace was better than anticipated and Stoke is going to be the best value league match that any of us have seen for many years. happy days indeed!

I might feel inclined to mention the cost of visiting Brighton, but I suspect I won't be going. Being asked to pay £44 for an 'away' season ticket on top of the £377 for a home season ticket is something I find unacceptable. That's £44 to guarantee another £400 plus going out of my bank account over the season, even though, as a shift worker, attending away games is often a bonus. Put another way, it is a surcharge of at least £2 a ticket for away games, given that Stoke will not be the only one that is pay on the day (Palace has just become a late addition). In reality, there will be only a handful of games where tickets are limited, so that could be £44 to guarantee a ticket for Brighton. A bit steep, I think you will agree.

On the field, Mike Newell has gone about the business of strengthening his squad quietly but successfully, and we now have strength in depth, perhaps the one thing we thought was lacking last season (not that it was a problem). We have gone from having one international in our line up (Enoch) to having several, and most would agree that the signings look to have shored up what might have been considered the weaker areas of our squad. Our pre-season friendlies have been up against such a variety of opposition that nothing could be read into the results, or indeed performances.

How will we do this season then? Going by some opinions not very scientifically obtained, nobody would have us as favourites for promotion or relegation, and a finish about 13th or 14th seems to be the anticipated outcome in 9 months time. That, of course, is pretty much what we were expecting this time last year – and what happened then! And this season we have a guaranteed 6 points to come from the hapless relegation favourites a few miles down the M1. Bring it on.



## Cost of living

What are you looking forward to next/this season? The W\*tf\*rd derby obviously; improved quality of football maybe; some new grounds for many people certainly; sensible ticket prices at away grounds? I think not.

Lord Justice Taylor noted in his famous report following the Hillsborough tragedy that there was a 'communal culture' of football club support and he stated also that much of the support was working class. He said that the rebuilding encouraged in his report should not be an excuse for increased ticket prices: "It should be possible to plan a price structure which suits the cheapest seats to the pockets of those presently paying to stand. At Ibrox, for example, seating is £6, standing £4." (*Final Report, para. 72*). Granted this was in 1990 but I find it shameful that the unpopular aspect of the report (enforced seating) was adhered to and actually placed on the statute books, whilst a pricing structure for working class fans was not enforced.

The year before Luton Town introduced seating at the home end I paid £6.50 to stand on the Kenilworth terrace: the following season it cost £11.50 to sit. It was no surprise to me that attendances took a nose-dive in the first all-seated season. The fact that David Kohler and Cherry Newbery denied to my face that there had been a £5.00 increase just rubbed salt into the wound. Interestingly, if you assume a constant rate of inflation of 5% (greater than the actual figure over the last twelve years) then the £6.50 rate would be £11.67, only just over the amount jumped to in one go. Of course, the Kenny End is so comfortable that I am sure all of you over there have no objection to the increase? At 5% increase from the £11.50 starting point the current price would be £20.65 which is bang on this seasons rate, but at 2% inflation (closer to reality through the 1990s) it would be only £14.58. Season tickets at Luton have gone up by about a half in just the last two seasons. We are not getting any better facilities in return but when (if?) we do get a new stadium, you can bet on another price hike: in fact if you do it might offset the increase...

In 1992 the FA led a breakaway of the 22 greediest clubs (following years of veiled threats from the so-called big five) and henceforth redistribution of wealth amongst the wider football community effectively ended. It irks me enormously to see Graham Kelly on the telly now talking as if he was always the great protector of the game. BSkyB then invested £305M for the TV rights to this 'new' competition and the FA Premier League used this money to invest in facilities for the benefit of its long-suffering supporters. At last, the downtrodden fans of football were rewarded for their loyalty with greatly improved facilities, tastier food, more comfortable seats and a real say in fixture scheduling. Okay, I made that last bit up. What actually happened to the money (and the obscene £670M that Sky paid in 1997) was that it went straight into the pockets of the players and managers and the new breed of previously unnecessary chief executives who, presumably, justified their existence by ensuring that all the lovely lolly went to the right people. Turkeys don't vote for Christmas and MPs certainly don't vote for pay cuts.

The following extract is current and taken from the FSF website [www.fsf.org.uk](http://www.fsf.org.uk):

"The Football Supporters Federation is campaigning for a fair deal for away supporters. Away supporters spend more on supporting the game than other supporters and contribute greatly to its atmosphere. Unlike home supporters, we [they] have no choice on the part of the ground we [they] go in. Unfortunately, amendments to the Football League regulations this year means that clubs may charge away supporters higher admission prices if the standard of accommodation is higher than that for home supporters.

"The FSF believes that visiting supporters should always be charged the lowest admission price applicable to home supporters no matter what area of the ground the visitors occupy. Despite massive progress over the last ten years, away supporters still feel annoyed at some of the pricing structures and moves made by certain clubs to get around the current regulations.

"One such club is Oldham Athletic. Please read what has been posted on their official website and I would urge ALL supporters to boycott Oldham Athletic away next season. Please write to your club and to Oldham Athletic telling them why you will be boycotting them. It's the only way that football supporters can fight to get a fair deal on admission prices."

Personally, I have been unable to find the offending material on the Oldham website so if anyone out there has a copy, do send it in.

Alan Bloore (Deputy Chair of the Football Supporters' Federation) commented "If supporters feel admission charges for certain clubs are excessive, they should complain to either the club in question, their supporters' trust (if applicable), the FSF, or the Football League. This will enable clubs to take their feedback into account when deciding pricing plans for future seasons."

If Mr. Bloore believes this will happen then I think he is living in cloud cuckoo land. Football clubs do not set prices in consultation with fans and never will, we are held over a barrel and will keep getting it in the rectum until our loyalty finally runs out and we stop going. At present football is fashionable enough to replace the retiring supporters with nouveau riche and nouveau interested types but for how long? I have written to both Brighton & Hove Albion (who replied) and Swindon Town (who did not) about their pricing for away fans. The Brighton chairman said that it was his temporary ground's lack of advertising space that demanded he have higher gate receipts which is understandable but regrettable. Cherry Newbery actually printed an extract of his reply in the programme. I personally boycotted both games, in fact I have not been to Swindon for some years due to their disgusting policy of forcing away fans to sit in a cramped corner of the main stand at £23 whilst a lovely open end sits empty (£13 I believe it was last time I used it).

Below is a table showing what football clubs charged last year, remembering that for away fans the price should have been equivalent to the price in home sections of equivalent standard. The data is from the FSF website and though my 'The Supporters' Guide to Premier and Football League Clubs 2005' disagrees in some areas: the average is about right.

CLUB	AVERAGE ADULT TICKET	ADULT PRICE RANGE
Brighton & Hove Albion	£21.50	£21~22
Burnley	£18	£16~20
Cardiff City	£20.50	£14~27
Coventry City	£18.50	£15~22
Crewe Alexandra	£16	£15~17
Crystal Palace	£35	£30~40
Derby County	£24.50	£17~32
Hull City	£17	£15~19
Ipswich Town	£32.25	£20.00~£44.50



Leeds United	£21.50	£13~30
Leicester City	£30.50	£22~39
Luton Town	£14.25	£10~£18.50
Millwall	£21.50	£17~26
Norwich City	£28	£23~33
Plymouth Argyle	£18.50	£15~22
Preston North End	£17.50	£17~18
Queens Park Rangers	£25	£22~28
Reading	£17.50	£16~19
Sheffield United	£21	£18~24
Sheffield Wednesday	£19	£16~22
Southampton	£31	£25~37
Stoke City	£22	£19~25
Watford	£17	£12~22
Wolverhampton Wanderers	£23	£20~26

So I am looking forward to Crewe, Burnley, Preston, W\*tf\*rd and Plymouth but the rest will be trying to screw us no doubt. Coventry have a new ground so that will be higher; the three relegated clubs cannot charge as much as they did in the Premier but they will be near the top I am sure; and the three promoted teams will increase prices to compensate anyway.

So you may wonder why I bother going at all. Well this season will be testing my patience and my pocket. I will certainly not be attending as many games as I usually do and it will be interesting to see if my attraction remains when I will be finding other things to do on many Saturdays. The crux is not whether I can afford to go (that is, do I actually have enough folding stuff in my pocket) because as a single man with a good job I can. The crux is whether I can justify spending that much money on a product when you have no guarantee as to the quality of the product you will receive, and when I was paying less than a third for exactly the same product fifteen years ago. For £20 I can go to the cinema three times at least (both choice and comfort have improved in many cinemas), I can go swimming five times, I can watch cricket all day and still have cash to spend on food to eat during the match. On the other hand, a good theatre ticket is the same price (more in London maybe) for about the same duration of entertainment but who goes to the theatre every week? Comparing it with non-entertainment commodities, £20 will not fill half my tank with fuel though it will get me a decent shirt (not being a fashion slave that is). £20 will buy more than one music CD but not a whole computer game.

So you will have to make your own minds up, as I am sure you will, but my guess is that our tremendous travelling support of recent seasons may be reduced at some fixtures. Time will tell.

Late news: I've just heard that Palace away is £20 and Stoke City have a staggering £10 happy day or something, so maybe things aren't too bad after all. I would like to think we can sell nearly all the 4980 tickets for the Potteries game. Only time will tell.

*Cliff Saunders*

## President for Life: A Good Job If You Can Get It

No, not the President for life of a corrupt third world banana republic dictatorship, but that of a football club; it is the golden chalice, the holy grail, the single greatest honour any club can bestow upon a faithful loyal servant or fan. So how does one merit such a privilege? The answer is seemingly very simple; just prepare and execute a cunning five point Baldricesque plan.

Firstly, purchase a club in mid-table mediocrity, then sell it three years later, in a similar league position, but now with £16 million of debt and no assets; every penny of the debt triumphantly achieved through inept boardroom stewardship, mismanagement and fiscal ineptitude. It is imperative however, that the debt is accomplished without seemingly spending sixpence for a coat of paint on the dilapidated crumbling old stadium, or improving facilities for the long suffering customers, bar the odd begrudged occasional new shiny Izal bog roll and a few fresh bars of soap in the khazi a couple of times a season.

Secondly, you then find a midnight rambling, two bob, two bit con man with a penchant for wearing white socks and Hush Puppies to complement his ill-fitting £25 off the peg Matalan suit to buy the club for less than a fiver; a man who history may judge, appeared determined to liquidate the business within weeks.

Thirdly, it is vitally important that you fail to do any of the most simple background checks on the perceived crooked new buyer that even a five year old with basic access to an internet search engine could manage, and you should under no circumstances appoint specialist advisors to instigate a credit rating and character search on this potential buyer and his Mysterons, an alleged fantasy consortium, whom in essence may turn out to be a dodgy tailor living near Hampstead Heath with a couple of cats, who is definitely not the marrying kind, and a hostess from a nearby Chinese takeaway.

You then ease the fears of your worried customers by issuing a statement, "We are convinced the deal struck today is the best one for the future of the club" and "I am happy to stand down knowing that I've helped to lay the foundation for what I am sure will be an exciting future for a truly wonderful club." Too bloody right it was exciting; I nearly pooped my pants on a couple of occasions as a direct consequence of the sale.

Nonetheless, if any of the loyal customers become a tad irked or even remotely wary of the handpicked new owner's intentions; simply issue another statement, blaming them for the club's demise. Why not say something along the lines of "No-one, but no-one, could have organised the deal I managed to arrange. I have told you all that your club is safe. What more do you want; Blood?" and then follow it up with this timeless piece of advice to the most loyal of customers "It distresses me when, after all I've done for supporters such as you, you now say you are considering not renewing your season tickets. This is not an intelligent way to keep the club going up or encourage more supporters. If, as you say, you love your club, then I suggest you set out to encourage every supporter you can to get their season tickets now".

Hmm, good advice from a man who almost single-handedly sold a hundred years of history and thousands of dreams down the River Lea through crass incompetence and all for the price of a pint of Lager, a packet of crisps, and a bag of nuts.

Fourthly, for the marzipan, just before the final icing on the cake; purchase a slice of land close to a motorway junction on behalf of a club, but place the deeds of ownership into a separate holding company. Thus, when the club, rather like a Phoenix rising from the ashes, finally manages to extricate itself from the evil clutches of a madman and the perils of administrative



receivership, your family can hold any potential development to ransom; demanding during the long protracted negotiations, an extortionate 300% profit for the transfer of ownership. Obviously statements such as "Its (the club) future is now secure and will always be on the site at the motorway junction, which I bought for that purpose" are meaningless; instead it seems to me that the stadium will only be built on the motorway site at a prohibitive cost that will further inhibit the club's progress.

Never mind, because fifthly, you have made repeated promises to provide your customers with a brand spanking new stadium to watch their football from; I once dreamt of an important person telling a supporters forum that he would personally show us all to our seats in the new ground. In this same hallucinatory dream sequence I even saw plans of a new stadium, albeit uncannily and remarkably similar to that of Darlington's posted on an official web-site; in fact, I dreamt that we will all be watching Championship football from the new stadium this August; after all, just ask one of the merry men, a personal representative to issue a statement, "We can now pencil a date in our diaries, by which time we have a realistic chance of being in our new purpose-built stadium. That date is the start of the 2005-06 season".

Call me blinkered, but the only problem I can foresee with this ingenious business plan is that nobody had officially applied to the local council and the relevant Government departments for planning permission, or the power company EDS about moving any pesky pylons stuck right in the middle of the land, let alone even appointing a firm of architects to draw up plans to be submitted for the stadium and its enabling development. There also appears to be some hiccup with the stadium builders, Wyatt Earp and Sons, Cowboy Builders of Disrepute; they haven't even turned up on site yet, perhaps they are finishing a couple of extensions, relaying the tarmac on a nearby Formula 1 racetrack or block paving a few more driveways before commencing the work.

We desperately need the land to secure the club's future, President for Life but you're havin' a laugh; sling your hook matey, we don't want or need you near our club; you have caused enough damage already. Will somebody please rid us of this meddlesome pest?

*Disclaimer: The characters and events portrayed in this story are purely fictional; any resemblance to any persons living or nearly dead is purely coincidental; the background of which is based solely on a series of recurring nightmares covering a period of many years. The author is now receiving stress counselling subsequent to hearing strange voices and having frequent delusional visions and is actively seeking expert medical help for alcohol and drug related issues*

TtWC

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

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**What have Tony Naylor, Paul Gascoigne, several Wolves reserve players and Patrick Vieira got in common? The answer is that they were all players who were very nearly signed by Luton during the pre-season campaign. Another summer went by with us being linked with many players, but not actually signing them. I can now exclusively reveal the stories behind the signings that never were.**

**Damiano Mitra** – At one point in the summer, it seemed that Newell would pull off a coup in bringing Mexican striker Damiano Mitra to Kenilworth Road; it appeared he would beat a host of Mexican clubs and Hull City to sign him. In the end, however, it wasn't to be. Damiano pulled out of the move when he actually visited Luton, and he saw that there were not enough Mexican places in the town and no Mexican players at the club, so he thought he would find it difficult to settle in. As for where he is now, I don't know and I don't care.

**Martin Devaney** – Last season, someone somewhere started a rumour that Newell was interested in signing Martin Devaney. It just so happens that Mike heard this rumour and had a look at Devaney when playing for Cheltenham. It's a good job that he did as well, because he found out that he was useless, and not a patch on Underwood. He wasn't even a patch on Paul Hughes – that's how bad he was. Hull City also had a look at him, but as he plays in the same position as Elliott, Stuart put his foot down and stopped the move. In the end, Devaney turned down an offer from Hertford Town and ended up where all useless players end up – at W\*\*\*f\*\*d.

**Izale McLeod** – Within a year, Mike Newell has changed from a manager who has a minimal number of strikers in his squad to a manager who wants about 10 strikers in his squad. McLeod was a target, and we were very close to signing him on a £300,000 deal (fighting off competition from Hull). However, part of the deal was for us to play a friendly with Franchise, and once the fans heard about this, they put their foot down, so in a sense the fans blocked the transfer of Izale McLeod to Luton. So, if we struggle for goals next season, then perhaps those fans (including me) who signed the petition and e-mailed the club about the friendly will feel guilty. Well, just the gullible ones who believe me.

**Mark Lynch** - No, I've never heard of him either, but Newell was after him, and once again he was up against Hull City. This time, however, Peter Taylor outwitted him, and Newell had to look elsewhere. We shouldn't be too harsh on Newell for this mistake though. How was he supposed to know that Hull were actually going to sign someone?

**Nick Barmby** – Newell was fairly confident about signing Carlos Edwards, but he thought he should earmark another midfielder just in case the deal fell through. The midfielder he chose was Nick Barmby, until Brian Stein reminded him of Barmby's performances against us last season and said we'd be better off with Nick Owen. Luckily, the Edwards transfer went through, and Newell was saved an embarrassment. This also left a clear path for Peter Taylor. He negotiated a deal to sign Nick Barmby, then he suddenly remembered that he already signed him last year.

**Shaun Wright-Phillips** – At the start of last season, Newell told his scouts to track



Shaun's progress, so he'd be able to sign him this summer, and offload either Hughes, Brkovic or Mansell to Man City. Brko heard about this, and it spurred him on to great things, as we all saw last season, making Newell and the Luton faithful realise we didn't need Wright-Phillips when we had the Croatian Sensation. So Shaun went to Chelsea and we kept Brko, and everyone was happy.

**Lee Bowyer** – With Bowyer being in disgrace after the scenes at St. James Park last season, he wanted to move away to boost his hopes of playing at Germany 2006. Newell was prepared to offer him a lifeline to help him, before Kevin Nicholls stepped in. Nico told Newell about a fight he'd had with Bowyer in their Charlton days. Nicholls won the fight by a country mile, hence the appearance of Lee Bowyer's face, and Nico said there was still bad blood between them. So Newell had to choose between Bowyer or Nico. No competition, is it? Hull were going to hijack the move, before Failure realised he already had one useless ex-England midfielder, and he didn't need another.

**Peter Crouch** – At one point in the summer, Mike Newell was scared that Vine would fail his medical, so he put in a bid for Peter Crouch in case Vine didn't sign. Harry Redknapp accepted the offer, but Crouch remembered the low tunnel from five years ago, and he didn't want to take his head off on the tunnel, which would literally make him a headless chicken. Mike Newell had already had enough of Lee "Headless Chicken" Mansell, and he didn't want another one. Again, we were lucky that Vine passed his medical, and in the end Crouch went to Liverpool.

**Patrick Vieira** – Bill Tomlins was contacted by Vieira's agent halfway through the summer, and he asked whether Luton could offer better terms than Juve for Vieira. The answer was a definite yes, and it looked like Vieira would be on his way to Kenilworth Road. However, the move hit a snag when it was revealed that none of the Luton players or backroom staff spoke any French, and Vieira had forgotten all the English he had learned. He didn't need English when he had been negotiating with an Italian club and playing for a French club. The original deal with Juventus went through as a result, and Newell was left wondering what might have been.

**Carl Emberson** – The Grays Athletic benchwarmer, who is still a popular figure with the Kenilworth Road faithful, was very nearly a Town player again. It appears that Carl "Safe Hands" Emberson was recommended to Newell by a mystery agent, who phoned Michael one day. With Mansell at Oxford and Hughes constantly injured, Mike thought that he might need someone to amuse the opposition enough to lull them into a false sense of security. However, the move broke down when the call was traced back to W\*\*f\*d FC – Betty Boothroyd realised it was the only chance they had against us next year.

So, as you can see, many top stars were linked with us but once again the transfers never went through. Our haul was nonetheless good, with Edwards, Morgan, Heikkinen and Vine all signing. As for predictions for the new season, I think Vieira and Crouch will flop, Bowyer will end up in prison, Hull will still be a one man team, Devaney will take W\*\*f\*d back to where they belong and Embo will end up with a team a few divisions lower than AFC Wimbledon. As for the mighty Hatters, I predict that Howard will score 50, Morgan, Nicholls and Underwood will be at Germany 2006, Newell will be tipped to replace Tony Blair as the Prime Minister and Paul Hughes will finish the season on the treatment table. To be honest, I'm only confident about one of these predictions happening, but you read them here first.

## IT'S ALL GONE QUIET OVER THERE

I know I am a grumpy old git and always look on the dull side of life but I am really worried about the long-term future of the club – again. We are now many months into Bill Tomlin's "news in a couple of weeks" and a year into the negotiations over the transfer of land at Junction 10. The club has gone into "Ostrich mode", which usually means things are bad. Who has been funding the club's estimated £150,000 losses each month? It can only be people who will be making money from the development of Junction 10. How long will they continue to invest such sums before they give up and walk away? I cannot see promotion making much difference to the operating losses, as wages will increase to consume any extra income. Add to that the large repair and maintenance costs associated with staying at the present stadium for more than a couple of years and the future looks bleak. A new stadium is critical for the club's survival. Junction 10 is the only real option that can be built in the next few years.

The Watson-Challis family are the controlling owners of the land at Junction 10 and are negotiating to transfer the land to a development company, which will build the Stadium. This will be financed by other business ventures on the same site. Mike Watson-Challis has always claimed to have the best interests of the club at heart. He has been associated with club for many years and owned it for a short time. He and his adviser Eric Hood, in a meeting with fans, told them that their five-year plan was on track and there were no problems. The truth was that they had been trying to sell the club for months. A few months later they sold the club to Gurney. This was disastrous for the club and nearly led to its demise. It's true that Mr Watson-Challis was involved in its eventual rescue but one can only speculate as to the reason Gurney was chosen over the current owners, who were also trying to buy the club.

So why are negotiations to transfer the land going so slowly? It is commonly thought that Junction 10 development would be allowed only if a new stadium for the club were included. However, the Luton Local Plan states "...development should, **if possible**, include a new stadium for the use of Luton Town Football Club." Not the cast iron guarantee that I thought the club had. This leads to the possibility of other uses for the site. We know that land is desperately needed for housing and to cope with the expected expansion of the airport. This is planned to grow to over twice its size (equal to Gatwick) in the medium term and possibly to Heathrow size in the long term. Land for airport support services will become increasingly valuable. One would think the club's Life President would be doing all he can to safeguard its future.

However, if the rumours are correct, then the Watson-Challis family apparently think the value of Junction 10 has doubled over the last 6 months. I understand that they want a fair price for the land but surely they have the best interests of the club at heart. They wouldn't do a Gurney.

It would make the situation much clearer if we had the answer to following questions:

- What's holding up the transfer of the Junction 10 site?
- Who is funding the losses of the Club at the moment?
- How long can they/will they carry on funding the losses?
- If the Junction 10 deal fails, how long will "Plan B" take to build a stadium?
- Who/what will finance the "Plan B" stadium?
- How long can the club stay at Kenilworth road and what costs will be incurred in staying there?
- If the club did not need Junction 10 what could the land be used for?

Come on Bill, tell us what's going on. We know you are doing your best but we deserve to know.



## Great Expectations

The month of July annually presents four and a half weeks of that rare sensation for football fans around the country – optimism. Loyal supporters experience the feeling that yes, this season it is going to be our year. For instance, in England's leading division Tottenham fans rush to purchase their figure hugging, insert long-name across the back, replica shirts as another stream of youngsters are poached from the Football League and several European imports flood into White Hart Lane – the rest of us have never heard of them. The cries from the less successful side of North London in recent years has been about waiting for their impressive cast of youths to come through the system, such as Gary Doherty... Despite this the Spurs faithful are convinced this will be the dawning of a new era as Vieira leaves Highbury and Huddlestone enters Tottenham.

Not only is it the season for Martin Jol and Spurs, but also the two pretenders on Merseyside (not Brian Little and Jason McAteer). Buoyed by the freak European Cup triumph over Milan and subsequent success against North Wales' finest, Total Network Solutions, King Rafa will surely return Liverpool to the Premiership's elite. Won't he? Of course – Gerrard has signed a new contract (he was just rooming with John Terry over the early part of the summer) and England's new Ian Ormondroyd, Peter Crouch, has arrived for a princely sum. Everton threatened to steal their neighbour's thunder, until the Azzurri fell asleep for forty-five minutes, but hope still springs eternal for the Toffeemen. 'Moyes knows what he's doing', they say. 'If Crouch is worth £7m Beattie must be worth... never mind that Cahill scores goals for fun and we've just signed... Pistone... again.'

Such thoughts surge throughout all other Premiership clubs, 'this has to be our year.' It is not just at this heady level though that for one month of the year all who follow any team can hope, dream and even expect that this of all seasons, 2005/06, everything will come good: After last year's near miss of being elevated to the top flight Derby County supporters believe they could move back to 'where we belong.' A young new manager at the helm in Phil Brown will surely equate to similar success experienced by his previous employers at Bolton. Won't it? 'He just needs to carry on George Burley's good work', comment Rams followers. 'No problems. Burley only signed up all the decent players the season before and got them playing like Ipswich. If Brown takes the blueprint laid by Big Sam at Bolton we'll be playing like Bolton in minutes... Great.'

Talking of new managers, our friends in Hertfordshire have perhaps the most embryonic of them all in a guy surely plucked from a maternity ward in the Midlands. Adrian Boothroyd has set pulses racing around Vicarage Road with plenty of ambitious acquisitions. Junior, a roaring success in the previous season spent leading Rotherham's potent strike force. But it doesn't end there, W\*tf\*rd will surely break all Championship scoring records as Marlon King signs up (the value of BMW's in the area has sadly plummeted after King's previous record behind the steering wheel of one) and the Hornets faithful learn that 'Sir' Les Ferdinand himself is training with the club sniffing around for a years contract. Surely now a bright future beckons for W\*tf\*rd's finest?

Perhaps the Championship side, however with the most unbridled joy in July is Reading. Despite a post Christmas collapse last season, Chairman Madejski has decided to loosen the purse-strings again and in come a collection of players including Leroy Lita at a cool £1m from Bristol City. The happiness in Berkshire was temporarily interrupted as Dean Morgan departed the club to finer, greener pastures new in Bedfordshire.

This brings us to our own beloved side – League One Champions Luton Town (how nice being able to say that?!). What should Hatter's fans expect this year? Promotion, again? Play-offs? Safety? Relegation? Being a Luton fan of late has been anything but dull. Only recently were we in the basement league. This, coupled with the ill-fated yet short Gurney era, has reminded supporters to cherish the good-times but not get carried away with success. Last season was fantastic. We have a good team, who like to play attractive football yet individuals who at the same time are not afraid to play an aggressive game when necessary. The signings we have made I don't know much about (apart from Rowan Vine), but that's Mike Newell's job and after his own personal performance last year his judgement deserves to be trusted. I believe this season we can certainly hold our own at this level, depending on our relatively small squad staying injury free. My hopes and dreams would be the play-offs and beyond – perhaps that's stupid expectation. But like all supporters, as the sun shines in July I'm an optimist. After all, although I'm still not entirely convinced that it happened, didn't Watford play in the Premiership a few years back? Anything can happen in a game where only a few can claim to have a successful season amongst the many with glory in their sights, at this the silly season for fans.

*Steeven Sharpe*

## IN AT THE DEEP END

What a start! Two of last season's Premiership teams and then Leeds. The first 3 games are always crucial to any season and the fixture list hasn't been kind to us Hatters. Palace (away), Southampton (at home) and then Leeds (home).

Compare it to the other two promoted clubs:

Hull City: QPR (h), Sheffield Wednesday (a), Wolves (a)

Sheffield Wednesday: Stoke City (a), Hull City (h), Southampton (h)

We've definitely got the worst start. 3 games with 3 defeats could spell disaster as our Division One Champions confidence could disappear. Thoughts could turn to how difficult this division is, and how we aren't equipped to deal with it. And if those defeats aren't by narrow margins and we're down the wrong end of the table, it could take months before any kind of recovery form could show.

However, enough of this doom and gloom – it works both ways. Imagine, we win one of the first three games (or even two or all three). The burst of confidence by beating any of these teams would spear our players on and our form from last season would, I'm sure, continue.

After all, this is the first season that I can remember, in ages, where the first team taking the field for the majority of the season, will be the same team from last year. And as that team stormed its division, we have every reason to be confident. Just keep your fingers crossed for the first three games!

*B.Dave.B.*



## And the loser is...

Have you ever wondered what actually happens at the press conferences when new managers are unveiled? Neither have I, but last season I was able to sneak in to such a press conference at Vicarage Road, where some bloke who was grabbed off the street at the last possible moment was appointed as the new manager. At first, it wasn't a pleasure to be at Vicarage Road, but as the conference descended into chaos, I found the whole experience much more pleasing.

**Graham Simpson:** Thank you, everyone, for attending this press conference, which could well turn out to be a very historic press conference for this football club. Anyway, without further ado, I would like to introduce you all to the man that I have just appointed as the new manager of Watford Football Club, whom I appointed as I considered him to be the best qualified out of all the applicants. I can now announce that the new manager of Watford will step through that door (points to the door and shouts for his new employee).

*Everyone looks towards the door. An unknown man in his early 30's walks in. Everyone continues to look at the door, but no one else comes in.*

**Graham Simpson:** (awkwardly) Um, may I, erm, introduce the new manager of Watford Football Club

*The room still remains silent, except for a few people clapping unenthusiastically*

**Graham Simpson:** Well, now you'll be able to ask him some questions, that is, if he hasn't got anything to add himself? (looking at the new manager)

**New manager:** (standing up and reading from a slip of paper (unconvincingly trying to look as if he knows what he is talking about)) Hello, and thank you for that warm applause. Also, thank you Graham Simpson for giving me this opportunity. Any questions?

**Sky Sports News bloke:** Who are you?

**Graham Simpson:** (laughing unconvincingly) What kind of a question is that? Do you know nothing about football? (New manager laughs with him)

Tell them who you are Andy.

**New Manager:** (whispering) Adrian.

**Graham Simpson:** (looking around) Adrian? Where?

**New Manager:** (perturbed) Erm, I'm Adrian Boothroyd, the new manager of Watford FC.

**Sky Sports News bloke:** I see.

*Silence for a minute.*

**3 Counties bloke:** Mr Simpson, how many applicants were there for the job.

**Graham Simpson:** Ah, I'm glad you asked me that. There were only actually three candidates. There was Andy, Brian Little and Gary Johnson.

**MAAH bloke (i.e. me):** You mean the Tranmere and Yeovil bosses?

**Graham Simpson:** No, two builders from St. Albans actually.

**The Guardian bloke:** So what made you think that Mr Boothroyd was the right man for the job?

**Graham Simpson:** Well, he's got vital experience that could prove vital to this club. He's worked at Leeds, Burnley, a few other clubs and also as a cleaner at Manchester United. He's worked with Alex Ferguson, you know.

**Adrian Boothroyd:** Well, not exactly with him – he walked past me in a corridor once. I've also read part of Brian Clough's book.

*The people in the room are speechless, with looks of disbelief on their faces. GS sees this.*

**Graham Simpson:** I can see you're all taken aback by his suitability for the job. Any more questions?

**Local news bloke:** What are your future plans for the club Mr Boothroyd?

**Adrian Boothroyd:** First of all, I'm planning to reduce the wage bill at the club by selling the high earners and signing lower paid players. There will also be a restructure of the backroom staff.

**Me:** What you mean is, you're going to sell your best players and let go coaches popular with the fans and loyal servants to the club?

**Graham Simpson:** Look, any more ridiculous comments like that and I'll close this press conference, OK?

*Behind him, AB is taking notes on my remark on a piece of paper, mouthing to himself (sell best players) as he writes.*

**3 Counties bloke:** Do you think you can survive relegation next season?

**Adrian Boothroyd:** Hang on, I'm not going to be too optimistic about the future.

**Me:** Do you think you will survive relegation from League One the year after?

*My account of the press conference sadly ended at this point, as I was forcibly removed from the room on the orders of the chairman.*

**My apologies must go out to everyone who was hoping for a more complete account of the press conference, but it seems I wasn't the only people with a patchy account of that day. None of the newspapers, radio stations, sports channels etc. published a proper account either. I assure you that this is really how it happened – why trust the BBC when you can trust *Mad As A Hatter*!?**

Peter Bulkeley



## UP, UP AND AWAY!!

### 30.04.05 TOP HATTERS 2 BRENTHOOF 4

It's not too often that we get the opportunity to celebrate in style. Not for us the expectation of winning something every single season like the armchair bound glory hunters of Arse and ManUre, or the "Sod you, we can buy anyone we like" attitude of Chelski's new followers. For Hatters fans, it is not meant to be easy, which makes it all the more enjoyable when it is.

The icing had been put on the promotion cake a week earlier at Wrexham, and all that remained was to light the candles. Even Mad Dog Allen and his bunch of spoilers couldn't get in the way. Could they?

The game started with a party atmosphere throughout the sell out crowd, and the excitement spread on to the pitch, with the Croatian Sensation hitting the back of the net after just 5 minutes, converting Howard's flick on of Underwood's cross. Clearly it was going to be our day. There was one chance in the next 10 minutes, before the visitors started to make the threat look more potent. Then after 21 minutes Marlon was unable to clear Salako's cross and Sodje used his head to equalise. From this point Brentford started to dominate, and five minutes later took the lead when Deon Burton was played clear to slot the ball home. Was the party over? It certainly looked that way as Town increasingly looked unable to force there way through, and Brentford used spoiling tactics to keep us out.

In spite of the onslaught they faced, the visitors held firm, and were looking to be party-poopers until Robinson was clearly brought down in the penalty area, and Town were awarded a spot-kick. Nico stepped up, and cool as ever, put the ball in the back of the net. So, a deserved draw was on the cards.

Well, no. Mike Newell had different ideas. Vine had already replaced Feeney, and this was time for Enoch to come on in place of Brkovic. Time for the charge to begin. This had been one of the major features of the season, the fact that we scored a lot of late goals, in many cases turning draws into victories, in contrast to previous seasons where we had all too often seemed content to sit back and protect what we had, only to see it disappear because we weren't very good at doing that.

Everything was thrown at the Kenilworth End goal that Brentford were trying to protect, and in the 90th minute the endeavour was rewarded when Curtis nodded on Robinson's corner, and Enoch was first to get a head to the ball, putting it away from all of about 6 inches! Cue wild celebrations. With the celebration well under way, and 'added time' ticking away Robinson got in position to side foot home a pull back from Vine and send us even more wild than we already were.

After that there was a bit of a wait and it was time for the presentation of the inaugural League One trophy, the lap of honour, and the "traditional" pitch invasion. Thanks are due to Brentthoof for enhancing the celebratory mood. It needed a home win, but would the atmosphere have been quite as good if we had scored three goals in the first 8 minutes and then held on for the win?

KFH

### 07.04.05 DONCASTER ROVERS 3 CHAMPIONS 3

With the title wrapped up and the trophy already presented, 3,500 happy Hatters journeyed to sunny Donny; to a fan determined to celebrate the finest season in many a long year in the style befitting of Champions.

There was something of a love-in between both sets of supporters; freely mingling together before and after the match, with no hint of any kind of trouble. The match itself was somewhat spoilt by the terrible windy conditions, with the highlight being a corking 65,000 yard unstoppable shot from the Division's best player and supporters' choice as player of the year, Kevin Nicholls.

Whether the blustery conditions were due to freakish inclement weather conditions or as the result of pungent bodily chemical reactions to the copious amounts of real ale imbibed by the Fanzine editorial team on their annual end-of-season jamboree is something that only Michael "what hurricane" Fish can answer.

Despite the determined, intimidating efforts of the Robocop Riot Police to re-enact the 1984 Battle of Orgreave between the striking Miners and the South Yorkshire Constabulary, the travelling army of fans refused to rise to the unnecessary, heavy-handed provocation and partied via road and rail on a heroic journey back home to Lutonia; whence the majority, despite nursing hangovers of epic proportions and with tired hoarse voices, valiantly managed to drag themselves to the town centre the following day to bestow upon the players and club officials, a much deserved victory parade and civic reception; a truly fitting way to round off a fantastic season.

TtWC

## NEXT ISSUE...

This issue is a bit on the thin side, mainly due to the editor enjoying too much of a relaxed summer, and not getting his act together! As a result there are a couple of things being carried forward to the next issue, such as the end of season poll. Also featuring will be a selection of unsolicited stuff about all manner of things – if you can be bothered to send it in! The publication date for issue 67 will be Saturday October 22nd, and the initial deadline for that issue will be Monday 3rd October (this may be extended a bit subject to shifts). All contributions will be welcome, sent to the usual address, as featured on page 2.



## Mike Newell for England

Even the most ardent fan would dismiss this as an exaggeration. Yet do a quick check on the men who have won the Second Division Championship in the past ten years; two of them, Kevin Keegan and Peter Taylor (be it for one game), have managed England; while a third, Graham Taylor, had been a former manager. Anyone with a long enough memory may recall Alf Ramsey won Division Three South for Ipswich Town in 1957.

If managing the national side is beyond Newell's reach what kind of future does he have in management? Comparisons in football are a fruitless exercise as each individual has their own destiny laid out before them. But a look at what has happened to other managers to have won the division in the last ten years may give some glimpse into the future.

Four previous managers, Taylor, Keegan, David Moyes and Paul Sturrock went on to manage in the Premiership. Taylor as every one knows did it in successive seasons. Keegan eventually went back into The Premiership with Manchester City. Moyes moved on to Everton two years after winning the championship at Preston North End while Sturrock was not in charge of Plymouth Argyle when they collected their prize, but he did leave with a sizeable lead and a seamless hand over to his named successor Bobby Williamson before his brief spell at Southampton. Paul Jewell has stayed at Wigan Athletic in the two seasons since he won the championship, becoming the fifth League Two championship manager to join the elite.

The other five championship winners have been in constant work. Barry Fry's unique double of Second Division championship and Auto Windscreen Shield did not prevent him losing his job when Birmingham City's former boy prodigy Trevor Francis became available. Fry went on to own Peterborough United until his recent retirement.

Steve McMahon won the title with Swindon Town in 1996, nine points clear of local rivals Reading, but for the next three seasons struggled at the foot of the table before being replaced. McMahon went on to Blackpool spending four seasons there but never came close to a title; he is now managing abroad.

Stan Ternant was an unlikely championship winner with Bury, the year Luton finished third. Ternant built Bury around a firm defence – remember the 0-0 draw here at Luton in the game we needed to win – then left Bury at the start of the following season for Burnley. Bury were unsurprisingly relegated the following season; as for Ternant he twice almost took Burnley to the play-offs but was unable to improve on previous successes and two seasons later he was sacked. He failed to keep Gillingham in the Championship at the end of last season. He failed to agree terms during the close season and up to the time of writing, is the only title winning manager to be out of football.

Peter Taylor combined his job at Brighton & Hove Albion with being in charge of the England-U21s. As with McMahon and Ternant, he was unable to get off to a good start after promotion and failed to agree a new contract and moved on to Hull City.

Mark McGhee the current Brighton & Hove Albion manager has the most successful record as a Second Division manager, having won the title with Reading in 1994 and Millwall in 2001. Yet for at least two seasons he was out of football after his dismissal from Wolves.

Since Mike Newell selected his first side as a manager of Hartlepool on the 23rd November 2003 his overall record shows he has won more matches than he has lost:

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PTS
Hartlepool United	28	13	9	6	41	34	48
Luton Town	92	46	26	20	157	114	164
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>212</b>

The 2005/2006 season will be his biggest test as a manager, as he takes his team of battlers into the Championship. Success is surely going to attract the big clubs. It will be then that his loyalty will be tested by his ambition and if that club is in the North West where his family is based it may be difficult for him not to want to go after that job. If and when that scenario comes about it must not mirror what happened to other managers that brought silverware to Luton who all left the club in acrimonious circumstances. The people's manager – if the telephone voting was ever true – deserves to be allowed to go when he wants to with dignity; may that be a long time in the future.

Brian Ellis

## A DAMN GOOD START

### 06.08.05 CRYSTAL PALACE 1 TOWN 2

After what was (in my humble opinion) the most enjoyable season following Luton – and that includes the 1980s – we assembled in south London for our opening fixture against one of the three pre-season favourites for promotion. It was without a doubt a huge test for us, but also maybe a good time to play Palace... Injuries to Marlon, Coyne and Sol meant that the Town started with the first choice line-up from last season with the exception of Brill between the sticks, Heikkinen at centre-half and Morgan left-midfield covering for Unders who dropped back to left back. Also, Feeney started up front with Howard.

The game started at a high tempo, and had an entertaining look with play swinging from end to end. Luton looked impressive and everybody appeared fit and in good shape, especially Stevo who's shed a few pounds during the summer. Lots of corners but few clear chances until after 25 minutes Robbo burst into the area and was held back, but alas, Nicholls shot untypically weakly from the spot and Kiraly gathered comfortably. Immediate thought was that we'll probably regret this... However, a minute before the interval Nicholls put in a lovely cross from the right that was powerfully met with a Stevo header into the back of the net – cue one mass celebration from the healthy away following. A second almost followed moments before half time.

Palace came at us from the restart and Johnson nodded in from a corner which resulted from Brill's superb tip away from a free kick on the edge of the area. From then on the home crowd expected only one result, but with 10 minutes remaining Brko poked in from close range. Bloody brilliant! Has last season really ended...?

Steve F

PS: The only minus of the day was referee Phil Dowd's decision to book four Luton players in the second half... only one of which was justified as far as I'm concerned.



## LOOKING EAST... A BULGARIAN ODDSSEY

### 07.07.05 CSKA SOFIA (& Referee) 3 LUTON TOWN 2

Ah, Bulgaria. The land that spawned Luton Town legend Bontcho Guenchev. The land where "yes" means "no" and vice versa – you have to shake your head if you mean "yes" and nod your head if you mean "no" – heaven knows how this came to be, but this provided much entertainment during our stay, for us and the locals alike! The land where you need to be hungry if you go drinking, because an order for 3 beers can on occasion produce 3 portions of chicken and potatoes! The land where chicken often tastes suspiciously like pork! The land where the No 1 tasty snack is sunflower seeds, yep I kid you not!

When this trip was announced there was no way that a desperado like me was going to miss it. After hearing the ludicrous price Town On Tour were going to charge, the four of us set about booking the trip independently for half the price.

I flew with BA from Heathrow on the Sunday morning, arriving in Sofia at 2pm. After meeting up with Bungle, and a couple of hours' siesta, with the help of the CSKA-supporting hotel doorman, we found ourselves at a bar near the ground to sample the local p\*\*\*. Not too bad. I was damned if I was going to spend 4 days drinking Carlsberg or Heineken, so it did the job.

After paying the disgusting price of 40 pence to enter the Bulgarska Armija ground, we had a look round to see how many Hatters were about. A disappointing 30-odd. Now, had the Town On Tour proposed trip been a lot cheaper... did they really need to stay at The Sheraton?

We stood at the back of a seating area that housed most of the travelling Luton hordes to enjoy the match. The crowd looked to be about 4,000, and they weren't in bad voice. The game was anything but friendly; the feelgood factor gradually evaporated with every foul on a Luton player that blatantly wasn't given, as it became clear that the tournament was being contrived to ensure that the 2 Sofia sides contested the final. Nico was the first of a string of Luton players to be yellow-carded; his booking – for a rash challenge – was borne out of frustration with the 'officials'. And little wonder. There was Enoch's run and disallowed goal (sadly his only meaningful contribution before Newell put him out of his misery – to rapturous applause from the home crowd – they had loved his knack of tackling himself on the ball) being pegged back for offside when it was so obvious that he started his run from behind the defender, the blatant wrestling of Howard to the ground – the ref played 'advantage' (Ho Ho), then booked the Sofia player a couple of minutes later, and the fact that not a single foul was given against Sofia until well into the last 10 minutes of the game when the score was 3-1! The penalty for their second goal was highly iffy as well, to say the least.

As for Luton's performance, they started off very slowly, but the back four put in a very competent performance against wave after wave of attack, and Luton

gradually got into the game and put on a good display. Considering it was the players' first match since May, their fitness was not lacking at all.

We left the ground only slightly peeved at the fixed result, and soon got back on the local sauce which was growing on us by the pint. We quite enjoyed our 4-day stay, though Sofia is a bit lacking in sights and entertainment, although the gentlemen's establishments provided us with late-night fun; we even had a 'club' on the top floor of our hotel, so it was rude not to... Sofia still looks like an old eastern European city, one that is trying to modernise, but is lagging way behind Berlin. The pavement coffee culture has reached here now, but there is still the feeling of a city of past grandeur that could do with a spot of bulldozing.

*Objét*

### 17.07.05 APEP 1 TOWN 1

This third place play-off in the Playstation 2 Trophy, was the result of the planned final meeting of the two local teams, CSKA and Lokomotiv, to take place later in the evening (CSKA won 1-0, for the record). A warm up match, if you like – although this was hardly a fitting term on a day when temperatures had hit the lower to mid 30s! The Town side was made up mainly of players who had missed out on the big match on Sunday against CSKA, and therefore meant it was a weakened side who were taking on the Cypriot second division runners-up. The heat, and the enthusiasm of the Cypriot side meant that for much of the match the Town side were made to struggle for possession, and chances were few and far between. Even when APEP had a man sent off, after a late challenge (it probably started in their Sunday game, when they had two players red-carded), it did little to calm them down.

Fortunately, the second half saw an improved Town performance after a couple of judicious substitutions, and a late equaliser came after a low cross from Calvin Andrew met Steve Robinson in front of goal. As this was a third place match, with a trophy at stake, this meant a penalty shoot-out. Nico stepped up to lead the way, and missed... clearly this was a ploy to show APEP how to take penalties, and in that respect it worked – and probably filled Nico's missed penalty quota for the season! Whilst Nico was the only miss for the Town, the true hero was Dean Brill with two saves and one very near miss (a ball he partly blocked but just beat him to the line). So, Nico collected the trophy, showed it rather sheepishly to the assembled throng of Town fans, and it was all over. As we left the stadium was getting busier with locals furnishing their seats and preparing their Sunflower seed supplies for the evening ahead – it has to be seen to be believed.

In closing, I would like to say thanks to the club for undertaking something different for the pre-season, and giving us an excuse to visit Sofia.

KFH



## When Billy phoned Kevin...

I managed to have a few words with Lutonian and Leeds United boss Kevin Blackwell before the start of the season. Here's his thoughts on Luton, Leeds, Springy and penalty saves...

**Billy:** Kevin, are you looking forward to managing a team against your hometown club?

**Kevin:** I am. It's my first time back at Kenilworth Road as a coach or a manager. It's always nice to come back to the town.

**Billy:** Are you a Luton fan then? Did you go to games as a child?

**Kevin:** I went several times as a kid, yeah, when Harry Haslam and then when Pleaty was manager. They played some decent football then. I always look out for Luton's results, but I never played past schoolboy level for Luton.

**Billy:** What school did you go to Kevin?

**Kevin:** Cardinal Newman.

**Billy:** Ahh, me too. What house where you in? Can you remember!

**Kevin:** *(laughing)* I can, it was Griffin, no, Godfrey House. The one on the ground floor. Yeah, Godfrey, that's the one! *(For those of you who aren't good Catholic boys and girls, Cardinal Newman in Luton is split up into eight houses; each named after a catholic Cardinal)*

**Billy:** Have you settled into the Leeds job now after a transitional first year?

**Kevin:** I've overseen a big personnel change, we've had lots of financial problems, but we've come through the tunnel. Pre season has gone well, we went to Norway and we're now reaping the benefits of all that hard work.

**Billy:** How impressed were you with Luton's progress last season?

**Kevin:** I was extremely impressed. I watched them five or six times last season. They work tremendously hard as a unit and gelled quickly, playing some tremendous stuff.

**Billy:** Any players that impressed you?

**Kevin:** The whole unit and its work ethic shone through to be honest. No one player particularly stood out, they were strong all over the pitch.

**Billy:** And Mike Newell has done extremely well...

**Kevin:** I've been very impressed with his attitude and the tremendous spirit that Luton has. He came in when the club was in turmoil; he won a phone vote didn't he? It just shows that sometimes the fans get it right, you just have to trust them.

**Billy:** How is Matthew Spring getting on? Will we be seeing him at Kenilworth Road?

**Kevin:** Springy's a decent player, he had various injuries and last year was one of rehabilitation for him. But he's done his pre season, and he's now showing the form that we bought him for.

**Billy:** So we'll be seeing him against us a week Saturday?

**Kevin:** He's got a very good chance of playing.

**Billy:** Finally, I've got a bone to pick with you Kevin. You saved my penalty at the St. Joseph's summer fete in about 1983...

**Kevin:** *(laughing)* Sorry mate. Hope you recovered!

*Billy Bradshaw*

## 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!



# STAT ATTACK

## Sat 6th Aug Crystal Palace (A)

It's Championship football again for the Hatters, but it's a tricky tie for Luton as they have only ever won twice at Palace in 23 attempts! It's 4 defeats and 4 draws since Luton's last win in October 1973. Peter Anderson and Barry Butlin were the scorers in a 2-0 win. The only other victory came in January 1937, when Luton were convincing 4-0 winners. This win came just a year after their biggest defeat in this fixture, 5-1! Luton have scored 29 goals, and conceded 53. There have been some high scoring draws, 3-3 in both 1977/78 and the promotion season of 1981/82 when Raddy Antic, David Moss (penalty), and Brian Stein scored the goals.

Last time: 19th March 1996 Lost 0-2

## Tues 9th Aug Southampton (H)

The honours are fairly even in this fixture with Luton having won 10, losing 8 and 9 draws. With 56 goals scored to 44 conceded, 100 goals in 27 games means this fixture is normally quite entertaining! There were two fixtures during 1991 with Luton losing 4-3 in 90/91 but winning 2-1 the following September. Amazingly Luton have smashed 6 goals past Southampton twice, and even managed 7 against former England keeper Peter Shilton!! The first 6 goal feast came in 38/39, with the visitors replying twice. In 1988/89 the Hatters managed the feat again, with the visitors only replying once. Kingsley Black & Ricky Hill scored, with Mick Harford and Roy Wegerle both netting twice. They went one better in October 1985 with the scorers including a birthday hat-trick for Brian Stein! Luton haven't failed to score in this fixture in 18 games, and 55 years!

Last time: 4th September 1991 Won 2-1 (Phil Gray, Richard Harvey)

## Sat 13th Aug Leeds United (H)

As with Southampton you have to go back to the 1991/92 season, and Luton's last venture in the top flight, to find a league fixture against these sides. That year saw one of only three defeats for the Hatters when Leeds have visited Kenilworth Road. The first ever fixture saw the Hatters hit six with only one in reply. Unfortunately since then goals have been less forthcoming. In fact Luton have only scored more than 2 goals on one occasion since! In November 1961 Jim Fleming and a brace from Roly Legate secured a 3-2 win. Leeds only other victories came in 1950/51 and 1959/60. There have been some long gaps between these fixtures, with the two sides not meeting between 1962/63 and 1974/75 and then not again until 1990/91. And as already mentioned you have to go back 14 years for the last meeting!

Last time: 7th December 1991 Lost 0-2

## Sat 20th Aug Stoke City (A)

It's actually nearly 5 years since these two sides met in the League, but it's worth remembering as the Hatters ran out 3-1 winners at the Britannia Stadium! Two rare goals for

Peter Thomson and a Paul McLaren strike gave Luton maximum points. This was one of only four victories that the Town have enjoyed in Stoke. Back in December 1983 Paul Walsh scored a hat-trick as Luton won 4-2, Ray Daniel netted the other. The Hatters had scored 4 goals in the previous meeting, in an amazing 8 goal thriller! Walsh had also found the net that day, with Mal Donaghy and a Brian Stein brace the other goalscorers. In a never to be repeated feat Luton managed 4 goals in their third consecutive trip to Stoke, this time without reply by the home side. Mick Harford scored twice, with Emeka Nwajobi and David Moss the scorers. Stoke's biggest win came in November 1995 when Luton's youngest ever league side lost 5-0.

Last time: 2nd December 2000 Won 3-1 (Peter Thomson (2), Paul McLaren)

## Sat 27th Aug Leicester City (A)

It's 10 seasons since the Hatters last made the trip to Leicester, when former City player Tony Thorpe netted the only goal in a 1-1 draw. In fact the draw is the most common result in this fixture, with 12 of the 26 matches finishing this way. Luton have won only 3 of the encounters, and strangely they were consecutive matches in the 79/80, 81/82 and 83/84 seasons. The run started in September 1979 when David Moss scored twice (including a penalty) and Ricky Hill netted the other in a 3-1 win. Steve White scored twice in the next victory, and in the most convincing victory Frankie Bunn, Moss and Hill scored without reply. Luton scored three times in both 1951/52 and 1959/60 but on these occasions the home side managed the same number of goals as the points were shared. Having waited nearly 22 years to the day (but only 6 fixtures!) since the last victory the Town fans will be hoping their first trip to the Walkers Stadium is a victorious one!

Last time: 3rd February 1996 Drew 1-1 (Tony Thorpe)

## Mon 29th Aug Millwall (H)

Although Luton have the upper hand in this fixture, 11 victories to 9, it's Millwall who have had the best of the recent meetings with 5 consecutive victories! The Hatters have only failed to score in 7 of the 33 encounters, yet 4 of these have been in those 5 defeats! Likewise the visitors have only won on four other occasions! Generally a low scoring fixture Luton bucked the trend on Christmas Day 1926 by winning 6-0 (although they then lost 7-0 in the reverse fixture 2 days later!!) and also in March 1937 with a 5-0 victory. The last home win came on 17th February 1996 when a Tony Thorpe penalty was enough to secure all 3 points. A draw is still the most common result though, happening 13 times!

Last time: 8th October 2000 Lost 0-1

## Sat 10th Sept Wolverhampton Wanderers (H)

Like Millwall it's Wolves who have had the better of the recent fixtures, as it's 4 matches since the last home win. There was a 3-3 draw in 1994/95 though! You've got to go back to September 1983 for the last Luton home win against the Wanderers. Paul Walsh, Brian Stein, David Moss and Brian Horton were all on the scoresheet in a convincing 4-0 win! The Hatters had won the previous two fixtures, in 74/75 and 76/77. Ron Futcher scored a hat trick in the first of these meetings, with Jimmy Husband and Lil Fuccillo scoring in March



1977, the visitors failed to score in both of these matches! Luton won the first ever meeting, in their first season in the top flight (1955/56), with a superb 5-1 victory! Bob Morton and Gordon Turner both scored twice in this fixture, with Mike Cullen scoring the other. The visitors managed their own 5-1 win though, in 1959/60! With just 12 games played at Kenilworth Road it's the Town who have won half them!

Last time: 10th December 1995 Lost 2-3 (Scott Oakes, Dwight Marshall)

#### **Sat 17th Sept Hull City (A)**

So it's last season's League One runners up against the runaway League One Champions, and it's probably no surprise that Luton have won this fixture more often than the home side. They can be high scoring games as well, with 54 goals in just 17 matches! Luton have netted on 28 occasions, including 4-0 victories in December 1954 and the promotion season of 2001/02. Steve Howard netted a hat trick in the latter game, with Bob Morton scoring a brace in the earlier meeting. The Hatters won three times in the 1970's with a 2-0 win in 70/71, 3-1 in 73/74 and 2-1 in 75/76. The SKY cameras and a lunchtime kick-off will no doubt add some extra spice to this meeting, but the Luton players will be looking to return to winning ways on Humberside after last season's minor blip.

Last time: 23rd October 2004 Lost 0-3

#### **Fri 23rd Sept Sheffield Wednesday (H)**

It's action in front of the SKY camera's for consecutive games as Luton play another promoted side, this time at Kenilworth Road. Luton are unbeaten in 20 of the 26 fixtures when Wednesday have visited, and have only lost once in the last eight. Luton also won a match that no longer appears as an "official" fixture, as it was one of only three played before the outbreak of World War II in 1939. The Hatters won 3-0, but justice was done when the football season resumed in 1946/47 as they won 4-1! This was also their first win in this fixture, but was the start of a seven match unbeaten run at home to Wednesday. The recent defeat was in March 1989, with the last Luton victory coming at the end of the 2003/04 season. Despite finding themselves 2-0 down Luton battled back to equalise through Steve Howard, and a first career goal for Stephen O'Leary. Howard then netted the winner in the last minute!

Last time: 1st January 2005 Drew 1-1 (Steve Howard)

#### **Tues 27th Sept Preston North End (H)**

Nineteen previous meetings in this fixture, and both sides hold seven victories, with 5 draws. Luton have the slight advantage with goals, 34 to 30. The Hatters have hit 4 goals on 4 occasions, and also managed 5 in 1996/97. Luton stormed into a 4-0 half time lead, courtesy of a well taken hat-trick from David Oldfield, and a goal from Gary Waddock with Mitchell Thomas adding the fifth in the second half. The Town have only managed two goals in the three matches since that win, and have only one point as well! Luton have only failed to score twice, both 2-0 defeats, in 1962/63 and the last encounter in 1999/2000. There were convincing 4-1 wins in 1958/59 and 1961/62, the latter coming on the opening day of the season courtesy of goals from Gordon Turner, John Groves and a

brace from Alec Ashworth. Luton also recorded 4-2 wins in 1973/74 and 1980/81, with a Barry Butlin hat trick being the notable highlight from the first match.

Last time: 23rd November 1999 Lost 0-2

#### **Sat 1st Oct Cardiff City (A)**

Despite losing three of these fixtures in a row from 1978/79-1980/81 the Hatters are unbeaten in their last three league visits to Ninian Park. The Hatters finished their Championship winning season of 1981/82 in Cardiff and won that match 3-2. Brian Stein scored twice that day with Mal Donaghy netting the other, as the Bluebirds were relegated. It was nearly 18 years until the two clubs played League football again, but once more it was the Hatters who came out on top. Julian Watts, Matthew Spring and Liam George all found the net in a 3-1 win. Luton went 14 matches and over 40 years without a win in Cardiff, this run was ended in October 1977 when Lil Fucillo, Ron Futchler and Ricky Hill added to an own goal to give the visitors a 4-1 victory.

Last time: 26th August 2002 Drew 0-0

#### **Sat 15th Oct Crewe Alexandra (A)**

There is limited history between these two sides, with only 7 previous meetings at Gresty Road. Luton have only won one of these, the last visit in October 2002. A 0-0 draw in 1996/97 was Luton's only previous point from their trips to Crewe. Gerry King (1966/67), Bruce Rioch (1967/68) and Steve Howard (2002/03) are the only Luton players to have scored at Crewe. King scored in a 3-1 defeat, whilst it was only 2-1 when Rioch scored. Howard's goal was the only one of the game in October 2002 as the Hatters returned home with maximum points.

Last time: 29th October 2002 Won 1-0 (Steve Howard)

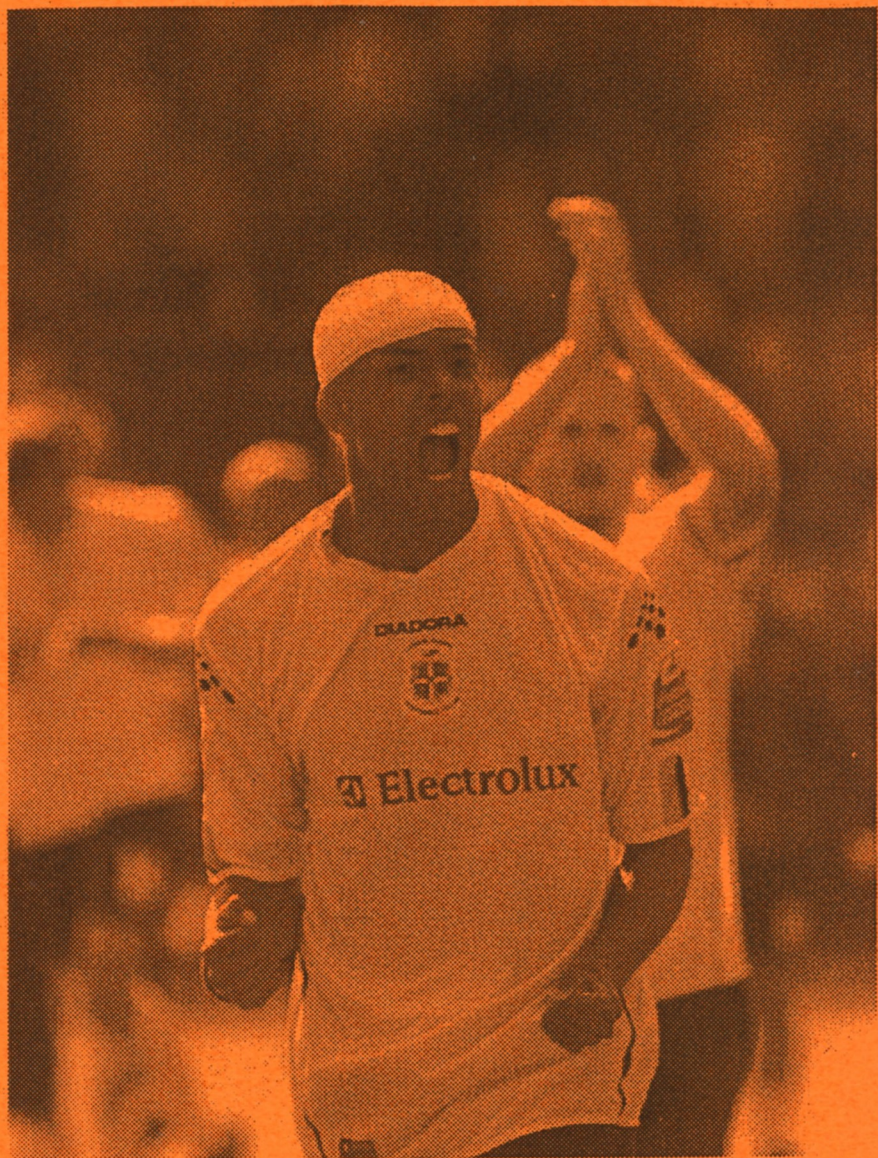
#### **Tues 18th Oct Norwich City (H)**

There is far more history between these two East Anglian sides as there have been 32 previous meetings, over the last 85 years! The Hatters won the opening four meetings, in the 1920's, and actually went seven matches before defeat in 1927/28. There have been some high scoring encounters, the most notable a 7-1 win for the Hatters in 1931/32. Tommy Tait opened the scoring, with Harry Loasby netting a hat trick, Jackie Slater bagging a brace against his former Club with Andy Rennie the other name on the scoresheet. Luton won 4-2 in 1962/63, with Ron Davies netting all of the goals, which obviously impressed the Norwich management as Davies transferred to the Norfolk side the following season! It was 19 years, but only 3 games later when the Hatters won again, this time 2-0 in their promotion season of 1981/82. Brian Stein scored the first, with Billy Jennings, in only his second, and last, substitute appearance, for the Hatters sealing the win. It's 10 years ago since the last visit of Norwich, which ended in a 3-1 defeat for the home side in front of the TV cameras.

Last time: 13th August 1995 Lost 1-3 (Bontcho Guentchev penalty)

*Simon "Statto" Pitts*





Beating Crystal Palace can mean quite a lot as well. Curtis Davies clearly enjoyed the moment, in spite of the knock he'd taken.