

MAD AS A **HATTER!**

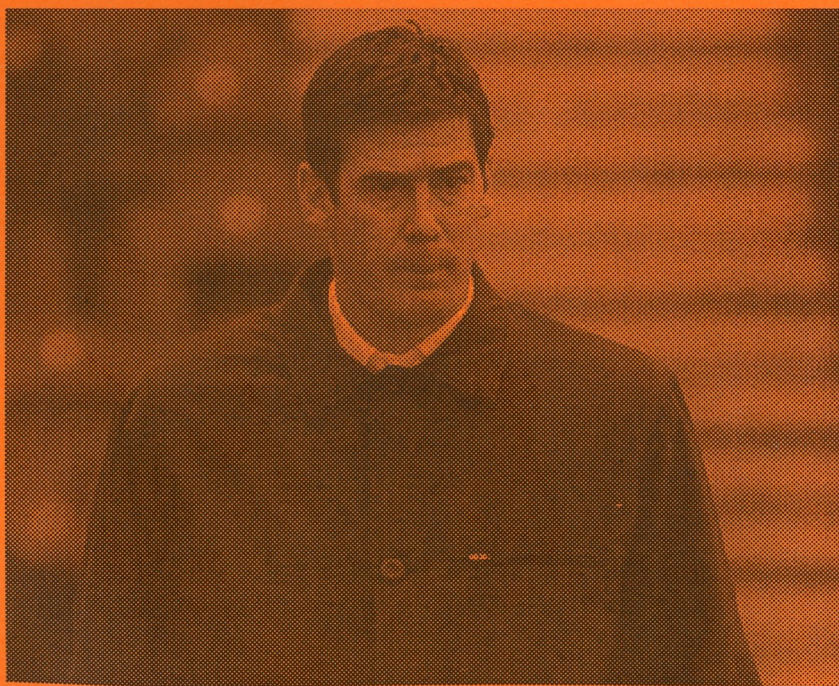
THE LUTON TOWN FANZINE

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STAYING PUT



Mike Newell is staying at Luton, having turned down the overtures from Leicester City. So, now down to the bigger questions – Like why was Mike's nickname during his Everton days 'Eyebrow'?

MAD AS A HATTER!

THE LUTON TOWN FANZINE

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NOT SPORTSPAGES, as they're now in administration!

Ed Lines

It's certainly been a strange couple of months since the last edition. We've had a run of fairly poor results, a stunning cup match against Liverpool, a lack of any further information about the new ground situation and a week or so of wondering which manager might be taking us through to the end of the season.

In the case of the latter, it is probably fair to say that Mike Newell has, at least, widened his knowledge of how different clubs operate in the appointment of managers and, one must assume, learnt about what is on offer elsewhere, even if he was not offered the Leicester job. We should be grateful that we have been spared the uncertainty and disruption of another change and hope that this leads to some medium term stability for our club, with the suggestion that Mike will now be offered, and will sign, a new extended contract.

However, a couple of questions arise from this. First, we have to wonder why the Luton Town board, personified by Bill Tomlins, seemed happy to allow Mike to go and speak to Leicester, and failed to display any apparent desire to counter the threat of losing their greatest asset. Indeed, in spite of talk of a 'big announcement' (where have we heard that before), it was not until Mike had publicly rejected Leicester that there was any talk of a new contract.

Not that we can really expect any response to these questions after Bill's recent *Luton News* article, where his response to criticism of the Junction 10 debacle was to suggest that, as supporters of a "private company", we had no right to be asking what was going on (not exactly what he wrote, but pretty much what it meant). Sadly, this suggests that Bill is as out of touch with the support as a string of chairmen before him at Kenilworth Road, and that the prospects of a closer relationship now that the Trust has a stake in the club are non existent.

And so, to the big announcement... the one that was supposedly enough to keep Mike Newell at Luton Town. We wait with baited breath, probably because we are still taken in after two and a half years of announcements about announcements, for the big news. What will it be? A planning application for Junction 12? A planning application for Junction 10? A big investor at Kenilworth Road or a ground share at MK? Unless Bill understands our expectations, it is likely to be another damp squib at best, or something deeply unpopular at worst.

Maybe, just maybe, I will be able to write something more kind and complimentary about our Bill in the next issue. We'll wait and see...

FRIEND OR FOE?

I read the last issue of *MAAH* with a degree of concern. The vitriol directed at Bill Tomlins in a number of articles seemed harsh and unwarranted. Our esteemed editor particularly seemed to have it in for the chairman, and not for the first time I might add. If Bill Tomlins fails to get us a new ground then that only makes him the same as the rest of our chairmen since the late fifties. Whether MK or Junction 10, Evans or Kohler, nobody has yet managed to secure an abode for the next generations to enjoy football in. It seems we are destined to be the last club to obtain modern premises and it may be that by the time we do get a new stadium that football has been superseded by rollerball, or certainly that VHS will be old hat...

I came across a piece I had written five years ago for the fanzine, and it seemed to sum up my current feelings for the stadium problem:

"The news about the 55 acres is very good and ground developments may well save MWC's reputation in the long run, but I will never agree with sacking managers mid-contract. ... We shall all, of course, believe the new stadium when we are sitting in it; but the very fact that the Philips family would do business with our new Chairman indicates a far more amenable board than you know who and his Alsatian."

Are Bill and his band as obnoxious as Kohler and his henchmen? Surely not. It certainly appears that the Philips family are not as co-operative as we first thought and hence MWC's efforts to secure the land have been wasted. Is this Bill Tomlins' fault? How can it be? I believe Mr. John 'shop steward' 'fat boy' 'two Jags' 'Pomagne socialist' Prescott must take most of the blame for blocking the planning approval years ago when the incumbent council were right behind us. Whether the council are still completely supportive I am not sure, but the New Stand will be demolished after next season to make way for the Luton-Dunstable light rail link and I cannot imagine future councils having the same patience with LTFC as past ones have done. Will we be evicted? We should have been years ago after our initial seven-year lease ran out. As Paul Carrack almost sang: how long can this go on?

If we have to move to Junction 11a then so be it. It will be a nightmare for those travelling by train but if we don't move soon then I see a bleak future for the Hatters. The crowds cannot keep up (despite the good attendances this year) and the money will keep draining away. Only so many wealthy supporters can exist and surely we have exhausted them all now? Which brings me back to loveable Bill. He rescued us from administration (with a nod to Trust in Luton or their forerunners) and we are having a good run at the moment due to the current board and the current manager. So why all the stick for a man who is a long-standing supporter? I think there may be some more personal issues behind all this but I don't know what they are yet. Can anyone out there enlighten us?

Cliff Saunders

Great railway journeys of the world (3)

Reading 3 Town 0

Now this ought to have been a doddle, because there are Virgin Trains direct from Sheffield to Reading. But the clue lies in the name, because journeys by Virgin are never as easy as you think they're going to be. Also it worked out cheaper to go via Midland Mainline to St Pancras and then from Paddington by First Great Western to Reading. To avoid the tube journey across London, I took my bike with me on the train.

Getting to Reading was OK, and once we'd found a pub that was open it was good to indulge in a little pre-match anaesthetic. This meant, of course, that cycling to the ground was not an option. After the inevitable defeat we then had to wait the best part of an hour for the bus back into town. I say "the" bus because there was only the one - once it had filled up and departed, those of us still queuing had to wait more than half an hour for it to find its way through the Christmas shopping traffic and back to the stadium on the edge of town.

It seems that Reading has absorbed the Thatcherite doctrine, that if you are still riding on buses after the age of 25, you are a failure in life. Well, me and my fellow "failures" would beg to differ. There's more to life than sitting in your gas-guzzling sports utility vehicle in a traffic jam. We lucky bus customers in the queue outside the Madejski (silly name for a stadium - hope we can do better - how about "New Kenilworth"?) even had the benefit of meeting a Reading supporter who told us he'd played non-league football with our Paul "Derek" Underwood a few years ago, though I must admit I was too worried about getting back to the station in time for my train to play a very active part in the conversation.

I needn't have worried, because the trains had all been delayed, so that when I arrived at the station in time for my 18.00 train, I was able to catch the 16.55 instead. Got back to London and arrived at St Pancras, despite an unexpected detour to Hyde Park, in plenty of time for my train back to Sheffield. Except that my train, like every other, was stuck the wrong side of a failed signal at Loughborough. We lucky Midland Mainline passengers - sorry, customers - were redirected next door to Kings Cross for the GNER "service" to Doncaster. This was due to leave 20 minutes later than my original train, so I thought I'd have time for a quick pint of Fullers in the Euston Flyer just along the road.

So, I locked my bike to the leg of an advertising stand and set off on foot to the pub. It was strangely quiet for a Saturday early evening, and the doors were still locked. I knocked to attract the attention of the staff, who eventually let me know that the place had been booked for a private function.

Arriving unrefreshed back at Kings Cross, I was surprised to find my bike the centre of attention for a group of two policemen and a railway security officer. The latter was broadcasting an appeal for the owner of this weapon of mass destruction to return to it immediately, before the police blew it to kingdom come. I calmly pointed out that this seemed a little extreme, after all it was only a bike. They asked whether I was aware of something they called the "ongoing security situation" in the country. I reiterated that it was only a bike and that I frequently lock it up at stations without causing any panic. They said that I should have locked it up in the bicycle storage area, where it wouldn't cause any alarm. So, here's a tip for any would-be bombers: fill your bike full of explosives and leave it in the bicycle storage area, so as not to alarm the security personnel.

The rest of the journey home was unremarkable, apart from arriving back in Sheffield a few minutes earlier via Doncaster than if I'd gone direct by the usual route. A pity that's not an option for home games.

Will Larter

ALTERNATIVE SHEFFIELD

So, a few days off work and a taste for adventure. The obvious thing to do was to travel up to Sheffield on the Tuesday morning, check into a hotel, go on a city pub crawl, watch the match, and have a decent lay in (check out by 10, please). But hold on: If I drive, the petrol's 30 quid, the train is more expensive, the hotel is prohibitive and the Wednesday ticket price is exorbitant. There must be more to life than getting ripped off at every turn. There is.

After surfing the web for an hour or so, I'd booked a return flight to Bordeaux - £2.99 there and £4.99 back (plus taxes, came to about £30 all told). 4 nights in a city centre hotel for £90. 5 days/4 nights in Bordeaux for the price of a Tuesday night in Sheffield? Surely no contest. I even took Bordeaux's French Cup game on the Tuesday evening for just FIVE Euros. And an entertaining affair it was, too.

Bordeaux's Chaban-Delmas stadium must have been built in the 1930's - it's just so Art Deco! And the acoustics are fantastic - a monsieur banging a drum up the other end sounded like he was sitting next to me. So why only 7231 spectators? Answer - the French Cup in, er, France is like the League Cup is here now. Basically a squad game for the big team, and a big game for the underdogs.

FC Girondes de Bordeaux 2 Entente Sannois Saint-Gratien 1

It was the big game in the last 16 of the Coupe de France. Bordeaux, second in le Championnat, against a team from Conference level. Bordeaux rested the big names (ie Denilson, Cheyrou...) apart from Smicer, who I didn't even realise was playing until he was substituted towards the end! The minnows (don't know the French for minnows) were up for it from the start and completely dominated the first half, taking the lead in the 37th minute through Quintin. Entente SSG had two excellent technically gifted left side players in Adjamossi and afore-mentioned Quintin.

Bordeaux obviously had the proverbial *le bollocking* at half time as they stormed out for the second half. Entente ambled on to the pitch, looking like they thought it was easy. You can guess what happened. Beto equalised in the 68th minute and the game really livened up. The referee played his part in allowing it to get physical - but not dirty - and playing advantage wonderfully well. Beto finally put Bordeaux ahead with five minutes left, and despite a final flurry, ESSG couldn't grab the equaliser. Both teams left to a standing ovation.

The half time hot dog avec ketchup was 12 inches, sorry 30 cm, long and cost just 3 Euros. No wonder Napoleon called the English a nation of shopkeepers. Never have I seen the phrase "rip off Britain" more apt.



Warren Feeney is found questioning the referee. Was he asking why he can't score? Or why the referee is wearing w*tf*rd colours (you'll have to trust me on that...)?

Match statistics (taken from Bordeaux's website and translated with Microsoft translator):

Chaban-Delmas Stage - 31/01/2006 - Lawn in bad condition - Time cold - 7230 spectators - Referee: M. Colombo.

Goals - Bordeaux: Beto (68', 84') - Sannois Agreement Saint-Gratien: Quintin (38')

Warnings - Agreement Sannois Saint-Gratien: Adjamossi (83'), Gragnic (91').

Bordeaux: Russet-red - Jemmali, Beto, Planus, Marange - Faubert, Fernando, Francia (Perea, 60'), Mavuba - Smicer (Alonso, 85'), Darcheville.

Agreement Sannois Saint-Gratien: Subdued - Bertrand, Behary, Carlier, Adjamossi - Planus (Gragnic, 87'), Mahamat, Maia, Stéphan (Carnot, 87'), Quintin (Aristouy, 68') - Lempereur.

You can stick a cold January night in Sheffield right up your jacksie.

Roger Holdstock

ALBUM REVIEW

EDDIE REDBLOOD IS "THE MAN WITH NO SHAME"

Quite what music reviews are doing in a footie zine is anyone's guess, but fans of ambient dancey music (sorry am not up on the genres) might want to check out Mr Eddie Redblood's output. "The Man With No Shame" is a collection of ten instrumental tracks combining electronic beats with a mixture of styles. In the space of three quarters of an hour, Eddie seamlessly gives us bombastic alternativey/rocky guitars in the opener *The Driver*, to a more dubby feel in *Deep* and a dose of Morricone, including twangy guitars, gunshots and ricochets on closing track *Against the Clock*. The album's centrepiece is the nine minute title track, on which Mr Redblood gets closest to a sweaty dance floor and in doing so, he gets the most from a weird flangey guitar sound and treble blasting keyboard. However the best track, in my humblest opinion, is the flamenco tinged *Barca Loner*.

An album, one suspects, more appropriate for a Sunday afternoon 'chill' than for the full heat of the club; and all the better for it. Love, money and attention should be showered on Mr Redblood, so he can improve the album artwork (perhaps) and help cultivate his freewheeling, multi-style musings. See it he'll chat or even try and sell you "The Man With No Shame" by contacting him at eddieredblood@hotmail.co.uk

The Count of Monte Cristo

New grounds - who needs them?

OK, so this is going to sound a bit like the fox and the sour grapes, but do we really want a new stadium? Seems like the best part of two decades we've been trying (or pretending to try) to get it together, but somehow the land or the money (or both) seem to slip through our fingers. Perhaps we're fated to stay at Kenilworth Road for ever, but before considering that as an option, let's have a look at some of the new or redeveloped grounds that have been graced with our presence this season.

Stoke City

The Britannia Stadium is built on the site of an old coal mine and is unusual in having the corners open. Apparently this is good for the grass, as the air circulation is better (or something). Apart from that, this new ground is typical of the new breed in that it is outside the city centre, miles from anywhere (except the motorway), no pubs, lousy bus service.

Leicester City

The Walkers Stadium at least has the advantage of being a ten or fifteen minute walk from the city centre, with some decent pubs even closer. Strange arrangements about tickets - home supporters get them from the ticket office, away supporters from a sort of converted hamburger stall. As with a lot of these new stadiums, it looks the same from every direction, with no distinguishing features at all.

Hull City

The Kingston Communications Stadium is much like the Walkers: big and round and an easy walk from the city centre. See my piece in Mad 63 about getting back into the city centre afterwards, though.

Coventry City

The Ricoh is famous for being incomplete, and has an interesting feature: one side of the pitch has fewer seats than the rest: there's a big glass, steel and concrete wall backing onto a hotel or conference facility, or something. It's like having a gigantic cruise ship parked on one side of the ground. Standard fare apart from that: miles from the pubs, handy for the motorways.

Reading

Even people in Reading mispronounce the Madejski as Majeski. Still, could have been worse: why would anyone want to call a football ground Galpharm? Once again, miles from anywhere (except the motorway), no distinguishing features.

Southampton

Sorry, couldn't get to the St Mary's Stadium this season; did I miss anything?

Derby County

Ditto. (Some excellent pubs within a reasonable walk, which I have visited often enough, though.)

Wolverhampton Wanderers

Molineux has been redeveloped or rebuilt or whatever you call it, and in consequence is still very

close to the town centre. Plenty of pubs, not far from the station. Can't fault it.

You can see where this is leading can't you? All we need is a bit of imagination (and a few million quid, of course, but we'll need that anyway). So here goes:

Oak Road End: shouldn't be too much trouble to knock down about twenty houses each side of the road and build a nice new stand there instead. Away supporters' coaches could still park in Oak Road, no problem. How about a coach park underneath the stand?

Bobbers Stand: just build upwards and backwards a bit, the view will be fine. We may have to take over some of the houses the other side of Beech Hill Path for emergency exits, but (here's the revolutionary bit) we could keep the path itself running underneath the stand, and have access via turnstiles either side.

Kenilworth Road End: we've already extended the seating back another few rows this season, so just keep going. We'll have to raise the roof a bit (there's a joke there somewhere, but I can't be bothered) and it may be necessary to build another toilet or two, but I can't foresee any difficulty there.

Main Stand: there's a dual carriageway running along the back here that is just crying out to be built over. But before all you car drivers blow a gasket, I mean build over the top of it, with the road continuing to run through a tunnel. Plenty of room for stands, executive boxes, dining suites, hotels and a cruise ship to rival the Ricoh.

I can (almost) see it now. The New Kenilworth on the site of the old, with unforgettable features and talking points on all sides. Now that's a stadium to get excited about. (And still only a few minutes' walk from the Bricklayers Arms, too.)

Will Larter

BYE BYE BEZ

With Luton's most senior 'keeper surely on his way out in the summer what is next?

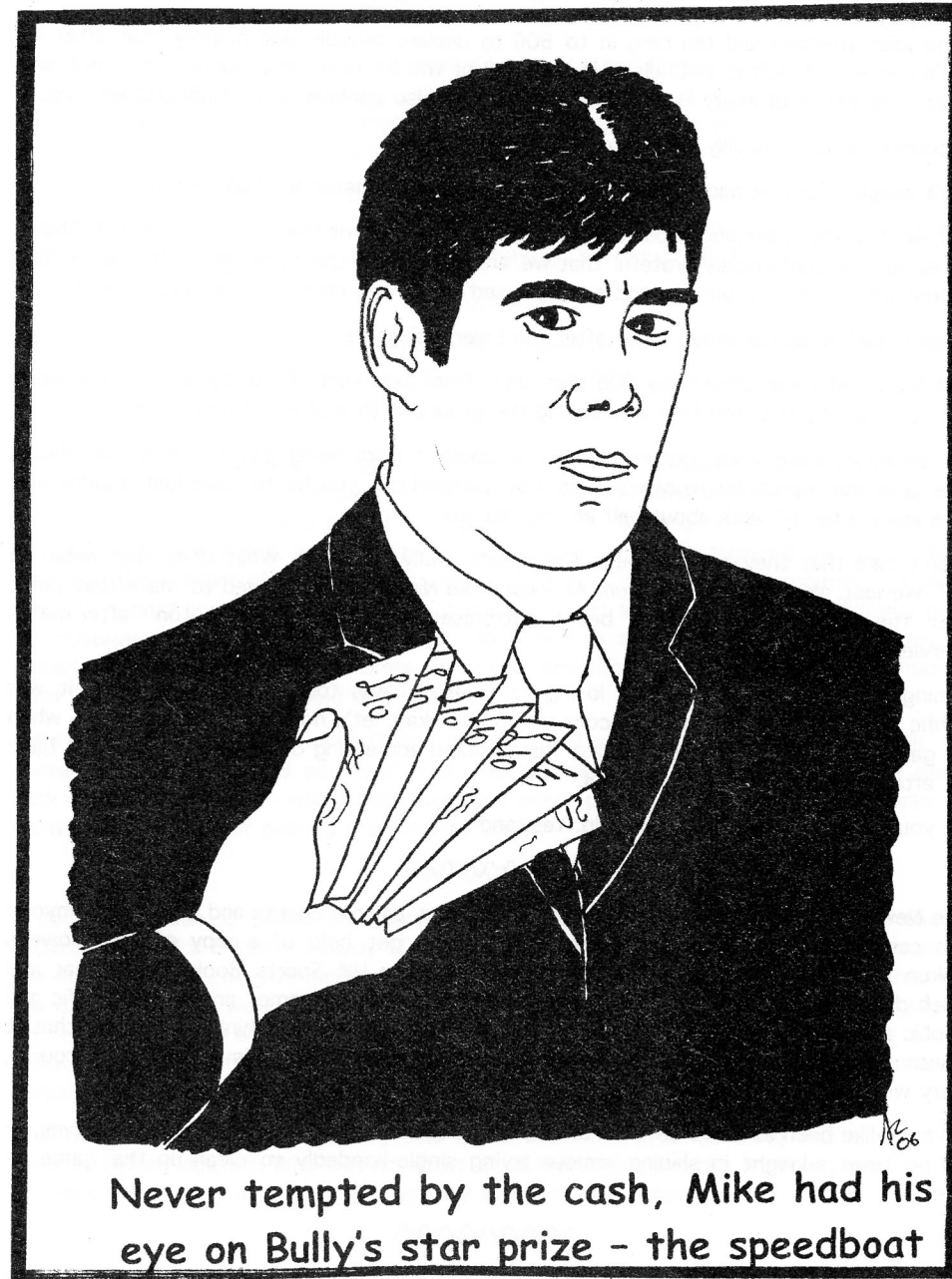
Marlon, has been solid for over 85 games, where he has donned the Luton jersey, and kept the crowd oh so amused. He is a crowd favourite and a pleaser, I'm sure the younger fans won't forget him in a hurry. His ball skills, his wind up the away fans skills and his, er, Liverpool attack! He has this club in his blood now and hopefully he has a great remainder of the season and enjoys his remaining time as a top professional.

However sad it is that he will depart we look to the future. One door closes, another opens. Brill is good but not yet ready I think. Dino... your views please. Somewhat of a dilemma for Mike, or who ever it may be, come the summer, with a transfer budget lacking any zeros at all one might also guess. I think we need another experienced 'keeper like Beresford. David Seaman maybe? Mark my words...! But, until then get behind Bez and the boys : they have all achieved a great amount in the past few seasons and no-one more than Marlon.

Here's to Marlon the great.

PS. A testimonial? On that subject, John Moore...

Dan Strobe



Never tempted by the cash, Mike had his eye on Bully's star prize - the speedboat

Sharpe Angle

Some idiot Huddersfield fan rang in to 606 to declare proudly and humbly that after her side's narrow 2-1 defeat at Chelsea in Round 3 of the FA Cup, Jose Mourinho had not only shaken the hands of every Huddersfield player, but also applauded the Huddersfield fans.

Of course he had, you silly, er, person, his team won.

Don't imagine for one minute he would have been so magnanimous had they lost.

And what is this sickening prostrating of oneself in front of the God Premiership? Should we all now be pathetically grateful that we are allowed on the same pitch, allowed to play against their superstar players and even allowed to do well enough to be patronised?

Which is just what happened to us after the Liverpool game.

Alan Green, who was presenting 606 that night from Kenilworth Road, declared to the world that "Liverpool and Luton fans are leaving the ground with a smile on their faces."

Not on mine, mate. I was gutted. I drew no comfort from being gallant losers. We should have won the match, for heaven's sake. How pleased can you be to have lost a game you were leading by 3-1 with about half an hour to go?

I don't care that they are European Champions. Bully for them. What does that mean to me? We lost. We should have won. At least Mike Newell was prepared to make that point after the game when he was being patronised in 'gallant little Luton' after-match interviews. Good for him.

Coming after the w*tf*rd defeat, losing to Liverpool was too much to bear. Yes, it was terrific to get 3-1 up. But then to concede four - okay, let's not count the last one - when the game was within our grasp. At last I understand something of what AC Milan must have felt after the Champions League Final.

Oh, you're such a bad loser, I get told. Yes, and...?



Mike Newell is, of course, completely right in his rant against agents and bungs and anyone who cannot believe that he should immediately get hold of a copy of Tom Bower's Broken Dreams, the book which won the 2004 William Hill Sports Book of the Year and which delves into these murky waters to great effect, naming names and given specific and graphic and persuasive detail. In fact, as you read the book you'll think to yourself that it cannot be possible that no-one ever sued the author for fortunes - unless, of course, every word he says is true.

But has Mike been as naïve as the naïvest fan of rock band Steve Naïve and the Naïves, or has he been a knight in shining armour trying single-handedly to clean up the game he loves?



I was most shocked by Mike's assertion in one of the newspapers that his programme notes have been regularly doctored or censored this season. If that is the case it reflects badly

on the club and on Mike, who should have made this known long since as he is then as guilty of misleading the fans who read the notes as he claims agents are in their dealings.

It is one thing having a personal crusade, a whole 'nother thing doing it in public. There is an argument here that he is doing Luton Town FC no good at all - would we have lost at Wolves if Mike had not been distracted all week because of the publicity about his claims? Who can say, but it cannot have helped.

Yet he is clearly a man driven by the highest moral standards and even though he might also have made it more difficult for the club to acquire players handled by certain - or any - agents - he will regard that as a price worth paying. Will you? Will Bill Tomlins?



I work for a bookie as many of you know. Personally I would make it an odds-against chance that Mike Newell will still be Luton Town manager on the first day of next season.



Like all other fans I wanted to get my hands on tickets for the Liverpool game, but the details weren't printed in the programme until only a brief time before the match, so there was not a great deal of time to get the applications in. So when I sent off for the tickets I just did what I was asked, and was happy enough when I quickly received the four tickets - matching the number of season tickets my family has - until, in a quiet moment, I suddenly thought - hold on. Hold on there, just a minute. I was asked to send an additional pound for postage and packing for each ticket. So I sent in an extra four pounds for my four tickets. But here are my four tickets, all in one envelope, and clearly costing no more to send than a single ticket would have done.

Right - a letter to the Ticket Office asking for three quid back. To their credit they contacted me quickly and admitted their mistake and told me I could collect the surplus back at the next game - which I did. But how many people either didn't think about it or know how to go about getting their money back?



A couple of moaning points from recent games - the Liverpool game - why did the BBC apparently need a massive convoy of trucks and vehicles to give coverage of the match to the nation? Their intrusive presence meant that on the way out of the ground afterwards the retreating fans were funnelled into a very uncomfortable chicane before emerging into the wider road. This was briefly quite concerning as more people flowed into the pinched section of fenced off pavement than it could comfortably deal with. And why the ridiculous perusing of tickets BEFORE even getting to the turnstiles on the way in?

And from the Brighton game, a very cold night when the pitch covering was only removed minutes before kick off. Why was no effort at all made to make the leg-room between rows of seats safe - they were very icy, slippery and potentially dangerous.



Returning from the Hull game there is a growing feeling that it will be one of - if not the - last games that Mike Newell is in charge for.

It seems that he wants to make Enoch a laughing stock before he leaves, if he does go.

Once again he started him in midfield where he is painfully out of place. Of course he tries but the position makes him look even more ungainly than usual and has succeeded in turning the crowd against him - he was almost jeered off when he finally went and was replaced by Bell, who looked a proper player - leaving me wondering why he hadn't been put straight in when he arrived. Yes, he needs to get to know the players around him, but that would be true whenever he was tossed in to the action.

Once again Vine and Feeney demonstrated that they are pretty much the same player - and that neither of them is ever likely to become a regular, prolific striker, although the crowd seem to have a more positive attitude to Vine while Feeney is beginning to attract criticism.

It would be nice though if, before he goes, Newell could introduce both Vine and Feeney to Steve Howard, and vice versa. There is precious little natural understanding between them and Steve still flicks the ball on hopefully when he wins it without too much awareness of where one or the other of them might be.

The fact that two back four players had to score our goals in this disappointing game which we looked like romping away with after quarter of a hour, is worrying, as is the fact that we are still very vulnerable down the flanks, which is where two of their goals came from. Our inability to spot the Hull free kick routine or to block Elliott's shot was also concerning.

Carlos Edwards picked up yet another Man of the Match award. He deserved it as usual. He is a smoother, trickier runner with the ball than anyone down here certainly since Jean Louis Valois. He puts in great crosses - often, although some are a little wayward, and he has that great long throw. Perhaps he could get round his last man and get some shots and telling passes in - but if everyone else created a fraction of the danger he does we'd be at least ten points better off.



The ground thing threatens to derail all the recent good done on the pitch as without an attractive place to play on the horizon it will be ever more difficult to attract and retain both decent players and loyal fans. If we slip away from play off contention crowds will begin to slip - cause and effect - and income will, as a result, decline. And it will become ever more difficult to see anything other than a compromise patch-up job at Kenilworth Road - with, maybe, the hospitality boxes going - or at least some of them - to add on another seating area.

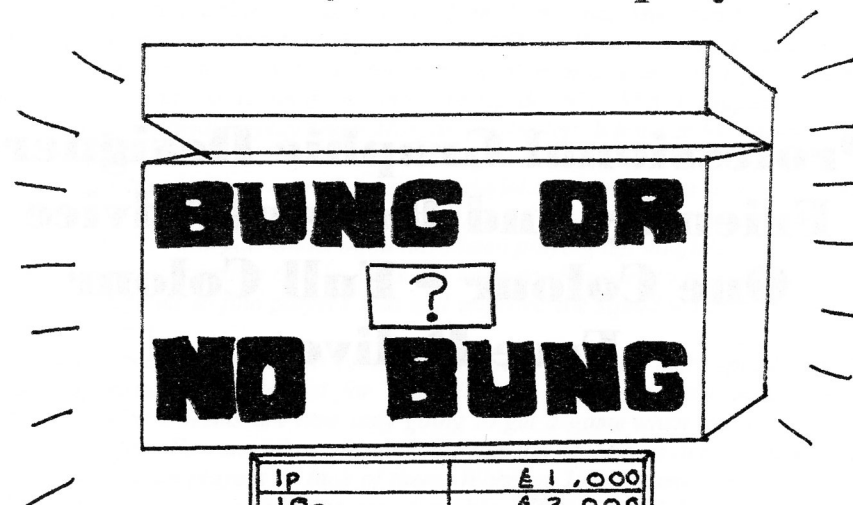
The Chinese have a curse - "May you live in interesting times" - and the forty odd years I have supported Luton have been anything other than uninteresting, and I suspect that times at Luton are about to become more interesting than they have been for some considerable while - bye Mike, welcome back, Mick? Or Joe?

Graham Sharpe

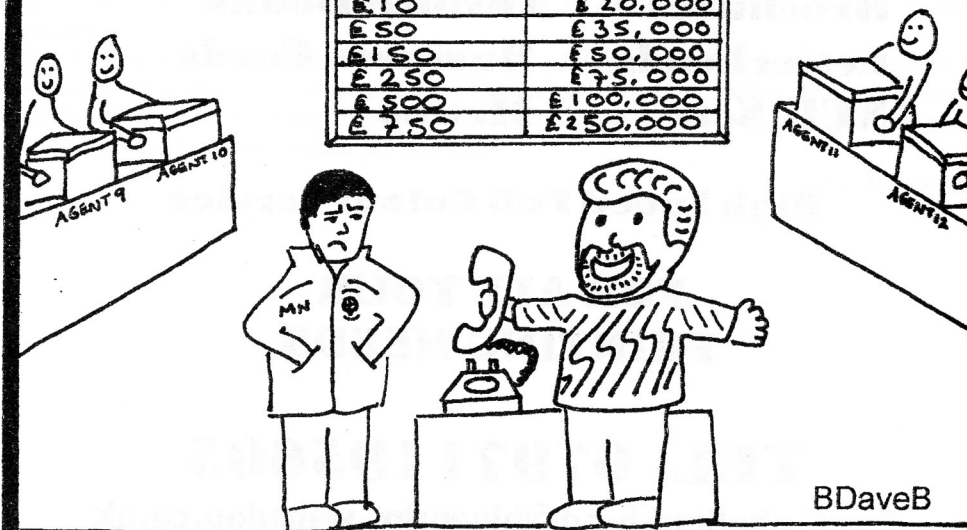
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New Year Blues

As I drove home in my car, after the defeat against the Hertfordshire hoofers and their collective acting audition to get onto Holby City as patients, I found myself further depressed by Mike Newell's comments.

Let me state before I begin that I have enjoyed the Mike Newell era more than at any time in my 27 years of supporting the town and I hope he is here for a long time yet. However his recent comments and decisions have disappointed me.

*My first gripe is the inability to score away from home that Mike can't "put my finger on". This problem also came to light against w*tf*r*d. How many times did the Luton faithful scream for a shot only to see the nervous man in a white shirt pass the ball to another nervous white shirt until the move broke down?? May I suggest part of the problem is Mike's refusal to play Dean Morgan on the left. Whatever his shortcomings he has scored 5 goals and looks a good deal more effective than the Croatian sensation who in turn would be free to resume on the right of midfield (where he has scored 4 of his 6 of his goals from) - if picked ahead of Carlos. Apart from the goals the side looks much better balanced when Morgan/Underwood have been playing left midfield.*

Gripe two is Mike's assertion that he does not have much money to spend and his feeling that it will be difficult to find players that will improve the squad without spending more money than he's got.

I find it hard to believe that he can't find a new centre half with more speed than Perrett and more experience than Barnett for example. Are there no better midfielders than Leary/O'Leary who it seems are now only going to get a game when loaned out? Is there no better keeper than Seremet who can challenge Marlon's status as our 1st choice keeper? My final whinge: loan players or lack of them. When we lost 4 games on the trot we had several key players injured or playing out of position. We also had 3 players out on loan, none of which were recalled, and we failed to bring anyone in to cover from other clubs. And when we sold Curtis on transfer deadline day for £3 million could we really not afford to loan a new centre half for 3 months to take us up to the January transfer window??

Still, I should stop worrying, by the time you read this in issue 69 we will be back in the play offs, Leon Barnett will have scored 10 goals while playing centre half, Mike Newell will be advising Sven on England's left midfield problem and our win at Vicarage Road in April is going be all the sweeter for Jan 2nd!!!!

Mad Hatter Sean

RAVING MADI!!!

Dear Mad,

Brian Ellis was saying in issue 68 that he had had problems with Yore Publications regarding publishing a Luton Town Who's Who. I had to correspond with Dave Twydell of Yore Publications on another matter and I sent him a copy of Brian's article. He has given me permission to quote from his reply which is as follows:

"For 2 or 3 years I have been 'talking' to Brian Ellis regarding a Luton Who's Who book. Due to the repetitive nature of such books it is best for both parties to establish the right format, method of display, etc. Brian, I believe, has the necessary details, but initially he was unfamiliar with using a computer, and agreed it would be best for him to learn (to be honest his handwriting would make it almost impossible by this method!). During the interim he has gradually come to terms with it, with help from others, however when we last spoke - a few months ago - he was still a long way from forwarding meaningful information in quantity. At this time I said that we were going ahead with a Brentford Who's Who, and probably one for Barnsley. As well as the other projects, I didn't want to take on too much, especially as I was not confident he could submit everything in time. I never turned the idea down point blank, and we left it (amicably) that we would make contact in a few months to see how he had progressed, albeit it was unlikely, at least for 2006, that we would be able to publish it.

One reason for not proceeding was certainly not that 'such books do not sell'. I said that they don't sell so well as club histories, and in general football books do not sell so well now; having published 10 Who's Who books (more than any other publisher). I have the experience to comment with experience! What Brian misinterpreted was probably the fact that he said (words to the effect) that he would be quite happy even if it only sold 2000 copies, and I said it had almost no chance of that number; despite the club's success at the moment, 1000 copies were more likely, possibly over time 1,500.

I would be more than pleased to publish a Luton Who's Who providing I was confident of receiving all the information in the standard required format, by the right time, but frankly would not be confident at the moment."

I hope that the above sets the record straight. I would also like to confirm that Sportspages bookshop in London has unfortunately closed and will not reopen.

Regards,

Andrew Wallace

Ickleford.

Dear Mad,

One thing, a bit of constructive criticism (I hope you'll take it as that). I'm not being funny here, I trust that there are going to be less errors in this next issue. A couple of spelling mistakes are forgivable but there were absolutely loads last time, plus there were the 2 incorrect headline scores in the match reports - that is sacrilege mate.

I'm not being critical for the sake of it, it's just in case you didn't notice yourself or nobody mentioned it to you before now.

JD,

Luton.

Historical Moments from Music History:

DYLAN GOES ELECTRIC

JUDAS!

HEY, MAN,
I THINK THEY'RE
TALKING TO YOU!



BDaveB

A BIT OF A DODGY SPELL...

11.12.05 SOUTHAMPTON RFC 1 TOWN 0

Once again the TV cameras come to a Luton match and once again we put in a dreadful performance in front of them. Not as bad as the Wolves performance to come a month later but still pretty bad nonetheless. The sad thing about it was that Southampton played badly as well but still managed to win. The only goal of the match came from teenage 'superstar' Theo Walcott. Either he had an off day against us or he isn't as good as the hype suggests, although he's good for a 16-year old. The goal came after Coyne failed to cut out a long ball and Brill drifted off his line and Walcott chipped it over him from the wing. Quite a good goal but mostly down to bad defending and bad goalkeeping from Deano, but having said that he did make a few vital saves later on. Anyway, enough about Walcott.

This match demonstrated our inability to score, with our best chance coming from a Chris Coyne overhead kick cleared off the line. Some hope was given near the end when Rory Delap was sent off but we didn't threaten Niemi's goal. Southampton weren't much better either. Surprisingly, none of their players picked up the ball and ran with it before scoring a try in Deano's goal - Rupert Lowe's plans to turn Southampton into a rugby team obviously going slowly, although not quite as slowly as our plans to move to Junction 10. To summarise, we didn't deserve anything out of this and Southampton only really deserved a draw, but a win's a win and our dreadful away form continued. Surely something can be done.

Peter Bulkeley

17.12.05 HATTERS 2 STOKE CITY 3

This year's winner of the 'Marvin Johnson Own Goal of The Season' award went to Chris Coyne for the last minute winner for Stoke. He had the speed, skill and energy to beat the Stoke striker to the ball with a toe-poke, just unfortunately it ended up in the top corner past Marlon!

It looked good for us early on with Brkovic nipping in from the left-wing to give us a 1-0 lead. However Stoke fought back to a 1-2 lead before Luton went for it and, when Howard was brought down, cool-penalty-king Kev made it 2-2. It shows our ambition not to settle for that point, as more and more players joined the attack; however it also showed out naivety, as Stoke rushed through a non-existent midfield in injury time and were rewarded when Coyne did a super Marv special. Doh!

BDaveB

26.12.05 DERBY COUNTY 1 TOWN 1

Stalling the Rot!

A year ago we made our Boxing Day pilgrimage to Derbyshire and what a contrast this Boxing Day visit was! Last year was Chesterfield, open terrace and open air urinal! This year was Pride Park one of the newer grounds (there are plenty in this division Mr Tomlins!). I preferred this ground to Southampton and Coventry's new creations. The positive thing about the Chesterfield visit was a decent pint in a proper pub, here we struggled with a pint in a Harvester (sic) because we couldn't get into the Derby bar by the ground.

Anyway a decent crowd with a solid Town following. Not the most memorable of games, a turgid first half, only notable for Graham being in oceans of space in our area and he allowed Marlon's dive to take the ball off him. He was in a similar position in the second half as well.

Second half picked up a fraction which wasn't saying much. Derby marginally the better side until they scored. An absolute cracker too, from a debatable free kick, Idiakes, their most creative player curled a snorter of free kick into Marlon's top left hand corner. Town at last woke up and huffed and puffed in search of an equaliser. Morgan broke free on the left (he has a knack of doing this) from his cross Howard's shot was saved but Berko scrambled the rebound home.

It did bring a retort from the Town fans "West Stand, West Stand, what's the score?" because the Derby kop had been tiresomely asking each part of the ground to sing after their goal.

I thought Foley did well after moving to centre midfield after Holmes limped off. Both teams lacked confidence and the draw was a fair result.

The Frampton Hatter

28.12.05 TOWN 3 BRIGHTON 0

This was a cold one. An evening game over Christmas was never going to be a balmy occasion but I bet there were many ashamed supporters who secretly thanked granny for the knitted jumper that they had bemoaned earlier in the week. At least in the winter you can hide it under your coat! What couldn't be hidden was how much better than the Seagulls our very own Luton Town were. All day I had monitored the media, expecting to see the game postponed at every news flash; however, the pitch turned out to be in very good nick and the home side made it count with some sparkling football, albeit in patches. Steve Robinson had his best game of the season and capped it with an 'icing-on-the-cake' goal in the second period which was certainly not expected. Some say it was a cross but the Northern Irish international deserved the benefit of the doubt on this bitter night.

During the first half, the reliable Steve Howard and the frustrating Warren Feeney put the Hatters in control and we never looked like losing it. Howard's goal was labelled as controversial by some but I was close to the by-line and someone needs to remind the Brighton players that the whole of the ball has to cross the line for it to be out of play - this is football, not rugby. So, that cross was converted but it should have been Howard's second. Earlier, he had headed the ball down when it looked easier to hit the target and then the ball bounced up and over the crossbar when surely it would have been easier just to go in the net. How can a ball not want to play ball? I mean what's the point of being a ball if you don't go where your supposed to? It's so deflating.

Nevertheless, the game was eventually wrapped up (yes, with a bow on) so the home fans headed gaily for the exits, rushing home for a cup of Horlicks and the opportunity to put their legs up on the poofee. Concurrently the South Coast supporters exited gayly for their charabanc, rushing home for some hot chocolate of their own and the opportunity to put their legs around the poofee. Oh for a stiff breeze on the beach and the feeling of wet, salty liquid between ones toes. You can come with Dean if you want to, I am going alone.

Cliff Saunders

At the start of the season I picked Brighton as being a relegation struggler and, it being our first season back in this league, I was worried that we were going to be too. But it's down to Mike Newell, and the quality team he's assembled, that we aren't.

In this match, Brighton's luck didn't hold out as King Kev seemed to swipe a cross in from behind the goal-line to set up Howard for the first goal. The ref and linesman gave it and that was more or less game over as Brighton had come to defend in numbers and seemed

to have no plan of attack at all. Feeney and Robinson added two more to complete the route. A good win at a crucial time.

BDaveB

31.12.05 TRACTOR BOYS 1 TOWN 0

A hideously timed lunchtime kick-off, bearing in mind the hours left to go afterwards until the New Year was rung in. Despite this, we arrived in Ipswich in good time for first orders, and were nicely 'fuelled' by the time we made our way towards Portman Road. My day was made by a nice Irish lass in the queue who gave me a spare ticket that she had (many thanks again!), thus I gleefully avoided the £25 rip-off entrance fee.

Which was just as well with the entertainment we were treated to. Another powder-puff Town away performance. We had plenty of the ball, but it was Ipswich who scored the only goal - or should I say the only allowed goal. Step forward Mr Andrew 'You-Only-Paid-To-Watch-Me' D'Urso. Seeing as he couldn't find a reason to send off his old mucker Steven Howard, he chose instead to disallow a perfectly good headed goal by the aforementioned. Stevo fortunately, despite being as absolutely gutted as the Luton fans were angry, managed to keep his cool, to his credit. It was reported afterwards that the goal had been disallowed for a push by Robinson in the 6 yard area as the corner swung in, but let's face it, there was no way D'Arsehole was going to let

Howard enjoy his afternoon. The club should really insist to the Football League that this excuse for a referee should not be allowed to officiate any future Luton matches. Otherwise, next time he is going to be in charge, there is simply no point in Town fans bothering to turn up.

Ah well, back to the pub for a couple more hours, then it was time for us to head back to Lutonia to try to stay conscious for the New Year festivities. Of course I failed dismally!

Objét

02.01.06 US 1 THEM 2

Not happy about this one obviously. From the start it looked like we were going to win this easily but a bit of dodgy defending (it wouldn't have happened if the injured Chris Coyne had been playing) and we were 0-1 down. Then the ref decided that apparently it is now in the rules that a striker can kick the ball out of a goalie's hands and then into his chest that is on the goal-line and this is a goal. 0-2. Thanks ref. In the second half Carlos Edwards got a good goal and Judas Spring came on and that was about it. Going home I tried not to think that some of the player's were taking it easy and saving themselves for the forthcoming Liverpool game but I have my suspicions.

BDaveB

07.01.06 SUPER TOWN 3 THIEVING SCOUSE GITS 5

The good thing about 5.30 kick-offs is the additional drinking time it provides one with. We got to the pub not long after our usual Saturday time and were surprised to find so few people had made the same decision, hence we actually got a table for the afternoon! So it was a drunken group of fans who turned up at Kenilworth Road to see a game that took us back to the glory days of FA Cup upsets. Either we played really well or the alcohol had had a stimulating effect on our eyes because we attacked so confidently that we had the Scousers worried, and only the second-half substitute Pongo caused any real concern to the Hatters. Apparently Rory, Twang and Boots will be signing for Liverpool in the transfer window. The fact that we matched a Premiership side for most of the game brings up that hardy perennial "Why can't we play like that every week?" and frankly this question could

be directed at no better target than Rowan Vine who covered every blade of grass in this game and actually looked dangerous. In fact no Luton players played badly and Steve Howard's goal was particularly enjoyable for both the delivery and the finish. Both penalties were unjustified but I think the referee was poorly placed for both rather than conned.

It finished 4-3 to the away team but there is no point me giving you the details of what happened because you all saw the game either live or on telly. 0-1, 1-1, 2-1, 3-1, 3-2, 3-3, 3-4 will suffice. However, don't you get sick of well-meaning armchair fans telling you, for the next two weeks, that you have a good team and were unlucky against Liverpool? We lost and we will not be appearing in the next round so who cares? Apparently, we don't exist if we aren't on the telly so why do people think we value their opinion for just one week of the year? I am glad we played well and put up a good fight but I would rather have had three points off w*tf*rd. I think Liverpool underestimated us and this allowed us to play nice football and pass the ball around. Obviously, at three-one down they had to come at us but the difference in tactics from the w*tf*rd game was marked. Where the disgraceful Hornets "managed the game" with no attempt to entertain anyone: the reigning European Champions actually tried to live up to their reputation. The video audience certainly got their money's worth but we probably owed them something after many awful performances on the goggle-box in the past.

So we live to concentrate on the cup and look forward to meeting the red half of Liverpool in the league next year. Well, if we played like this every week then few teams in the championship could touch us and promotion would be assured. However, we don't perform this well regularly enough so maybe we need to manage the rest of the season and simply collect the points. Having said that some people think football is an entertainment - an interesting idea I am sure you'll agree.

Cliff Saunders

13.01.06 TOOTHLESS WOLVES 2 HUNG OVER HATTERS 1

F.A. Cup Hangover

Wolves being an hour away from deepest Gloucestershire is, apart from Cardiff, my shortest journey in this division. It is an easy ground to get to and being in the City Centre plenty of options for parking and food. Being a Friday night and on Sky it was a muted atmosphere in the ground.

Most of us were amazed to see Enoch lining up in central midfield, surely we are not that short or was this one of Mike's inspired selections? The pitch didn't look great it looked like an end of season surface from our seats and it did seem that both sides struggled to control and keep the ball. Wolves marginally the better side first half, but didn't create anything, Underwood actually looked the most creative player on view. Enoch did burst through but finished with a weak shot. Marlon saved comfortably from Kennedy at the end of the first half which did bring the chant from the home faithful "We've had a shot on goal". My friend Pete (an occasional Luton watcher) asked me at half time "Is Enoch any good because he has looked crap every time I've seen him?" I shrugged my shoulders!

An increasingly restless home support was voicing their discontent when Kennedy tore down the left (Foley not even close), from his cross Davies poked home a rebound after Marlon saved well. Kennedy now started to cause us real problems and after one run his shot clipped the outside of the post. Gradually we started to claw back in midfield although without looking too dangerous. Super Kev drove a free kick into the wall on 80 minutes, from the rebound he crossed to Stevo who headed home an equaliser. That seemed it a scrapped point until Ince out of nothing drove in a fierce shot at the death to win the

game. Much of the Wolves game plan seemed to be to clobber Howard, I have never seen him take so much stick – did they make any comment on TV about this? I turned to Pete at the end of the game and said “Enoch’s not a midfield player and is probably playing a level too high for him, but there were several crap players out there tonight on both sides!”

The Frampton Hatter

After the scum farce and the glorious failure against Liverpool, it was a return to the more mundane and a trip to Molineux.

A decent Town following was slightly crammed to the side of one end, with the Wolves faithful right next to us, content just to stare at us for the first half. Still, if they have to put up with this rubbish every other week, you can hardly blame them. It was a dreadful first half that couldn’t have kept many neutrals on Sky tuned in. Molineux is a fantastic stadium, but I’d forgotten the huge gaps everywhere which gave it a morgue like atmosphere for this game. The only noise was when the Wanderers fans booed their team off at the interval which gave the belief that a better half may be in store for the Town. Not a difficult task, it must be said.

The start of the second period was a big improvement as the Hatters kept hold of the ball in the Wolves half for quite a while and their defenders were made to work for the first time. Much better, Town. Keep them out, get the home fans on their backs and then press for a goal of our own. Wolves scored soon after. Coyne was probably fouled when he jumped for the cross, but I can’t complain about that if our entire midfield is going to let Ince run unchallenged for fifty yards. It wouldn’t have happened last season. The Town continued to push for a goal, but it looked a forlorn hope until a good Nico cross was well headed in by Stevo after eighty minutes. I was confident that we had enough about us to scrap and battle for the final ten minutes to earn a good point. But it wasn’t to be, as man of the match Ince made sure he got to the ball first and fired into the corner with a few minutes left. I thought we were a little unlucky to lose, simply because neither side deserved to win this poor match. A pale shadow of the game at Kenilworth Road.

Other results kept us in the top half of the table, but I can’t see that lasting much longer. We aren’t in great danger yet but we’ve now lost eleven of our last fifteen games and if we lose eleven out of the next fifteen, we’ll be down with the relegation fodder. It’s not that we’re playing bad football and we’re certainly due some good fortune but, until then, the lads just need to work harder to earn that bit of luck. Our tiny squad doesn’t help. Fair play to Newell who won’t waste what little money there is to spend and will only sign players ‘for the future of the club’. David Bell was the only signing from the five bids made for players, so it’s a good job Rushden are owned by the fans these days – they have got to watch the pennies more than us. However, when Enoch lines up in centre midfield I think it might be time for a loan player to come in. The present situation for the Town is that we need wins, whatever our final target may be.

Richard Ward

21.01.06 TOWN 2 QPR 0

Ian Holloway has really annoyed me this week. Not only does he give very frank and down-to-earth interviews but now he has spoken out in support of Mike Newell on the subject of bungs and corruption within football. In a sport full of hyperbole and deceitfulness, Holloway’s honesty is as welcome as it is refreshing and herein lies the problem: I like him. I don’t want to, I don’t like QPR and they have been incredibly lucky in recent seasons

against us, both in league and cup, and for the most part we haven’t got what we have deserved. Nevertheless, I appreciate Holloway now almost as much as I did when he single-handedly tore us to bits as Bristol Rovers’ midfield maestro.

Fortunately, QPR’s current crop of second division ‘starlets’ are not living up to their manager’s ball-playing ways and are crap. With two great hulking centre-backs in Shittu and Carlisle, QPR seem to be basing their tactics on bullying opposition forwards into letting them have the ball. However, Luton’s more mobile forwards managed to avoid being taken behind the bikesheds and created chances throughout the game. The main worry for the Town being our inability to convert them into goals. Warren ‘the genie’ ‘wears a beanie’ ‘bit of a meanie’ Feeney missed three glorious chances in the second half after coming on as a substitute for Rowan Vine who himself never looked like scoring. With two goals disallowed for borderline decisions of impediment and offside, Luton could quite easily have scored a hat full and Rangers could not have complained as the home side dominated the entire game. The problem is that the opposition, even when playing badly, will always feel they have a chance at only 0-1 down. Why is it that Luton sign recognised goalscorers and then seem to remove their shooting boots as soon as they arrive at the training ground?

At the back Mika Hakkinen was awesome again. How did we sign this guy on a free and how come he is supposed to be a midfielder? Heikkinen’s anticipation and Chris Coyne’s aggression are forming a reliable partnership at the centre of defence which is why we are still competing despite wasting the chances we create. I am annoyed at the manager’s insistence on playing Ahmet Brkovic at left midfield when every supporter knows moving him to the right was the making of him. Dean Morgan should be playing left midfield and taking the corners; Brko should be playing in the middle when Holmes/Nichols/Robinson are injured, or on the right otherwise. The idea of playing Enoch Showunmi in the holding role is risible. Carlos Edwards should be playing on the right or up front if Brko is in. Only Steve Howard seems to score regularly and all the other strikers cannot complain about lack of chances so why not try Edwards in attack, where he has played before, and where his pace and shooting enthusiasm would be most dangerous? Why am I not manager? Why do men have nipples?

So, we were deserved winners this week. I cannot see us getting promoted this season and frankly it would be a waste if we did, but we won’t go down and we are certainly good enough to give the likes of QPR a run for their money. Either that or Newell bunged Holloway a tenner before the game...

Cliff Saunders

31.01.06 WEDNESDAY 0 TOWN 2

Along with the Liverpool cup game, this was Rowan Vine’s best performance this season, if not his best in a Luton shirt. He was energetic, direct, he made space, he changed flanks, he linked up really well with Ahmet Brkovic down the left, he brought a penalty about (no dive this time) with a strong run and he took the Town’s second with a blistering strike that I would have sworn was going over but dipped viciously to leave the keeper stranded. Why he can’t do it more often is beyond me. Consistency is the key of course, and to highlight this fact was one of Steve Howard’s better performances due, perhaps, to the stick he was getting from the fans he scorned last year.

Just like the performance against QPR, Luton should have had more goals as they had much more of the play but Sheffield Wednesday offered very little threat. Luton started brightly then tailed away but came out very strongly in the second half, kicking towards their own supporters, and played some very nice stuff. The Owls did have the ball in the

net in the second half but the referee ended like giving it. Apart from that their attacking was dealt with quite effectively by the Hatters back-four with Kevin Foley outstanding. In front of Foley, Carlos Edwards caused problems with his pace as usual whilst Kevin Nichols spent most of the game wondering how come he had to play alongside the Daddy Longlegs again.

The linesman on Luton's left in the second half had an absolute shocker. All officials can make mistakes regarding throw-ins and free-kicks and the home team will generally get the benefit, but this guy was dreadfully contradictory. In the first half, a big fuss was made over Marlon Beresford taking a free-kick from the correct position, as if 5-10 yards would make a difference from his own penalty area. I accept that rules are rules but why then, were the Wednesday players allowed to take at least three set-pieces from positions nearly 15 yards away from where the so-called offences occurred? The ref was poor for both sides so it did make me chuckle as the home fans booed him vehemently towards the end. Maybe they should change their name to Partisan Sheffield.

This was my fourth trip to Hillsborough, if memory serves, and my first win. Not a surprise as it was the Town's first win in over 25 years apparently but it was well-deserved as well as long overdue. It is a shame that the game couldn't have been moved to the Saturday but I was expecting a better away attendance despite the frosty weather. Who knows if the result would have been different? All I know is the stay-aways missed a good game and a good result.

Unfortunately, the woeful Sheffield side are further proof that this ridiculous play-off experiment should be scrapped at the earliest opportunity. If a club cannot finish within sight of the league leaders then they will not be able to cope in a higher division. Wednesday will follow Leicester City into the second/third/19th nervous division for next year and Luton Town will still be competing. If you see him, bung the manager a fiver from me.

Cliff Saunders

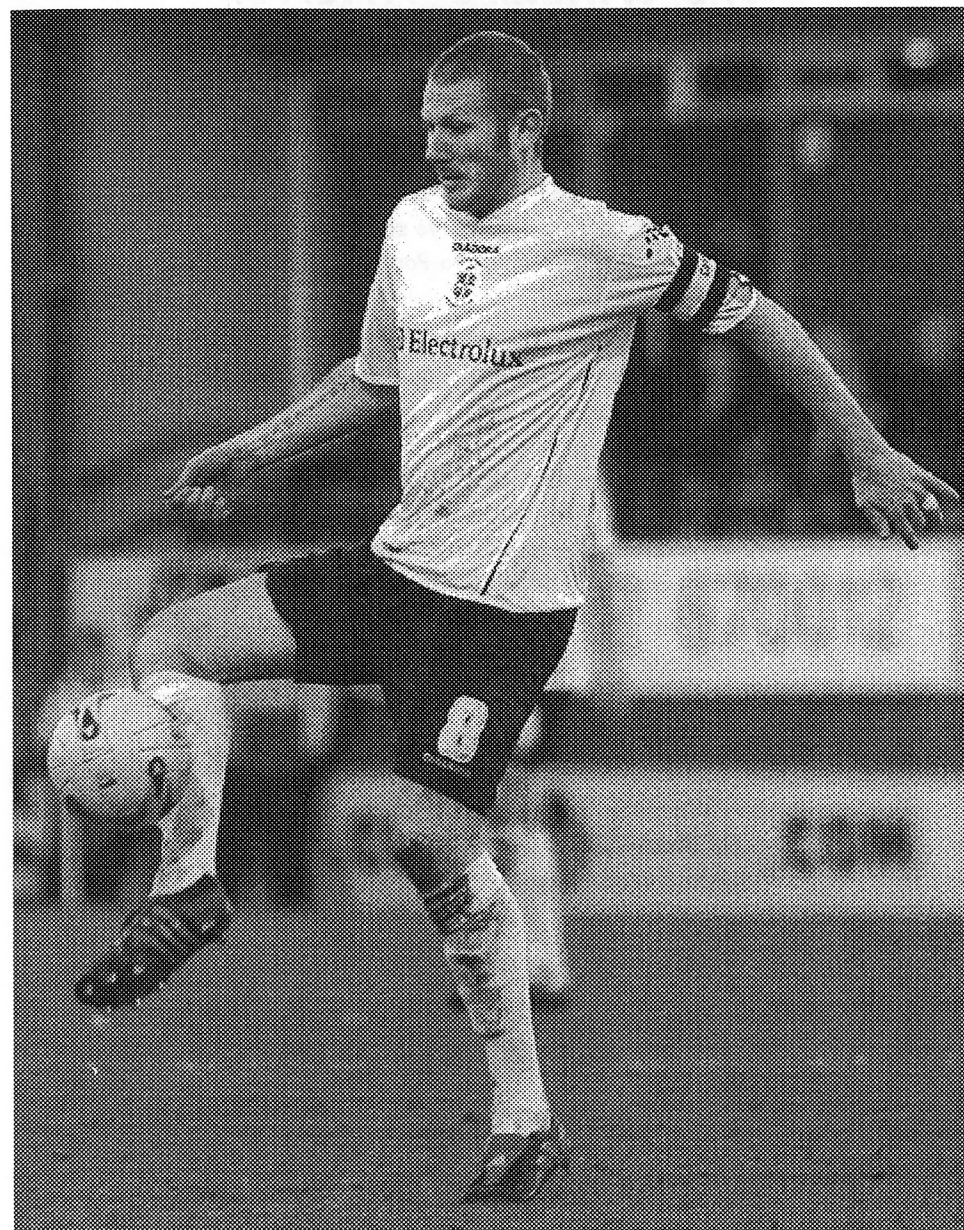
04.02.06 TOWN 2 DULL CITY 3

Around eight months earlier, this fixture had been the crunch match in the League One title race, with Town emerging victorious after a hard fought encounter and going on to take the title. This time round, many felt that the significance was more likely to be Mike Newell's last match in charge before leaving to take charge of a bigger club – or Leicester!

As it turned out, the significance was probably to put an end to our play-off hopes. We were given some false hope early on when Keith Keane was the unlikely hero, heading the ball home after 9 minutes, but failed to match up to our first half dominance of several earlier matches this season. In fact, Hull took the honours in that department. Elliot equalised with a superb strike after 14 minutes, but the killer blows came close to half time with two goals from close range for the visitors.

When Newell made a rare triple substitution early in the second half, we got our first viewing of David Bell who, it has to be said, looked good value. But, although Town were starting to dominate the game, it was not enough to get past the stout defence of Hull. The visitors were certainly not interested in entertaining, and took their time about almost everything, but at least didn't resort to w*t*f*rd's "management" techniques. In the end, Town found a way through with Coyne putting Edwards' cross away, but could not take advantage of the remaining time to draw level. Overall, a disappointment but representative of our recent loss of form.

KFH



Dreaming of wearing a 'keeper's shirt? Captain Kev in action in his more accustomed matchday clothing.

The Wiltshire 'Atturrrr

Christmas was coming. The goose was getting fatter. Please put a smile on the face of this old Hatter.

Four points from the whole of December, worst possible result on 2 January and dumped out of the FA Cup by some jammy scousers (was there a hub cap left in Dunstable Road that night?). So it was good to see Mike being given some money to buy players (as opposed to being offered money to sell them). However, at the time of writing, even the prospect of a free holiday to Portugal is not enough to tempt any potential new talent.

What can you say about the Liverpool game. It was a sort of 90 minute summary of the season to date. Hope of survival became hope of glory became expectation of glory became expectation of survival. I'm not sure what the other inhabitants of a little pub in the middle of Wiltshire made of a babbling, gibbering stir crazed nutter climbing the walls and shrieking his head off but I enjoyed myself. I think the whole country (apart from the red half of Merseyside) became honorary Hatters that night - everyone I spoke to was rooting for us. Mind you, you would expect that as, being in Wiltshire, most people here are Man Utd or Chelsea fans (naturally).

As far as I know, only three teams have stuck three goals on Liverpool in the last 6 months: AC Milan, Chelsea and now Luton. Illustrious company indeed (for AC Milan and Chelsea, that is). And did anyone see Steven Gerrard stumble during the post match interview? Trying to get another penalty, no doubt.

I have a theory. Well, more paranoid delusion really. When the FA called Mike Newell in "to discuss his bung allegations", it was really to sound him out about the England job. Sven was being his usual gullible self where the press are concerned and they knew time was running out. "Not a Premiership manager", I hear you say? Neither was Mike Bassett. So who's next? Here are a few alternatives:

Paulo di Canio. Antics would make him very welcome in Germany I'm sure.

Cynthia Payne. Vast experience of making tarts work hard.

Ulrika Jonsson. Probably knows most of the squad already.

Harry the Happy Hatter. Having no genitals, the press would be hard pushed (if you'll pardon the pun) to make allegations about his private life.

The Luton Town Board. They would probably relocate the new Wembley to France (after about 10 years farting about, of course).

If you look at the English contenders, frankly, none of them have to date proved themselves to be up to it (apart from Mike Newell and they're not having him!). With

all due respect to the likes of Sam Allardyce, etc, they have only had the opportunity so far to get good results out of average groups of players. That is not England, as Graham Taylor found out. England is a squad of superstars and, sorry, you need someone with the proven ability to take superstars and make them work as a team. The right person therefore needs to be managing a top club full of superstars AND succeeding.

How ironic that this is probably the only person England can't afford.

Anyway, we are playing Cardiff on 14th February (happy valentine) and that reminded me of a great piece I read years ago. So I have slightly amended it to fit. Imagine Mike and Howie on the coach (think John Travolta and Samuel L Jackson in the opening scene of a certain Tarantino film):

Steve: Ok, so tell me again about Wales.

Mike: Whaddya wanna know?

Steve: Bestiality is legal there right?

Mike: Yeah, its legal buddy but it ain't 100% legal. I mean you can't just walk into a field, pick and start having fun. They want you to shag sheep in your home or certain designated places.

Steve: And those are farms?

Mike: Ok, it breaks down like this: it's legal to buy a sheep, it's legal to own a sheep and if you're the proprietor of a farm, it's legal to sell or rent sheep. It's ILLEGAL to shag sheep in public but... but... but that doesn't matter 'cos, getta loada this, the police in Wales are too stupid to notice a sheep hangin' off your old fella. I mean that's an intellect the police in Wales DON'T have.

Steve: Ahhh man. I'm not goin', that's all there is too it. Turn the coach around.

Mike: Nah man, you'd hate it the most. But do know what the funniest thing about Wales is?

Steve: What?

Mike: It's the little differences, I mean they got the same kinda shit over there as we got here, but there it's a little different.

Steve: Example.

Mike: Ok. You can walk into a movie theatre in Wales and order a coke, and I'm not talkin' about no beverage, I'm talkin' about a LUMP of coal. And in Cardiff you can buy coal in MacDonalds.

Do you know what they call a quarterpounder with cheese in Cardiff?

Steve: They don't call it a quarterpounder with cheese?

Mike: Nah man, they don't have fractions, they wouldn't know what the hell a quarterpounder is.

Steve: So whadda they call it?

Mike: A (assumes welsh accent) "Hhhhaaaam and Cheese Saaaaandwhichhhhhh".

Steve: A Ham and Cheese Sandwich?

Mike: That's right.

Steve: And whadda they call a Big Mac?

Mike: A Big Mac's a Big Mac but there they call it a Bichhhhh Machch (accent again).

Steve: (imitating accent badly) A Bichch Machchchchchchchch

Mike: Ha ha ha

Steve: Whadda they call a Whopper?

Mike: I don't know, I didn't go into "Burrregagghhhh Khheeeng" (accent again). Do you know what they put on French Fries in Cardiff instead of ketchup?

Steve: What?

Mike: Nutty slack.

Steve: Ahhh man...

Mike: I've seen 'um do it man, they drown 'um in that shit.
(cue Music)

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 25th Feb

Leeds United (A)

Only 18 previous encounters at Leeds, with the hosts winning 9 matches, Luton have been victorious on 4 occasions, and there have been 5 draws. The home side have scored 29 goals, with the Hatters managing 19. Luton won the first encounter 2-0, on Boxing Day 1947, courtesy of goals from Joe O'Brien and Hugh Billington. This score line was repeated in September 1957 with Luton legends Bob Morton and Gordon Turner scoring. The other two victories were both by a 2-1 score line, in February 1957 (Allan Brown and George McLeod) and March 1961 (Alec Ashworth and Gordon Turner). There has never been a goal-less draw in this fixture, with Leeds only failing to score on two occasions, and keeping a clean sheet 4 times. Although 45 years may seem a long time not to have won at Leeds, there have only been 5 encounters in this time, 4 defeats and 1 draw for the Hatters. Victory margins have only been by 1 or 2 goals, except for a 4-0 defeat in April 1955 and 3-0 in May 1963.

Last time: 29th Feb 1992 Lost 0-2

(Extra statistic! - This match was played on a rare day, courtesy of a leap year! This was only the 3rd time that Luton have played on 29th Feb, previously home games against w*tf*rd and Hull in 1936 and 1964 respectively. Both these games finished 2-1 to Luton.)

Sat 4th Mar

Millwall (A)

Taking at least a point from over half of these fixtures is certainly an achievement for the Hatters, with 8 wins and 9 draws from 33 meetings. Goals scored isn't so good though, only 31 to date with 55 conceded. The history goes back 85 years, with a goal-less draw in April 1921, and in fact Luton were unbeaten in the first 5 meetings at Millwall! Having said that the run came to more than a shuddering halt with consecutive 7-0 defeats, in 1925/26 and 1926/27. Two fixtures later and the Hatters recorded their second victory, in some style as well 4-1, with Jack Ball scoring twice. Another goal-less draw followed a year later, and Luton were victorious once more in November 1936, courtesy of goals from Joe Payne and Frederick Roberts. It was 5 defeats in a row then though and we're now into the 1970's. A point was gained in a 2-2 draw in September 1971, and although Luton scored twice again in the next fixture they found themselves losing 3-2. A solitary goal from Barry Butlin was enough for victory in 1973/74. David Moss scored twice, without reply, in 1978/79 and Luton won by the same score line in 1997/98, Steve Davis and Tony Thorpe the scorers. This was the second of three consecutive victories for the Hatters at Millwall, with 1-0 wins in 96/97 and 98/99, Ceri Hughes and Thorpe the scorers.

Last time: 10th March 2001 Lost 0-1

Sat 11th Mar

Leicester City (H)

It's 13 years since Luton last beat Leicester at home, but that was the 4th consecutive win at Kenilworth Road against the Foxes. Leicester ended Luton's 7 match unbeaten run in this fixture with a 2-0 win in October 1993. There have been 26 previous encounters, with the home side winning 12 and Leicester 8, with 6 draws, of which 2 were goal-less. In the first post-war season the visitors won 2-1, but the scores were reversed the following season. Leicester have scored 3 goals on two occasions, but yet still lost one of these matches, 4-3 in February 1959. Tony Gregory, Bob Morton, Allan Brown, and George Cummins were the scorers that day. The Hatters also scored 4 in May 1985, courtesy of

goals from Emeka Nwajobi, David Preece, Brian Stein and Mick Harford, who between them wore shirt numbers 8, 9, 10 and 11! The Hatters have managed 3 goals twice, in April 1975 Adrian Alston, an own goal, and Jimmy Husband were the scorers and then on New Years Day 1986 Mick Harford scored a hat trick in a 3-1 win. The highest scoring draw came in September 1953 when Johnny Downie and an own goal were the scorers a 2-2 stalemate. This is the first time the two sides have met for 10 years!
Last time: 26th August 1995 Drew 1-1 (Ceri Hughes)

Sat 18th Mar Derby County (H)

Luton have won 10 of the 16 fixtures, with Derby taking maximum points on 4 occasions, including 2 wins in the last 4 meetings. Luton won the first meeting back in April 1954 when Bob Morton and Johnny Downie scored in a 2-1 win. Six months later the score line improved as Gordon Turner and Jesse Pye scored without reply from the visitors. The sides drew 1-1 in March 1961, before Luton won 4-2 at the start of the following season. Tommy McKechnie scored twice, with Harry Walden and Alec Ashworth netting further goals, in what is Luton's highest score in this fixture. The Hatters found the net 3 times during the promotion season of 1981/82 and the biggest win, 3-0 was achieved in April 1989. David Moss, Clive Goodyear and Mal Donaghy scored in the first fixture, with a Danny Wilson penalty, Mick Harford and Kingsley Black scoring in the latter. These victories made up two of the five consecutive Luton wins in this fixture, which was ended in October 1992 when the visitors won 3-1. Luton won the next fixture, which is also their last, in January 1994. Many will remember this match for the Scott Oakes wonder goal, racing from inside his own half, past numerous challenges before lashing the ball home from outside the area. Paul Telfer had scored the Hatters first, with Ceri Hughes also being sent off.
Last time: 2nd September 1995 Lost 1-2 (Dwight Marshall)

Sat 25th Mar Brighton & Hove Albion (A)

It's 23 years since the Hatters last won at Brighton, although on a positive note there has only been one fixture since then! Unfortunately there's where the positivity ends, as Luton have only taken maximum points from 3 of the 26 trips to the South Coast, and have scored just 23 goals! The home side meanwhile have 18 victories and 51 goals to their name! Luton were unbeaten in the first 3 meetings, way back in the 1920's, which included a 1-0 win in 1922/23, courtesy of a goal from Syd Reid. This is also the only time the Luton defence have kept a clean sheet in this fixture! It was 47 years before the Hatters won again, and that came after 3 draws and 14 defeats! John Collins was the hero, scoring twice in a 2-1 victory. Although the defeats returned, 3 more in the next 9 years, Luton won again during the 1982/83 season. Ricky Hill scored twice for the Hatters, and two own goals doubled the Hatters tally in a 4-2 win.
Last time: 25th August 2003 Lost 0-2

Sat 1st Apr Ipswich Town (H)

There has only been 8 fixtures previously, with the Hatters winning 5 times and Ipswich recording victories in September 1974 and March 1996. The only draw, 1-1, came in 1982/83 when Brian Stein scored from the penalty spot. New Years Day 1955 saw the first league meeting at Kenilworth Road, and Luton won 3-2 courtesy of goals from Roy Davies, Bob Morton and George Cummins. It wasn't until November 1960 that the two sides met again, and it was the same score line once more, with a brace from Gordon Turner and an

Alec Ashworth goal. The visitors were convincing winners in 1974/75, by four goals to one! After the draw, previously mentioned, Luton won the next three meetings. It was 2-1 in 1983/84 with both goals from Trevor Aylott, including a penalty. The following season Mick Harford scored twice in a 3-1 win, Emeka Nwajobi netted the other. The latter then scored the only goal of the game in October 1985.
Last time: 30th March 1996 Lost 1-2 (Kim Grant)

Sun 9th Apr w*tf*rd (A)

So the long awaited derby match, and Luton have a good record when visiting Vicarage Road, with 11 wins and 9 draws from 37 league encounters. There's not much in the goals record either, 42 scored and 55 conceded. Recent history is certainly much more impressive than the early days, when it took the Hatters took 10 attempts to win! Although when they did record that illusive victory it was done in style, with a 4-0 thrashing of their hosts, the biggest victory to date! Jimmy Yardley netted the first before Andy Rennie banged in a hat trick, in September 1929. Three more defeats followed before another Luton win, this time by a solitary Billy Pease goal in March 1934. This win started a 4 match unbeaten run, with a 2-2 draw followed by two 3-1 victories. In 1935/36 Wilf Crompton, Frederick Roberts and Jack Ball scored the goals, and Roberts also scored the following season, along with Bert Dawes and the legendary Joe Payne. There were only 3 games in the next 33 years, and Luton lost, and failed to score, in all of these encounters. Mike Keen scored the only goal of the game in December 1970, as did Kirk Stephens in 79/80 and Steve White in 1980/81. In the Championship season of 1981/82 the points were shared as Brian Stein scored in a 1-1 draw. Stein joined Frankie Bunn on the score sheet in November 1983 as the Hatters won 2-1, a score line that was repeated almost 2 years, to the day, later with Mitchell Thomas and an own goal giving the visitors all 3 points. It's currently 7 matches unbeaten for Luton at Vicarage Road, and this run started in 1987/88 with a 1-0 win, courtesy of a Steve Foster goal. It was nearly 6 years on before the sides met in the league again, and the match finished goal-less, the following season the points were also shared but this time David Preece and a penalty from John Dreyer earned Luton a 2-2 draw. A stunning 4-2 win followed in 1994/95 with Paul Telfer netting twice after Scott Oakes and Kerry Dixon had scored. The last three meetings have all ended in 1-1 draws, Steve Davis scoring during the 95/96 season, and Paul Showler netting in 96/97.
Last time: 14th February 1998 Drew 1-1 (Marvin Johnson)

Sat 15th Apr Coventry City (H)

The last time these sides met it was in the old first division, (now called the Premiership for you younger fans!), and the Hatters were victorious with the only goal of the game being scored by Mick Harford. Thirty previous fixtures, with Luton winning 14, 6 draws and 10 victories for Coventry. The first meeting, 79 years ago, saw the Hatters win 4-1, with goals from Syd Reid, George Dennis (2 including a penalty) and Jimmy Thompson. This started a 6 match unbeaten run in this fixture, with repeat 4-1 and 3-1 victories, during the 1931/32 and 32/33 seasons respectively, and a 2-0 win in March 1931. There were two draws, both 1-1, in October 1928 and April 1930. In fact 5 of the 6 draws were by this score line, the only exception in April 1989 when John Dreyer and Danny Wilson both scored in a 2-2 draw. The visitors most common victories, three times, are 1-0 and 3-1, with their biggest win (4-1) coming in February 1938. After the Hatters 2-1 win, in April 1952, Coventry won the next four meetings at Kenilworth Road, and so it was over 32 years

before the Hatters won again. Boxing Day 1984 with goals from Brian Stein and Ray Daniel. A 1-0 defeat followed, before Luton won 2-0 again when, during the 86/87 season, current* management duo Mike Newell and Brian Stein found the net. The most recent three meetings have all ended in wins for the Hatters. In March 1990 Kingsley Black, Paul Gray (with his only league goal for the Club) and Iain Dowie were all on the score sheet in a 3-2 victory, with Dowie also scoring the only goal of the game in the following season. Last time: 20th December 1991 Won 1-0 (Mick Harford)

(* = At the time of writing Mike Newell is the manager of Luton Town FC, despite being linked with Leicester, Newcastle and every other Club without a manager!)

Mon 17th Apr Plymouth Argyle (A)

This is one of the worst journeys a Luton fan has to make, not only because it's such a long way, but the Hatters have won only 5 times from 31 attempts! The hosts have 64 goals and 12 clean sheets in this fixture, compared to 34 goals and 8 clean sheets. In the opening 10 fixtures Luton only scored 4 goals, and 3 of them came in the 4-3 defeat in April 1926! The Hatters were to concede 4 goals on four occasions from these 10 matches, whilst also only picking up a solitary point, following a goal-less draw in 1923/24. Hatters were soundly beaten 6-1, in November 1929, but 8 years later, and the next fixture between the sides the Hatters were to record their first victory at Plymouth! Frederick Roberts scored twice, with Joe Payne and Jack Vinall scoring the others in a 4-2 win. 11 years passed before the next victory, Valentines Day 1948, when Syd Ottewell, Mel Daniel and Hugh Billington were on target in a 3-1 win. The biggest Luton win in this fixture, 3-0, was recorded three games into the 1961/62 season, Gordon Turner with a brace and a goal from Harry Walden for the visitors. There were also 3 goals in the next win for the Hatters, a brace from Matt Tees and a Graham French strike in a 3-1 victory. The two sides shared a 6 goal thriller, and the points, in November 1996 with Tony Thorpe scoring a hat trick. The following season saw Luton's last win, with goals from Andrew Fotiadis and a first career goal for Sean Evers. Since then Plymouth have won three fixtures by two goals to one. Last time: 13th September 2003 Lost 1-2 (Gary McSheffrey)

Sat 22nd Apr Sheffield United (H)

It's 10 years since the two sides last met at Kenilworth Road, and Hatters were victorious that day, Bontcho Guentchev scoring directly from a quality free kick. This victory went some way to avenge a heavy 6-3 defeat from the previous season. United won the first ever meeting, a 3-2 score line, in February 1938. Seven months later and Luton won 2-0, Eddie Connelly and Jack Vinall the scorers. Christmas Eve 1949 saw the visitors win again, this time 3-1, before one of only 2 draws in this fixture the following season. Luton then won the next four meetings of the Clubs, the most impressive of which was 4-1 during 1952/53, when Bernard Moore, Jesse Pye, Bert Mitchell and Charlie Watkins all scored. The visitors matched that score line in September 1960, with Gordon Turner netting the only Luton goal. The Hatters started the 1976/77 season with a victory over the Blades, Dixie Deans scoring both goals in a 2-0 win. This score was doubled the following season when Ron Futch, Lil Fuccillo and Brian Stein (2) wrapped up a comfortable victory. 7025 fans witnessed only the second, and last draw, in this fixture in February 1979, with another Turner on the score sheet, Wayne this time! In their final season in the top flight Hatters recorded a 2-1 win, with legends Brian Stein and Mick Harford netting. Last time: 31st January 1996 Won 1-0 (Bontcho Guentchev)

Sun 30th Apr Burnley (A)

The final game of the season, and Luton will be looking to keep hold of an impressive unbeaten run at Turf Moor, as they have won 3 of the last 4 fixtures! Unfortunately looking more at the statistics and you'll see that overall Burnley have a clear advantage, with eleven victories to five, and five draws. It was at the seventh time of asking that Luton first won at Burnley, a 2-1 win in February 1958 courtesy of goals from Gordon Turner and Allan Brown. A draw and four defeats followed, before the Hatters were victorious once more, again with a 2-1 score line with Dixie Deans and Ricky Hill finding the target. The number of games before another away win fell by one again, as it only took three defeats and a draw before Tony Thorpe scored twice in a 2-0 win during the 1996/97 season. Mitchell Thomas scored a rare goal in the 1-1 draw the following season, before Luton's favourite winning score lines were repeated once more, 2-1 in February 1999 and 2-0 a year later. Andrew Fotiadis and Gary Doherty scored in the first game, with Alan White (what is it with Luton defenders scoring rare goals at Burnley?!) and Phil Gray netting in the second. As well as the two 2-0 victories Luton have only kept a clean sheet on one other occasion, a goal-less draw in November 1979. Burnley's last three victories have all been by a 2-1 score line, with the last of these coming in March 1995, when Dwight Marshall netted. Last time: 7th March 2000: Won 2-0 (Alan White and Phil Gray)

Simon "Statto" Pitts

www.lutonfc.com/stattoindex.asp

SUBSCRIPTIONS

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

NEXT ISSUE...

We've just one issue left to do this season, and that will, as has been traditional, be on sale at the last home game of the season, against Sheffield United on April 22nd. With Easter coming the week before we need a touch more time for preparation, so the deadline will be Sunday April 9th (giving time for some quick thoughts on our famous victory in Hertfordshire. Please feel free to submit your contributions earlier though. Everything welcome, to the usual address, as featured on page 2.

So who are we
playing tonight?

Saturday 7th January 2006

12.10.06

