

MAD AS A **HATTER!**

THE LUTON TOWN FANZINE

£1.00

Issue 70

April 2006

DRESSED TO...



A W*tf*rd defender tries to remove Rowan Vine's shirt during the second half of the recent derby match. Those who were at the match won't be surprised to be reminded that neither referee nor his assistant saw this!

MAD AS A HATTER!

THE LUTON TOWN FANZINE

195 Cutenhoe Road, Luton, LU1 3NQ.

Email: keith.hayward1@ntlworld.com

Editor

Keith Hayward

Editorial Assistant

Sue Hayward

Executives

Phil Ivinson, Mark Ivinson, Andy Collon, Jerry Darr, Dave Kirkby, Steve Follit, Jeff Smith, Chris Lennon, Kevin Wilson, Mark Wilson, and the Brothers Different.

Occasional help

Ann Tice, John Wild.

Child Labour

Adam & Peter Tice, Rebecca Wild.

Contributors

Our thanks to Peter Bulkeley, Cliff Saunders, Martin Trainer, Tom King, Dale Walker, Dave Baker, Peter Bulkeley, Graham Sharpe, Will Larter, Eric Olthwaite, Elliot P Smoke and anyone else we've carelessly forgotten to mention.

Cartoons

Adam Lloyd & B Dave B

Action Photos

Gareth Owen, www.go-photo.co.uk

Printer

Paul Hollingshead, Blueprint 01443 205653.

All material contained in this publication is copyright of *Mad as a Hatter!* and may not be reproduced without permission. The views expressed are those of the individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor. Anyone who feels offended, misrepresented or misquoted will be given the right of reply.

Mad as a Hatter! is also available from:

BRICKLAYERS ARMS, High Town Road, Luton.

THE CLUB SHOP, Luton Town FC, Kenilworth Road, Luton.

Ed Lines

Here we go then, the end of another season. This, our first in English football's second tier for 10 years or so has been, if we are realistic, a resounding success on the field. If, last July, we had been offered a place around 10th in the division, with only a couple of new signings and, amazingly, not a single loan player all season, we would have said "that will do nicely!" It is a sign of how much we exceeded our own expectations that we find ourselves ultimately disappointed not to have made a greater challenge for a play-off place. But let's not delude ourselves. We are not ready to be a Premiership club just yet - the whole set-up of the club is not ready for that, and we are still subject to Football League controls after the receivership episode. The season has been a success and we should look to improve on this next season and mount a greater challenge than this.

It will be a test of Mike Newell's management to take the current squad to yet another level, within the limits of the LTFC budget. Judged on his achievements so far, if he can do this, then he will set himself up for a top job in the Premiership when it becomes available. If he doesn't, then he can at least comfort himself that, under the current board at Luton, he has a job for life. There is no doubt that Bill Tomlins seems to be immune to criticism, even when he has happily taken the credit for Mike signing a new contract that he hasn't seen.

So, with the outlook seemingly rosy, Mike has little to worry about. Other than, according to some recent quotes, "Avenues of evil", in this case, an internet messageboard (believed to be that at lutonfc.com). It seems that a player showed Mike a message which slated almost the entire team, in some detail. And Mike has taken exception to it. Unfortunately, it seems that he was unaware of the context of the message, and was therefore unable to accept that it was very tongue-in-cheek. Interestingly, he declared that he does not 'do' the internet himself, yet is able to see that this is something which the authorities will, in time, stamp down on.

God help us! For your information, Mike, what is discussed on a messageboard is, in general, no different to a chat in a pub over a few pints - something many hundreds of us do after every game. If the internet is an avenue of evil, then so is the pub chat and the alcohol that fuels it. We think you know what we mean.

As we head into the summer, the club has addressed 50% of thing that play on the minds of the most ardent supporters by announcing, uncommonly early for Luton Town, season ticket prices for next season. These show a pleasantly reasonable price increase of around 5%, which probably does not really do enough to increase the budget as much as we might like, but sits nicely in a position where it will stifle complaints from both those worried about their own pockets and those worried about the club's pockets. Nice work, LTFC. Now to the other 50%; about the destination for those pre-season friendlies...

COMING AROUND AGAIN

Remember David Evans? Our ex-chairman was part hero-part villain in a sort-of-Doug-Ellis mould, with his initial 'investment' helping the team and his subsequent selling of the ground and withdrawing of his money nearly killing us. Whether you remember him as being good for Luton or not, you will certainly remember him introducing an artificial surface and a ID-card policy which made Luton Town the most hated team in the country. It was said that the introduction of the membership cards was a reaction to the Millwall riot in 1985, however, this argument failed to hold water as the club continually told us that it wasn't so much an away fan ban as a members-only scheme. Regardless of the inherent contradictions of the scheme, it was clear to most of us that the only reason the sitting MP for Welwyn Garden City introduced ID-cards for Luton fans was as a sop to his party leader Margaret Thatcher who wanted to introduce them for every football supporter in the country.

The idea to require all persons in the U.K. who may at some time in the future want to attend a football match to buy an ID-card and have their private details kept on file was regarded as nonsense on so many levels. What was the government doing interfering in football? Why should you be charged in advance for the privilege of applying for a ticket that, for big games, you might not even get? Why should every fan be treated like a hooligan when the majority hasn't done anything wrong? What happened to innocent until proven guilty? What about the cost of new ticket machines and card readers which introduced a whole new barrier to entry and the commensurate delays? Then there was the technology. Cards and tickets not swiping successfully was a regular occurrence and on some match days they had to open the electronic turnstiles altogether to get people through as the bottlenecks were too widespread. Imagine this kind of chaos at Heathrow Airport on an August Bank Holiday when the government's new National Identity Register and Biometric Tracking Card fails to work as smoothly as they are all assuring us...

Anyone who opposed the introduction of ID-cards for football fans needs to wake up to the new threat we face when President Tony introduces a National Identity Register for all adult citizens whether they are football fans or not. This will be a vast computer database with 77 separate pieces of information each on approximately 30 million UK adults, followed by a compulsory record of every time that your card is used. In a short space of time the government will have a record of everywhere you go (coupled with number plate readers/recorders for cars), what you buy, whom you meet and you will be charged for the privilege. So you trust this government to use that information wisely? What about the next one, and the one after that? The ID-card bill allows for modifications to the content and usage of the cards and database to be introduced with no recourse to the elected body in Parliament. This means once the bill is through, successive governments can do what they like with it and make it more onerous every year.

You will pay for the cards, you will be fined for mistakes and you will pay again for replacements, lost cards or updates. Ever had an Oyster card for London Transport? How long do they last? One to two years maybe and the new ID-cards are very similar in design and will be used more often; so the Government's proposal that they should last for ten years like current passports is quite preposterous. At present we are being told that we will be charged £30 directly for the cards (£93 for a biometric passport+ID card). The London School of Economics stated in an independent report that this is not feasible and £175 is more likely. The Times recently published a report which estimated that £500 would be the fee. This is for every over-16 in your household so parents of teenagers beware. Every time you change some of the information on the

database it will cost you. Students living in three addresses over a three-year course will have to pay (or their parents will) three times to have the card updated. If you change your hair colour: you will have to change your record. If you start to wear glasses: you will need to change your record. If you make a mistake – it's a £1000 fine for every error; it is £2500 for refusing to have one at all. No exceptions.

The biometric data will involve every adult in the country having to traipse to a local centre (no exemption for the elderly and the infirm) to be fingerprinted, have their irises scanned (1% of people experience pain from this procedure and no data exists regarding long term retinal damage) and to have their faces scanned. We all think that fingerprints are foolproof but no study of such a huge number of people has ever been done; the criminal records currently held are nothing like as big as what is proposed here. Iris scans will need to be redone as people age and are impossible for blind people or those with cataracts. Facial scans are a joke, as growing a beard will throw it out, as will a new bulge from a trip to the dentists or a right-hander from a copper at football! The fact that three biometric tests are being used is highlighted as a belt-and-braces-and-bra (all I could think off) approach which only demonstrates the Home Office's fundamental misunderstanding of the maths involved. Fingerprints may be 99% accurate, iris scans maybe 97% accurate for those that can have them and facial scans are reported as anything from 60% reliable to 90% depending which report you read. $0.99 \times 0.97 \times 0.90 = 86.4\%$ which means that on a daily basis nearly four million people may experience problems getting access to library books, bank accounts, tax credits, doctor's appointments and even football grounds!

That's right, do you think that once a scheme is in the powers that be won't try and enforce an ID-card reader at entry to football grounds? Tickets for international tournaments are already non-transferable with many checks (often ignored I know) on the holder in the vicinity of the ground. Back in the David Evans days, the police were gagging to get all soccer supporters tagged and tracked in an effort to combat hooliganism so do you think they will pass up this opportunity?

The best bit though is the price. Again, estimates vary but who wouldn't be willing to pay £30,000 million to set-up a National Identity Register that Tony can then sell to George for sundry purposes. Oh, didn't I tell you? The USA has already stipulated what form they want the UK scheme to exist in so they can use the data easily too. They should have spoken to Bill Gates. Microsoft recently issued a press release stating that they have grave doubts over the security of the system and the data stored on it. Many other IT experts have cast doubt over the system but IT companies stand to make a killing from it so they are keeping quiet.

Put simply: it cannot be 100% accurate, 100% secure and guarantee 100% to cure terrorism benefit fraud, identity fraud (in fact it makes this easier – obviously), crime and all the other things we are told it will cure. So, why is it coming in? There are some big corporations who stand to make a gargantuan amount of money from this, and no doubt a few MPs have shares in them. Free enterprise, David Evans might have said, but at whose expense I say, look what happened at Luton Town.

Cliff Saunders

Sharpe Angle

'WE WANT TO FINISH IN THE TOP HALF of the table because that's where we've been all season and where we deserve to finish'. That's a paraphrase of what Mike Newell and anyone else connected with the club has been spouting for some while.

What nonsense! Unless there is some substantial kind of financial reward for finishing in the top half, (and when I rang the Football League to enquire, they told me you get fifty grand for winning the Championship; £25,000 for coming second and nothing for any other position) it doesn't matter a bean, a jot, or the rear end of a rodent.

While there is still a chance of making the play-offs, yes, you go for it flat out - although to judge by some of the lacklustre performances in games while there has still been a chance of that there hasn't been an undying determination to make it.

But, once you can no longer mathematically achieve that status then you are far better off using the remaining games to try out new formations and players than you are busting a gut to finish one or two meaningless places higher in the table.

After all, the higher you finish this season, the more you have to live up to next season and the more likely finishing no higher than that next time out will be considered failure. Why make life next season more difficult than necessary?

Okay, the supporters may be a little miffed that you've finished below such and such a side, but as we cannot finish higher than the one side which matters, then who really gives a damn?

In fact, a lower finish can help out next season when managers who perhaps weren't around at their club during the previous campaign, just glance at the league table for last season and under-estimate your true capabilities because of the position you finished in.

So - top half of the table ? You're having a laugh.

>>>>> <<<<<<

MIKE NEWELL is clearly a great fan of The Clash. He must sit at home listening to repeated plays of 'Should I Stay Or Should I Go?' How hilarious was that exchange recently when Bill Tomlins welcomed the fact that Mike had signed his new contract, to which the Gaffer responded 'Signed it? I haven't even seen it'.

Why would he want to stay? He has done extremely well this season, and enhanced both his reputation and bargaining power - offers of higher-placed clubs with much more spending power seem sure to appear during the close season. What more can he achieve by staying with Luton Town? There is no scope for more money to come in to the club - the attendances can barely improve on this season, regardless of how well we are doing next season. There is no real indication of when a new stadium can realistically be anticipated. Newell's stock is as high as it can get at Luton. The only way for him is down.

Why would he want to go? He would be going into an environment where he wouldn't know the club, wouldn't know the players, wouldn't know the political intrigues going on around him? There would be genuine pressure on him to achieve at a bigger club, therefore more likelihood of being perceived as a failure.

I still think that ultimately, ambition will get the better of him and much though he is

enjoying it here he will decide that to truly test himself he has to move on.

>>>>> <<<<<<

So, end of a decent season - although I am still convinced the Liverpool result was the great under-achievement of the campaign - which of the players should still be here next season and which ones shouldn't?

Is it time for Marlon to hang up his gloves? He says not. He has been the proverbial safe pair of hands and has pulled off some terrific saves, but has also occasionally looked his age and cost us the odd goal here and there. Time to make way for younger blood, perhaps.

Sol Davis - both an asset for his determination and ability and a liability for his temperament. Chris Coyne, troubled by injury and never approached the peak performances of which we know he is capable. Russ Perrett did well when called upon. Leon Barnett has showed gradual improvement and is worth persevering with. Kevin Foley is committed and capable but did not seem to improve that much during the season and is perhaps now playing at the top end of his potential.

Keith Keane got a few starts and even scored, but never really looked comfortable at first team level.

Carlos Edwards has only one weakness - his final shot when carving openings. Definitely our player of the season - imagine adding his pace and trickery to Jean Louis Valois's crossing and shooting ability.

Marcus Heikkinen. Just terrific. Uncomplaining, full of effort, adaptable, though clearly more effective in the back four. Excellent buy.

Paul Underwood. Mr Reliable. Steady, cultured, up to the standard. One of the unsung heroes.

Dean Morgan has frustrated everyone and showed just why he could be a great player and just why he is unlikely ever to be. Brko enjoyed a fine opening to the campaign but lost his way in the middle period of the season.

Kevin Nicholls - a far better footballer than many give him credit for. A born leader by example. Natural skipper.

Peter Holmes. Flatters to deceive too often. Useful all-purpose player but difficult to see him becoming a 'first name on the sheet' player.

Steve Robinson. Reliable Robbo. A battler with flashes of outstanding skill who has produced consistently and proved himself an integral part of the line-up, complementing Nicholls so well.

David Bell didn't get enough match-time to make an impact this term, but looked a proper player in flashes, so hopes are high that he can make the grade and prove the real deal.

Enoch. An enigma. Bashes in goals for fun in the reserves. Comes on as sub in different positions too often to make a real impact in the side. Not up to the level required in midfield, but unable to get a run in the side up front where it is still not certain that he couldn't outscore both Feeney and Vine. Still popular with the crowd - witness his mazy dribble in the Ipswich home game.

Steve Howard. Howie is Howie. Sometimes lazy, sometimes pre-occupied, but always looking

for a goal and still better than anyone else in the side at achieving that vital end product.

Rowan Vine/Warren Feeney. Mike Newell clearly cannot split them. Both never likely to become prolific goalscorers. Something of the Stuart Douglas/ Andrew Fotiadis about them, maybe. On the plus side both got plenty of games under their belt in what could be seen as a learning curve of a season and one of them has to establish his superiority over the other next season for all of our sakes. My bet - Feeney just has the edge as a goal-sniffer although Vine looks the classier of the two.

But then, what do I know ?

>>>>>> <<<<<<

I DON'T KNOW about you , but I am not a great fan of the rather angry, unpleasant atmosphere which surrounds local derbies. I wonder just how long that has been part of the games. I only ask as, whilst listening to the away game at Watford on 3 Counties Radio - pretty good coverage, by the way, too, with Simon Oxley doing a good job of maintaining neutrality - I was flicking through a programme I recently came across, from the April 25 1964, Division Three clash between the two sides at Kenilworth Road. We were seventh from bottom, having gone on an unbeaten run of seven games, during which 12 points (2 for a win, don't forget) had been collected, while Watford were third in the table with one game to play.

But what I was really intrigued to see was the 'Club Notes' in the programme, and the tone they took - 'When the fixtures for this season were published, we noted that our old friends from Watford were to be our last visitors and, naturally, hoped that this would be a significant occasion.'

And: 'Today marks the first visit to Kenilworth Road of Watford in a League match for over 25 years and it is perhaps sad that such important issues to both clubs hang on the result because there has always been the friendliest of feeling between the two clubs.'

Those were more straightforward days, and I do not detect any sarcasm in those remarks, so it can be assumed that there was little, if any, animosity between the clubs at board level, at least.

So, when did it all become a matter of life and death? And will it always be the way for the foreseeable future? Well, we don't have to worry too much about that until next season, do we? I for one very much hope Watford win the play-offs - because there is every chance that they will make Sunderland's Premiership record this season look quite impressive.

Also in the programme for that day from 42 years ago, was an advert for 'Lillywhite's New Method' - gardening, what else? Another, suggesting you should 'Keep Right on Top' - no, not for the Conservative Party, but for 'Rons' Gentlemen's Hairdressers and Stylists in Mill Street, Luton; and another for Wilds Sporting Goods Centre where, they were keen to inform potential customers, they boasted 'large stocks' of, er, air guns.

Ah, perhaps that's how the rivalry got started.

Graham Sharpe

Crowds, Monsters and Japanese

History lesson

Another year, another season. As history has a habit of repeating itself, we might soon be at a point where we've fallen from top league to bottom then back again. As when we appeared in the 1958 FA Cup final, then fell from the top division to Division Four in 1965 before being promoted again, in 1974.

1974 was a horrible time. As a seven year old, that era was like adolescence without the puberty. The Town were promoted, by mistake, along with Middlesbrough (who were quite good), and, Carlisle. Yes, Carlisle. I remember this clearly, but still, do not believe it. The 1974 Panini pictures of Barry Butlin, John Aston and John Faulkner featured astonished faces against the savagely blurred, colourful backgrounds normally reserved for 'half-pics' of players in the Scottish section. The Town players were utterly shocked to be swapping places with Man United for the season and before normal service was resumed a year later.

So let's ignore that season. The top division and an FA Cup final in 1958, to Division Four in 1965, then promotion, again, in 1974. Then, League Cup in 1988, fourth tier in 2001 and surely we'll be in the Premier in a sparkly new ground on stilts, for 2007-08.

Maybe not. Football's changed. Things will never be the same as in the good old days. Nada nada nada, blah blah blah. Nostalgia is, of course, cock. Politics is a different issue, but again, there are distinct parallels, going by the names of financial peril and Milton Keynes.

What the hell have we got? What can we cling on to?

But management/ownership/ground issues aside - if they *can* be put aside - we should be enjoying our football at the moment. Howard, Coyne and Nicholls are bona fide 'legends' and hopefully it's only a matter of time before the same's true of Heiks and Edwards. We have these consistently fantastic players, before we even go on to consider flashes of godlike genius from Messrs Brkovic and Vine.

Our manager

And in Mike Newell, we clearly have our best manager since Pleat's heyday (not counting Sir John Moore's brief tenure). We'll do well to hold on to MN. After all, it takes genius to be likened to 'James Bond waiting for a bus' on Radio 5 (Mr N was adopting his favoured 'reclining up against the dugout' position, in suit).

Newell oozes style. Whatever Big Fat Joe's positives or negatives, he looked like a mattress with a bullied 80s haircut. And with the benefit of hindsight some of his patter was ridiculous. Fabricating a rivalry against Plymouth got us one good gate and was *quite* funny, but was embarrassing.

Singing

But still, in the stands, football chanting is mean-spirited and devoid of wit. God knows if it motivates the players. If I was a striker with a goalscoring problem (we have a few to choose from), hearing that one of your predecessor's mother practises the oldest profession isn't necessarily going to make you put the ball in the back of the net.

And if Thorpe's mother *is* a whore, she can at least wake up one day and change her ways. Certain LT fans, a good few years after TT left the club, appear not to have that ability.

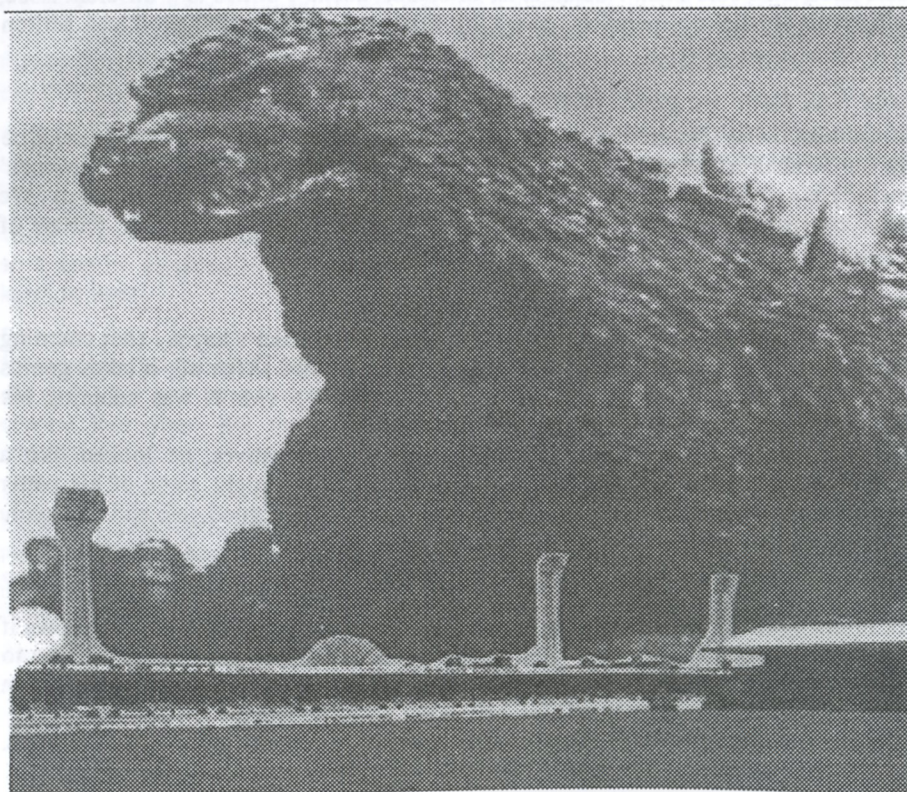
Please, shut it

And while we're having a go at imbecile Town watchers; Swearing Dad, you walk like a monkey and like your Simian kin, appear to be obsessed with masturbation. Is it necessary to leap up and shout "You're a wan-ker referee" every time play is stopped for one of the opponents *not* to be sent off? And Wckd boys; you're past it. One season in and you're acting like the bleedin' Diamond White Foul Mouths.

I'm not calling for censorship. People should be allowed to say what they want, even if, occasionally, a gagging order would be nice. Not because of coarseness or vulgarity, as while both these are base arts, they are arts, nevertheless. Gagging orders would be nice as it might cut out some of the lemon-sucking, cringe making stupidity of some folk privileged or foolhardy enough to be Town supporters.

Ahoy! Japan!

I suggest a spot of Japanese culture. If the Town slung its lot in with the Japanese, we could use The Vapours' hit as an instant, half-decent rallying song, and the yens would flow in. It wouldn't too difficult to erect a huge statue of Godzilla over the stadium (see artist impression), or to serve little Islington lunch boxes of steamed broccoli instead of the rather tired pukka pies. Nicholls and Sol could be retrained in the noble art of dirty Samurai tackling, and Enoch's feet could be bound together for no reason.



Japanese singing may or may not be good. I have no understanding of such matters. The Japanese are, however, keen on the Haiku, a philosophical poetic form in which poems contain three lines of five, seven and five syllables. They're meant to contain stuff about nature and offer some illumination of the thoughts of the writer.

LTFC haikus

Here are a few haikus I think richly deserve to be converted into esoteric football chants.

Junction ten or twelve?
Yeh durr-brain. While we're at it,
Why not eleven?

Enoch Showunmi
Eight foot eight; tall like giraffe.
But can't head the ball.

Ere, a season ends.
What price next season ticket?
Loads more, that's how much.

How much the burger?
They're made of rubber. And dust.
I'll have a coffee.

K1

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.

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 64 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 from 65 onwards 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.

New grounds - who needs them?

Just a few words on the article from Will Larter "New grounds - who needs them?" in *MAAH* 69. It was an interesting article and I think we need more like this on what the fans want from a new ground before we all go hiking up the M1.

I go along with the argument that new grounds on out-of-town sites tend to lose something and are not always close to stations / pubs / civilization etc. Those clubs who are fortunate enough to be able to redevelop where they are, can often get the benefit of a new ground, maintain links with the surrounding community and take advantage of existing infrastructure, which will often mean proximity to rail stations, local pubs and food outlets. A good example of a smaller club who have achieved this is Leyton Orient, who have managed a phased development supported by a developer who has used part of the site for housing. Without knowing the details of the finance, I would assume that sales on the apartments have cross funded the ground improvements, which now look pretty good. At first glance the O's old ground shared some of the same characteristics as Kenzie Road - ageing ground surrounded by Victorian terraced housing in a built up area.

That is where the similarity ends unfortunately - for a start I understand the O's own the plot and the site "footprint" allowed just enough elbow room between the ground and adjoining development to build new stands as well as the blocks of flats in each corner of the ground. Proximity to the Central Line means the flats would command a pretty reasonable sale value.

To try and attempt the same at Kenzie Road, as Will Larter suggests, would be difficult for the simple reason that the space is not there. Trying to build over an existing dual carriageway would be fraught with technical difficulties - that's if you could get Planning and Highways approval, which would be unlikely. Coupled with the necessary land purchases, road closures etc that would be required on Beech Hill Path and Oak Road and the difficulties in access for construction traffic, this would be an very expensive option - far more than purchasing land and building from scratch elsewhere. The infrastructure and facilities in the immediate area are poor anyway - so why stay?

The time scales for Planning and other approvals and purchase of land would take ages anyway, with no guarantee of success. I would personally favour a new ground somewhere in the town, but for the sake of the club we need to get something as quickly as possible. To be honest the move should have been made already - if it doesn't happen soon current success on the field will wither on the vine, we need to take the line of least resistance whatever that may be.

With Bill Tomlins' recent announcement on the new stadium in the Leicester match programme, it gives us a little more information but it is difficult to comment on the proposal without any more detail. Bill stresses that everything is down to Planning Consent which will give the Board a ready made excuse if this one goes pear shaped as well - and note that the fans will not get to see the proposals until **after** the detailed Planning Application has gone in. Too late in my view. Bill also says in the article that the Developer will be appointed in 2006 in order that the design can be prepared and submitted to planning. Well, we are now in April so only 8 months left of 2006 - already a pretty tight time scale. The latest proposals don't give me any more confidence than any previous proposals, Junction 10 and all. I really hope I'm proved wrong this time.

I would have thought if the Board have any confidence in the latest project they would be more specific on project milestones, but us fans are obviously too thick to be trusted with any details on progress. Either that or the Board don't really know what they are doing - surely not!

Wanstead Hatter

A CLUB WITH NO MONEY...

For all those that can't or won't accept that a new stadium has to be outside the Borough here is my understanding of the current situation. But first repeat after me "**The club have no money**". This phrase must be repeated whenever you think "redevelop Kenilworth Road" or "there must be a site in Luton somewhere".

The club have no money. The only real money, other than loans, that has come into the club is from the sale of Curtis Davis. This will be soon used up funding losses estimated at £1.5m per year. The directors purchased the club to develop J10, not to build and run a football club. Remember their exit strategy was to give the club to the Trust - god forbid. The only way we will get a new stadium is to be given one. The only ways that we will be given one is either from a rich benefactor or if the stadium adds value to or enables other development.

We can't stay where we are. Kenilworth Road is in a very bad state of repair and will need hundreds of thousands spent on it just to keep it open. It also stands in the way of the proposed Translink project that will take the Maple road car park as a station and some offices and function rooms will be demolished for the bus-way. There is no chance the council would give permission to purchase houses around the Kenny and allow it to be redeveloped. Even if it did, **the club have no money.**

Junction 10 is dead. It was ideal as the site could only be developed if a stadium was included and the owners were friends of Luton. Or at least that is what we were told. It has been alleged that during the negotiations over the sale of land, the asking prices was raised at the last moment on more than one occasion. This may explain "the sale should be completed in the next couple of weeks" statement we heard so many times. Was it really the Airport plan that killed J10 or did the club get fed-up with being messed about? Did the landowners really want to sell? Who knows? I doubt we will find out in the near future as it is still in the interests of the Club to keep the Life President on side. It's gone, get over it!

Junction 11a. This was 'Plan B' but time scales were long. It had to wait for the widening of the M1 J10 to J13 and the building of J11A. Timing is critical due to that state of Kenilworth Road. The longer we stay there the more money will be needed to keep it open while even more money will be lost due to it's small capacity. However the actual junction 11a was never a firm proposal, in fact in plans just published it does not exist.

Junction 12. This site has many of the attributes necessary to make it work. A real friend of Luton owns the land. He wants it to happen. Development of a stadium coupled with the proposed large number of "Prescott" houses to be built, on greenbelt land, in the vicinity could open further land for development. This would allow the stadium to be funded outside of the club. The fact that it is greenbelt land and it will generate local opposition (which site won't?) are problems. If it does go ahead will it really matter that it is not in the Borough of Luton. Kenny stadium was not built in the borough of Luton either, as it did not exist then.

Other sites in Luton. Where? There is very little free land in Luton, and most of it is earmarked for housing or airport related business. Like J10? However come on all you loyal fans get your walking shoes on and tape measures out, find these sites. Find owners willing to sell and money to buy. But don't rely on a council that can't build a small swimming pool, is millions of pounds in debt and about to cut front line day centre services for the elderly. The council have their own problems and no money, they are not going to get us a stadium. Nor are the MP's - no votes in football.

It is time for all to stop grinding axes and get behind the club in this difficult process. After all it's being going on for the last 50 years. Remember **the club have no money**. It's not the board's

fault. They are trying. However if it does mean a short period of ground sharing, so be it, grow up and face reality. Charlton and Brighton fans did, so can we. The long-term survival of the Hatters is far more important than short-term posturing.

DEB



Drogba signs for a new team....

Mixed signals or smoke signals?

At the time of writing (mid-March), our first season back in the professional games' second tier is in real danger of ending in a whimper rather than with a bang. The fantastic start to the season lasted about two months before things slowly but surely started to take a turn for the worse. We've since been on a run that could be described quite easily as relegation form.

Both Mike Newell and Brian Stein publicly stated before the season kicked off that their only target was to 'surprise a few people'. That's nicely vague enough to mean anything from just staying up to winning the title and getting automatic promotion! I'm pretty sure that's what Mike Newell said last year as well!

This season has been regularly peppered with 'issues' – selling Curtis Davies on transfer deadline day; how much of the fee would be made available in the transfer window; the whole bungs thing; the number of offers we had turned down for new strikers and midfielders (when we really need cover in the centre of defence!); the lack of progress on the new stadium; the 'will he/won't he' go to Leicester... Things are certainly never dull when you support Luton, that's for sure!

In terms of the games, a few stand out for different reasons. One of the highlights (despite losing) was the FA Cup tie against Liverpool. That game encapsulated our season perfectly – great at going forward but not-so-great at defending. Turn the clock back 23 years or so, and that's what people were saying about us back then too! We didn't get the nickname of the 'Cardiac kids' back then for nothing!

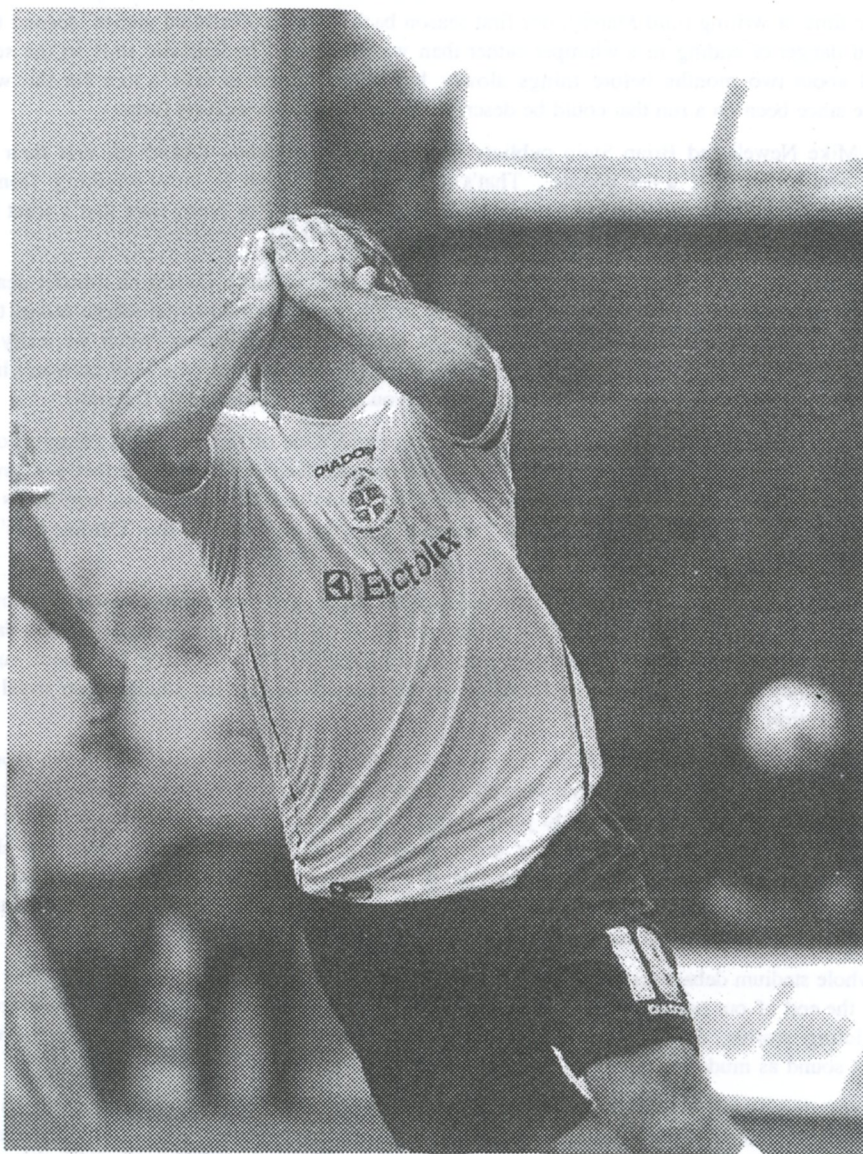
The home game immediately before the Liverpool match was one of the worst for obvious reasons, although I reckon that half our squad weren't in the mood for a local derby that day, as they were far too busy making sure they didn't get injured for the upcoming Liverpool cup tie! Hopefully they'll turn in a better performance in the rematch despite the smaller than usual away fans allocation.

The behind-the-scenes running of the club is also a little worrying for some fans at the moment, who get the impression that Mike Newell is drip-feeding signals to other clubs (other than Leicester!) that he might be ready to jump ship in the Summer. It's also come up two or three times that the Board and the Manager don't appear to talk to each other. Mike Newell has complained at least once this year that he's never been given any instructions on what the board are expecting him to achieve this season, and then there's the issue of an improved contract as well that has been going on for ages.

The whole stadium debacle is another issue that a lot of fans are really getting sick of. Many of us are at the end of our tethers when it comes to being reasonable and patient about a new ground. Conflicting stories, doubts about motives and uncertainty over time scales just make the whole project sound as muddled, disorganised and unlikely to happen as it's ever been.

However, despite all of the things mentioned above, most of us would have been happy to have no relegation fears and consolidate the club in the Championship this season; it's just that the start we had spoiled us and got our hopes up for something even better. The season is all but over now, so we have to hope that we are able to keep the manager, sign a few new players, release even more of those who aren't up to the job at this level, and hear some concrete news about a new stadium for a change!

Anon



Brkovic despairs at missing yet another opportunity at Vicarage Road, thinking that he had spurned the chance to enter the Hatters' Hall of Fame.
Not yet he hadn't!

WHAT'S GOING ON?

It feels as if has become a tradition at this time of year to bemoan the fact that another year has passed and we are no nearer having a new stadium for the club. Was it Peter Nelkin who promised an announcement at Christmas (which one not being specified!)? Was it avid Kohler who gave us a planning application that was doomed to failure? Was it Mike Watson-Challis who promised to lead us to our seats? Was it Bill Tomlins who told us there would be announcement soon? Was it all a load of old tosh?

Having spent the last two years feeling we were closer to getting a new ground than since the Kohler days, it came as quite a shock when uncle Bill told us that Junction 10 was off the agenda, and we would soon be off to junction 12 instead. It also came as a shock when he told us to mind our own business, because we had no right to know what was going on within the club. This may have been more of a defence mechanism than a PR bloomer, but the effect was the same. Many people immediately lost confidence in the idea that Bill is the saviour of Luton Town.

The trouble is, if it isn't Bill, who the hell is it? It would seem that all the likely candidates have already done enough for us to feel that it isn't them. So, casting our net around, what do we find?

We'll start with Luton Borough Council. They have certainly been cast as villains of late for their failure to bring forward proposals for junction 10. This is rather unfair, as that is not the role of a planning authority, unless it is a council facility that is proposed. And the stadium would not be that. So, the accusation is failure to help. And the council might respond that they have provided as much help as has been requested. If that's the case, the ball is back in Bill's court.

How about the Watson-Challis? We have heard little of Mike WC's health lately and it seems that Sheila, the hard headed businesswoman is very much at the helm now. Airport runways might just have been a convenient get out clause for Bill when negotiations were going nowhere, or the terms being asked were too high for Bill to deal with. It is clear that the WC's do not wish to be seen as the villains of the piece, and do not feel that their cause is yet lost.

As for Cliff Bassett, it is difficult to see what he has to gain from the junction 12 idea if there is no successful planning application. Or should we look more closely? Inevitably, the locals will be horrified by the prospect of a 25,000 (or whatever) seater stadium, and will thus welcome some smaller proposal for the land, that they might otherwise have opposed. And Cliff's a winner. And Bill... well, he's back to square one.

There are also murmurings of other interests being involved. Whilst we seem to have seen off John Gurney, the name of Eric Hood has not gone away completely, although rumours of some involvement on his part may be ill founded. There have been times this season when those not quite in the know have been aware of talk of new investors coming to the rescue, of both team and stadium, but then it all turns out to be rumours!

Whilst all this goes on, who looks after the supporters' interest? From his earlier comments, Bill doesn't feel we have a right to know anything, so should we look toward Trust in Luton? Maybe not, as TiL seems to have lost its way a little, and the elected board member appears to be treated as a token by the club - someone to be acknowledged but ignored. A member of the club's board in name only, and not a member of the board of the controlling company.

In the absence of TiL, it seems no-one is stepping forward to act in the interests of all supporters, but some act for their own interest. It is known that the Loyal Luton Supporters Club have had a meeting (possibly more than one) with Bill, but the results of that are not for public consumption, only for their own members.

So, what will the summer bring. As things appear at present, the answer is probably anything but good news.

The Croatian Sensation

The second most crucial player in last season's Championship winning campaign was arguably the Croatian Sensation Ahmet Brkovic. After a dreadful season the year before, Berko recovered in style to score 15 goals and become the second highest scorer at the club. Yet he still gets criticism every week from the stands. Why?

It's fair to say that Ahmet hasn't had a great season this year. He started the year with goals at Palace and Leicester but hasn't hit the target as much this year. This can be attributed to him playing down the left wing rather than his favoured right wing position. Some criticisms of him can be justified, but Berko does tend to get more than his fair share. He is moaned at for not tackling enough, not heading the ball enough and for dawdling on the ball or trying to do the spectacular.

But surely every player has their defects, and can anyone honestly say that Berko has more than any other Luton first-team player? He's no Kevin Nicholls when it comes to tackling, but instead he is the most technically gifted player we've got at Luton. The cross he put onto Howard's head a few weeks ago against Ipswich was superb - we simply haven't got anyone else of his calibre at the club. His corner taking is also superb, but for some reason Newell chooses Nico, Robbo and Unders to take them (resulting in the nutter behind me shouting 'Let Berko take it' week after week). At W**f**d, the Scum keeper didn't claim any of his corners and every single one was directed towards a Luton head. The only problem is you usually want Ahmet in the centre in case the ball falls loose - he's the player I'd most want in the middle to pick up a loose ball. As for tackling and tracking back, he does at least try to do his fair share. He attempts to make tackles and to help the full-backs - he certainly isn't perfect at it but do you expect any more from him?

As well as being technically brilliant, he also has a cool head. He does often dawdle on the ball too much, Southend in the cup comes to mind - instead of shooting first time he took the ball round their keeper, and instead of shooting then he dribbled it for a while before tapping in. How many of our players would keep their head in those situations? His coolness is reassuring sometimes, frustrating at others, but it may explain his tendency to score important goals in tight situations. How many times has he popped up to score vital goals for us? His late header against Hell, his equaliser against the Scum, his overhead kick at home to Port Vale, his brace up at Blackpool, his 6 minute hat-trick at Stevenage. The list is endless - I didn't even mention his winner at Crystal Palace. Maybe not all crucial games, but he is probably still our second most clinical finisher behind Howard (possibly behind Morgan as well). Say what you like about him in front of goal - if we are ever in trouble then the chances are that Brkovic will provide.

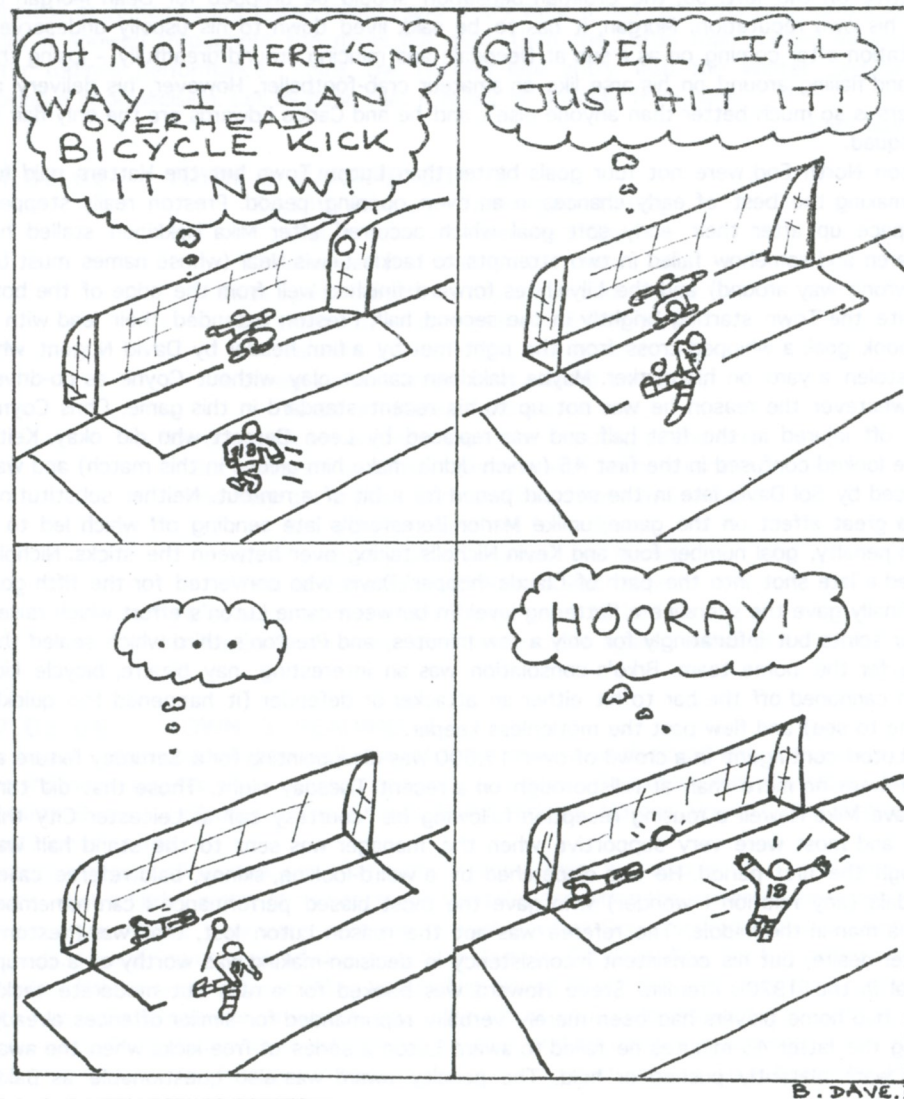
So yes, he is one of the worst tacklers of the ball at the club, yes he isn't great at heading the ball and he does often go for the spectacular. But technically, he is brilliant, and if he had no defects, as some fans reckon he should, then he'd probably be in the Premiership or Serie A by now. He makes no more mistakes than Edwards, Howard, Feeney, Vine etc. but for some reason gets more criticism than they do. Not that I hate any of those players of course, I just don't see why Berko gets more than them. I think we're lucky to have a player of his talent at the club and hopefully the majority agree with me. Maybe some fans will ease off him a bit after his goal at W**f**d.

Next fanzine: Why people should stop having a go at Paul Hughes after his dramatic pre-season recovery and opening day hat-trick against the scum.

Peter Bulkeley

THOUGHTS OF A GOALSCORER

BRKO SCORES AGAINST THE SCUM!



AS THE SEASON DRIFTS TO A CLOSE...

11.02.06 PRESTON NORTH END 5 TOWN 1

It barely got above -2°C all day and the Luton side certainly looked deep frozen as once again Rowan Vine was the pick of the town; indeed he was probably the only Luton player who moved faster than a fish finger in the Arctic Ocean all afternoon. Ahmet Brkovic continued to get stick from the fans who seem to be completely missing that he is back in the position that didn't work in BFJ's reign. Brko plays well on the right-hand side of midfield or maybe in the centre, if we ever got the chance to judge, but he is much less effective on the left. So, the Croatian Sensation should be dropped for Dean Morgan to save his own reputation. Morgan, it has to be said, lived down to his usually undeserved reputation after coming on as a sub at Deepdale and mincing around dreadfully - losing the ball and flailing around on his arse like an amateur crab-footballer. However, his delivery at corners is so much better than anyone else's and he and Carlos Edwards are the only flair in the squad.

Preston North End were not four goals better than Luton Town but the Hatters paid for not making the best of early chances in an even opening period. Preston really stepped the pace up after their early soft goal which occurred after Mika Hakkinen stalled his McClaren and somehow failed in two attempts to tackle Lewis Neal (whose names must be the wrong way around) and the Lilywhites forward finished well from the edge of the box. Despite the Town starting brightly in the second half, Preston extended their lead with a textbook goal: a whipped cross from the right met by a firm header by David Nugent who had stolen a yard on his marker. Maybe Hakkinen cannot play without Coyne as co-driver but whatever the reason he was not up to his recent standard in this game. Chris Coyne went off injured in the first half and was replaced by Leon Barnett who did okay. Keith Keane looked confused in the first 45 (which didn't make him unique in this match) and was replaced by Sol Davis late in the second period for a bit of a run-out. Neither substitution had a great effect on the game, unlike Marlon Beresford's late sending off which led to a harsh penalty, goal number four and Kevin Nicholls taking over between the sticks. Nicholls parried a late shot into the path of Claude 'hopper' Davis who converted for the fifth goal and finally gave the scoreline a flattering level. In between came Luton's effort which raised all our spirits but infuriatingly for only a few minutes, and Preston's third which sealed the game for the home team. Brko's consolation was an interesting, nay bizarre, bicycle kick which cannoned off the bar to hit either an attacker or defender (it happened too quickly for me to see) and flew past the motionless keeper.

The Luton contingent in a crowd of over 15,000 was disappointing for a Saturday fixture as there were no more than at Hillsborough on a recent Tuesday night. Those that did turn up gave Mike Newell a rousing reception following his 'courtesy call' at Leicester City this week and most were very supportive when the manager was sent to the stand half way through the first period. He was dispatched by a weird-looking, skinny, bald referee called Drysdale (any relation I wonder) who gave the most biased performance I can remember from a man-in-the-middle. The referee was not the reason Luton lost, that was Preston's greater desire, but his consistent inconsistency in decision-making was worthy of a corrupt official in the 1970's Kremlin. Steve Howard was booked for a rash but moderate tackle when two home players had been merely verbally reprimanded for similar offences already. During the latter 45-minutes he failed to award Luton a series of free-kicks when the away team were blatantly pushed or held. The penalty award was also questionable as Baldy

played an advantage when a home striker was felled by the away keeper. The problem in my view was that the striker had already played the ball when he was clattered so the challenge, whether fair or unfair, had no effect on the play. The lob was actually perfect and it would have gone in if Davis had not charged back with the kind of never-say-die attitude that Tim Breacker used to show and hooked the ball away from nearly under the crossbar. If the ball had gone in then no penalty would have been awarded as the whistle was not blown until Davis' clearance. So what the referee is saying, in effect, is that no advantage can be gained by an attacking team unless a goal results from that attack. What nonsense is that?

So my fourth trip to Preston North End and my fourth defeat (or at least third, I am hopeless at remembering these things) and every time it has been freezing. One Tuesday night it snowed throughout the game but even then the Luton team looked interested. After today's performance I think the Hatters late entry into the Winter Olympics is looking a poor decision. Let us hope that it is not all downhill from here.

Cliff Saunders

14.02.06 TOWN 3 CARDIFF CITY 3

On 14th February - Cardiff came to play,
Luton Town on Valentine's Day,
Whoever set that date on the fixture list,
Must spend Valentines day single and p*ssed,
But thanks to an own-goal and 2 from Vine,
We went 3-1 up in the nick of time,
& surely we've learned from playing Liverpool,
To sit on the lead and play it cool,
Not to attack in numbers, leaving us exposed at the back,
But however Cardiff found space with every attack,
And they got 2 goals back and could have had more,
But luckily we held out for a draw,
Oh why oh why oh why haven't we learned,
That all out attack will leave a lead burned,
& so away from the playoffs we seem to be heading,
But hopefully we won't let a 3-1 lead slip against Reading!

B.Dave B

17.02.06 TOWN 3 READING 2

No Coyne, Underwood, Robbo, Bell, etc. etc. We have a small squad but fortunately some fine individual players who can swap positions and cover. The team was, therefore, Marlon, Edwards, Barnett, Heikkinen, Davis, Brkovic, Foley, Nicholls, Morgan, Howard, Vine. Still looked pretty good to me.

Surprisingly gaps all around, not that many Reading fans, but also in the Luton ends too. That's what a Friday night, at half-term, on the tele, and when the waverers have lost hope, does for you. Maybe they were right (we thought) when Doyle scored after just eighteen seconds, capitalizing on a sliced clearance from Barnett. Oh dear. And, for ten minutes or so, it looked like we were in for a hiding as Reading played direct and very very fast, running to take free-kicks, throw ins, and each time straight at goal. Like Watford but with at least some class. Gradually however we started to play, and as usual it was a delight to watch, with Vine in particular fizzing and causing the man mountain Sonko a huge headache. Pace -

surely that's out of order!

Foley in midfield looked very positive, both with the ball and running into space. The combination of Edwards, Berky and Foley all on the right was like poetry, while wild man Nicho kept the energy levels high. As SkyTV put it we defended from Howard and Vine, Howie in particular doing his usual "Oh as the cameras are here I will put some effort in", and the rewards started to come.

Morgan looked up for it - as he should be, particularly against his old club - but as usual fanned around when a more direct approach (a shot perhaps) might have paid dividends, and the crowd were on his back (Reading fans too for that matter).

Howard wasted three chances, the first a shot on the turn from an Edwards through ball that skewed wide, the second a header just wide after Foley retrieved an apparently lost cause wide on the right and swung over a great cross, and the third a fairly typical weak shot from the edge of the box after a great through ball from Morgan.

Then on 19 minutes a wonder goal from Vine, made down that dangerous right flank. Edwards fed Vine, who passed in to Foley on the edge of the box. Foley cleverly stepped over the ball, leaving Howard to play a super return pass into the box, where Vine beautifully lifted it over a despairing (and huge) Hahneman. Michael Owen couldn't have done it better.

Five minutes later and a second wonder goal, again down the right flank. Berky threaded a slide rule pass into the edge of the box which the Reading left back stretched for but couldn't make. Foley had anticipated it and pulled it back for Vine to again befuddle Hahneman. 2-1!

The pressure continued, with beautiful interplay and triangles leaving the league leaders bewildered. On 35 minutes a corner from the right beyond the far post was flicked back by a soaring Howard to Vine, who from 6 yards could only knee it into a relieved Hahneman's hands. Immediately he threw out wide right and within seconds Marlon had to save well. It was real end-to-end stuff, and within a minute yet another golden chance.

This time a Nicho free kick from 35 yards seemed set for a Beckhamesque floater into the corner. But no, it seemed he had over hit it, and Reading relaxed as the ball floated right and high. But not Berky who seemed to have been expecting it and was yards ahead of anyone else. As the ball came down, virtually on the line, he headed into the 6 yard box where Howie then somehow contrived to hit the bar from no more than four yards. The ball bounced out, and was cleared to Edwards on the right. He struggled but Berky managed an overhead kick (of course) into the box for Barnett to neatly nod home. Alas the offside flag. Seconds later another hopeful direct hoof from Reading saw Heikkinen and Doyle racing towards Marlon. Heikkinen was ahead but allowed the ball to bounce, a fatal error. Doyle was the keener and nodded on, then fell into the box as he and Heikkinen tangled. The ref waved away penalty shouts, and SKY later showed that the collision was just outside the box. But on another day it could have been a penalty and Heikkinen off.

So half-time and a chance to catch breath at 2-1. An early second-half goal please!!

And so it was, after five minutes Morgan beating virtually all of the Reading right flank before feeding Howie, back to goal on the edge of the box. Morgan continued to run across the box and Howard returned it into his path, just as Berky ran the other way dragging the left back with him to our left. It gave Morgan a clear shot from 18 yards, and he tucked it away a treat as Hahneman anticipated wrongly. 3-1

The rest of the half was predictable but great entertainment. Reading forced to come forward but very vulnerable on the break. Berky playing slide rule passes to create the chances, Howie shooting weakly, Carlos twice running the length of the pitch before hitting

his customary slices to the right (I am straighter with a wood than Carlos is with his right foot). Morgan creating mayhem on the left. Feeney for Vine and to little effect. Enoch for Sol, with Foley covering at left back and Enoch rushing at high speed down the left without ever quite getting the ball under control. And Holmes for Morgan.

For the last ten minutes we were under pressure and Reading pulled one back just on time, Doyle heading in after Foley had given the ball away on our left. A nervy (and incredible) four minutes of injury time, but it ended happily at 3-2, and should have been 5-1.

Martin Trainer

25.02.06 LEEDS UNITED 2 TOWN 1

Today, Town fans who took the long journey up to Yorkshire witnessed first hand the second biggest architectural disaster in English history (second behind MK of course), Elland Road. Ok, maybe I'm exaggerating a little, but a team who hosted the likes of Real Madrid and other top European teams about six years ago really should be able to knock up a better ground than this. Instead of wasting all that money on Nick Barmby, perhaps they should have redeveloped the away end instead. Those further back may not have noticed much, but at the front you could hardly see any of the pitch at all. I didn't see the two Leeds goals due to the seats being ten feet underneath the pitch. Hope our new ground isn't as bad as this one, although knowing Luton it will be ten times as bad.

However low our seats were, we could still see the handball incident. For the benefit of those who weren't there, it was definitely a penalty. Ask anyone in the ground and they will tell you the same thing, although some Reading fans thought Kevin 'Best Irish Synchronised Diver in the World' Doyle should have had a penalty and some Hull fans still think they deserved the league last season, so some Leeds fans probably agreed with the ref. The first half was pretty even with both teams missing great chances. Foley apparently sent a free header into the stands from six yards out (Unders walked in the way as he headed it so I didn't actually see it) and Brko put a good shot just wide. Marlon made a few good saves to keep the score level at half time. Howard pulled a goal back with about ten minutes to go (forget their goals), deciding not to celebrate his 100th goal in style. Somehow, the ball just didn't go in in the last ten minutes of the match despite various matches of pinball in the Leeds penalty area. At least we didn't let in three late goals like at Preston.

So, we lost to a promotion chasing side away from home and lost more ground to Wolves (damn) and other play-off chasers. On the other hand, the performance wasn't that bad and we have still managed to score in each away game this year. The burgers were vile as well, served by someone who didn't even speak English. Howard worked extremely hard yet again and was probably just about man of the match for Luton. Sol apparently got sent off at the end - again I missed it. Perhaps I'm the only one who thinks Elland Road was a shocking ground for an ex-Premiership side, even if it does hold 40,000. Not that I'm bitter about the defeat of course. Thieving Yorkshire gits.

Peter Bulkeley

04.03.06 MILLWALL 2 TOWN 1

This was a caricature of recent Luton performances. When we want to we're just like watching Brazil, but with the finishing touch of Peter Thompson rather than Pele. As surreal and ridiculous as the Robbie Fowler story was we'd stroll this division with him. We look solid enough at the back, but we're regressing to the Luton of a few seasons ago, with individual errors and late goals stunting an otherwise miserly defensive.

After an embarrassingly poor first half it wasn't as though the second half could have been worse, so, as Coyne punted the ball in from six yards after the Millwall defence had a brief volleyball session, it looked for all the jellied eels in the world we were going to win easily. But I'm sick of singing "we're gonna score in a minute" consistently throughout each away game and ending up choking on my own assumption. Our dominance was mainly due to the continual ineptitude of the Millwall defence, who persistently had the nerve to present us with chance after wasted chance; presumably in the knowledge our front line looks increasingly deadly from 2 yards but not from 3.

The highlight of the match was probably the comical incompetence of Uriah 'suitably capable to referee a Championship but not Premiership match' Rennie, which reached a head when he booked their left back for time wasting when he was clearly injured and duly had to be substituted. You had to laugh.

Millwall were shit. End of story. But there's a certain panache in scoring your second chance in the last minute to win 2-1 that we could well do with. It doesn't matter how foreign the basic concepts of passing and moving are with a knack like that. Can't fault the passion of their fans as well. They're born fighting down here, so why stop for a few hours on a Saturday afternoon? There was a near riot when Tuttle subbed off their only footballer, Colin Cameron, after an hour. It warms the heart to see people so committed, though whether it's towards the football or violence and intimidation I'll never know.

And finally, I understand being herded slowly like mindless sheep through a corridor of concrete and steel barriers isn't going to inspire any empathy towards humanity, but even I was astonished by the whole 'police = bad' attitude coming from very our swine element. There's still a mindless element in every club, perhaps even in every one of ourselves, that despite any notion of basic human values still reads the Football Factory as gospel, and thinks having a push and shove with police down south is more of a result than anything on the pitch. So what if some of us are living proof in Darwinism - far more ape than Homo Sapiens - can't we just pretend we're human for a few hours? Actually, maybe a few gracefully arching truncheons could knock some common sense into their ugly reared head. Anyway, save it for the Watford, lads, where any amount of hooliganism can be masked with the morally forgiving label 'local pride at stake'.

A nice day out.

Tom King

11.03.06 TOWN 1 LEICESTER CITY 2

The previous week's reverse at Millwall said everything about our away form over the latter two thirds of the season. The home team were bloody awful but still registered three points. This game was our chance to chalk up our second double of the season, but we failed to deliver. An end of season type of game, though the result confirmed the Foxes have all but earned the right to play the mighty Hatters at least twice next season! Stevo bundled in an equaliser but they stole all the points. Never mind, let's hope for better against the other East Midlands outfit (the Sheep!) next week.

Wheels

18.03.06 TOWN 1 DERBY COUNTY 0

Westley loses at Kenilworth Road yet again...

Such was my enthusiasm for this game, given the miserable cold weather, that on returning from work with only 20 minutes to spare to get to the ground, I felt it more appropriate to have another pint and miss the first 20 minutes. I wasn't alone in choosing this course of

action, and by all accounts we missed nothing. Ultimately, the result should have been predictable going on the past form, at Kenilworth Road, of a certain Mr Westley. And so it proved. Any concerns we might have had about a returnee having a major influence on the game were with Michael McIndoe rather than Westley, but he had a quiet game. By half time, it looked like I had left the pub a bit too early.

The second half was a bit more lively, but there was little sign of a breakthrough. Luton were perhaps the stronger side, but Derby defended well. Newell finally saw the need for change, and Bell replaced Brkovic. Within a minute we were ahead, as Howard (who else?) was in place to meet the ball flicked on by Coyne from Edwards' cross. In the closing minutes Derby made a desperate attempt to salvage something from the game by pushing the keeper up front for set pieces, but it was not to be. How I felt for the Derby supporters, as it brought back those memories from 1995. Altogether now: "Westley out!"

KFH

25.03.06 SODDING BRIGHTON 1 SODDEN TOWN 1

Those of us lucky enough to have obtained tickets for this game at the Withdean Stadium didn't know what a treat we had in store. Of course everyone knows about the fix the club has been in since they had the Goldstone Ground sold from under them, and the seemingly never-ending process of getting permission to build a new ground near Sussex University to the east of the city. Their temporary home is an athletics track in a leafy suburb (I think that's the correct term) called Preston Park. The seating is even more temporary, as it apparently spends the summer months accommodating bums at golf courses (that's backsides, not tramps). The roof over the seating is just wishful thinking.

It started to rain while we were having a few drinks before the game in the Evening Star, a very pleasant real ale house near the central station. It carried on raining during the short train journey and the half-mile walk to the ground. It rained all through the first half, didn't let up at half time, carried on raining until the Hatters scored, when it stopped for a nanosecond, then carried right on raining again.

There was some football played, but there was a lot more splashing about in puddles, both on and off the pitch. Brighton scored after about a quarter of an hour, when an unchallenged cross was met by an unchallenged header and the ball looped unchallenged into the corner of the goal. It was doubly unfortunate for Hatters fans that the scorer was Brighton's newly signed ex-scummer Gifton Noel-Williams.

There followed what seemed like hours of rather pointless splashing about while we stood around waiting for the final whistle so that we could go back to the pub. The prospect of leaving pointless as well as drenched loomed large until, in a moment of unexpected skill after about 60 minutes, Warren Feeney dribbled the ball into the area and crossed from the goal line into the six yard box. Their keeper palmed it into the path of the onrushing Steve Robinson and it ended up looping into the net.

Both teams tried as hard as possible in the circumstances to create an opening, and probably Brighton came closest with a volley from inside the area that hit the far post and stayed out. Enoch Showunmi had one decent run down the left, but his cross to Rowan Vine at the near post was smothered away for a corner.

I suppose a victory for either side would have been cruel to the loser, because the conditions made skilful football a distant memory. We wouldn't have thanked the referee for calling the game off, but I wonder what the criteria are for that? Does the ball have to be stopping in the mud or skimming across a puddle, or does it have to be considered "dangerous" for the players before they are allowed to take an early bath? I can't

remember seeing a continuous downpour throughout a game before, and I don't suppose it can have happened too often at a stadium with no covered seating. One Brighton fan told me it was the first rain they've had at a home game all season. Unlucky, or something more sinister?

Will Larter

01.04.06 TOWN 1 TRACTOR BOYS 0

A poor game which seemed to reflect a drifting, aimless end to the season quite aptly. Everyone wants to beat W*tf*rd next week but whether we do or not it is likely to finish most supporters' interest in the remainder of this campaign. Okay, we are getting results at the moment - we have certainly deserved the last seven points - but the entertainment value has not been high, which is down to the opposition as well as us, of course. This match was mainly tepid though it finished warmly, in fact the thermostat seemed to be tweaked up after Steve Howard saved us again with a perfectly placed glancing header. From the goal onwards, Luton Town played some nice stuff and we looked more likely to score again than the Tractor Drivers did to get an equaliser. This made a pleasant change from some of the nail-biting finales we have endured this season but paying customers deserve a bit better. Yes there were other chances for the home team and the young and Supple Ipswich goalkeeper certainly earned his apprentice wages with some brave first half saves, but the soporific Suffolk-men rarely raised a threat during the entire game.

The old problem is still there for Luton: plenty of possession and a number of chances but no precision in the finishing. For all his faults, Howard remains far and away the most likely candidate to get on the score sheet whilst Rowan Vine looks more likely to give an inattentive steward concussion. Both Vine and his alter ego Warren Feeney have pace, energy and directness and both often create problems for the opposing defenders but they only set up colleagues and just don't seem to be able to muster a powerful shot at goal; and that's with their right feet! There is a rumour that Feeney is moving back up north in the summer which I hope is untrue but either way we need some more firepower. Quite why we signed David Bell when the manager has consistently stated "we only buy players better than we have already" is a mystery. He looks okay (like a right-footed Paul Underwood without the experience) and may improve as he gets older but was it the midfield that needed strengthening? How about a proper right-back so Kevin Foley and Carlos Edwards can spend all their time in midfield? Foley and Underwood at Leeds looked really useful and I think Kevin Nicholls has had his day. Once again we failed to miss our skipper and with Mika Hakkinen getting a drive in the spare car this time (and looking well off the pace) central midfield lacked creativity. Surely Brko could have filled in as Dean Morgan played down the left wing (his worst game yet incidentally) but at least Enoch Showunmi only saw ten minutes in his least effective role so let's be thankful for small mercies. Raw he may have been but that is no longer a good-enough excuse and Daddy Cool must be on his way soon. I admit that I saw something in him too so I don't blame the club for taking a chance but he still looks decidedly non-league so it is best he drops down a division or too where we all know (Sod's Law) that he will score a hatful for someone else. C'est la vie et bonne chance l'Enoch.

Despite being the better side we actually rode our luck a little in this game with Sol Davis back to his belligerent worst - getting involved in unnecessary incidents - and Ahmet Brkovic apparently giving the visitors' Drogba look-a-like a right-hander which the linesman didn't see properly. Nice to see the cheats getting a taste of their own medicine. The

referee guessed that something had happened and produced a yellow card which drew no protests from the Luton staff at all: to me a sure sign that they were grateful it wasn't a red one. Typical referee though: making it up as he goes along! I have to say that this one was quite anonymous so he cannot have been that bad. Unfortunately, Alan Brazil is on holiday this week so no opportunity to give him abuse on the breakfast show and listen to his pathetic, jellyfish excuses. Never mind, let's save all the vitriol for next week when we'd all settle for one nil to Steve Howard again.

Clifford Saunders

09.04.06 YELLOW BELLIED DIVING CHEATING HORNETS 1 MIGHTY HATTERS 1

And so it came to pass, in a season that has fizzled out into a mid-table platform from which to build upon next season, the short trip to Scumville raised our spirits for El Gordo, the big one, our last mass away party of the season.

It was a difficult day. Precise logistical plans had to be prepared in order to skirt around the Hertfordshire Constabulary's finest efforts to spoil the day for away fans. With this in mind, an early start was essential. The 0730 train to Mill Hill Broadway was the first chosen mode of transport, followed by a bus journey to Harrow on the Hill, where 25 hungry and thirsty Hatters waited patiently for the somewhat startled duty manager to open the doors at 9am at the nominated pub that would be our base for the morning.

Finally it was time to depart for the match. Remarkably, at each station along the journey to Watford Metropolitan Station not one home fan was seen embarking. Finally at journey's end we prepared for the march of hate towards Vicarage Road. Yet again, we were alone, no home fans even peering above the parapets. Where were they all hiding, we never came across one all day?

The match itself proved that because of injuries to key players and a wretched run of poor away form, we have underachieved this season. Betty Boothroyd's team are a very poor side; their league position seriously flatters any limited ability they may have. How a team of such huffers and puffers, hoofers and divers have somehow managed to connive their way into the play-offs beggars belief.

The match ended a 1-1 draw. As per normal, we dominated an away match for long periods without taking any of the numerous clear-cut chances that were created, whilst Watford had one first half chance and scored. Fortunately, the team have proved to be a tad more resilient in recent weeks, thus Brko scored with ease to give the Hatters a share of the points.

It was then finally time to run the gauntlet of riot police, mounted police and helicopters as we made our way home. It wasn't a great day out, much of the usual derby day atmosphere was spoiled by the actions of the over zealous Herts Constabulary.

Eric O Olthwaite Jnr III

15.04.06 TOWN 1 COVENTRY CITY 2

With only three first-choice outfield players starting this game in their 'normal' positions, there were few grounds for optimism as the Hatters took on 2 opponents. Ultimately it proved that the end of season injury crisis was a stronger challenge than the visiting team, who would have been a pushover if only this had been a winter midweek floodlit game rather than a spring Saturday afternoon. Given the weakness of a line-up that would not have been predicted by anyone in their right mind, the Hatters actually put up a fairly good fight. Sadly, we were caught out by a sucker punch after half an hour when Stern

John suddenly cheered up after beating Heikkinen to the ball which in turn beat Beresford to hit the back of the net. Before we had got over the shock, McSheffrey had (inevitably) added a second after Marlon failed to hold his first effort and he followed up. The half time view was that we had no chance of getting anything out of the game while Howard was playing in central defence, and we needed to take the risk of moving him forward. Conceding more really would not matter.

Fifteen minutes into the second half, Newell had clearly formed the same view, and a double sub was the order of the day. A surprisingly large number of clowns in the crowd jeered the substitution of Carlos Edwards without waiting to see what the plan was – probably the same clowns who gave an opposition striker an ovation 20 minutes later. Why do so many Luton supporters find it so difficult to show any appreciation of their own players? As it turned out the changes, much like the starting line-up, were not ideal, but made the best of what was available to achieve an acceptable formation. Sadly the impact was not enough, although the additional pressure eventually counted when Enoch, who had had a fair game in central midfield, made an excellent run to the goal-line and fired the ball across towards Howard, only for a defender to get to it first and pull the Town back into the game with an own goal. It was too little too late for many in the crowd (yours truly included – had to go to work), but there was, apparently, almost an equaliser in the last minute, even with Town down to 10, after Barnett limped off.

Any volunteers to play in the back four at Plymouth?

KFH

17.04.06 PLYMOUTH ARGYLE 1 TOWN 2

After following this game from work on the BBC website, I requested a match report by text from one of the group who had ventured down to the sunny South-West. So, here it is:

“STREAKY!”

KFH/The Thin Controller

NEXT ISSUE...

At last, the season is over. The editor would like to offer his profound thanks to all those who have written for *Mad as a Hatter!* over the last year, assisting him with the ever more difficult task of putting a fanzine together. At the time of writing, it is rumoured that he has just about enough enthusiasm to keep going for another season (he dreams of carrying news of building work starting on a new stadium). So, if you want to continue to read *Mad as a Hatter!* please try and help ensure there is enough content to keep it going. Any contributions you may have should be sent to the usual addresses (they're on page 2), aiming for a deadline of about 3 weeks before the first home match of next season.

RAVING MAD!!!

Dear Mad,

I could not let the comments made by Andrew Wallace via Yore Publications go without challenge. When I read they would be prepared to publish a who's who after they told me point blank on the 23rd November they would not be publishing me, I would not have spent several weeks attempting to find another publisher. I am very happy to say that I have found another publisher; however, until I physically see the finished book I will not believe it; as Yore's refusal was the third time since 1998 I had a book turned down. I said in a Mad in 1998 Luton have not tried to exploit their history by way of books. Although the market currently is not what it was (as the demise of Sports Pages proves) there is still considerable profit to be made. I believe the definitive from what I gather, two thousand were sold (hence my comment to Yore Publications) the club took between 30 and 40%. The 'Who's who' should retail at £15.99 giving Luton another considerable profit for something that would have taken me thousands of hours of my time to produce.

In Mad 69 Yore claimed that they were going to possibly do a Barnsley book. This will be Barnsley's third who's who. As a Luton fan for the past thirty nine years it surprises me no such book as ever been published. IF I HAD MY OWN MONEY and could afford to print the book myself I would. But if the sales failed to reach the magic 500 figure it would be a lot of money to lose. In Mad 69 Yore were right I was never in a position to send off the finished draft. But that was NOT down to me. When I approached them in January 2004 after I had obtained a computer I told them I wanted to do a who's who the original plan was to try and have the final draft ready by the end of October. Then in May I was advised to stop work as they would not be bringing the book out in 2004. They then told me in November that I should purchase a CD rewriter, which I did at an incredible cost to my finances. I was told to start in January 2005. Five months later I was told again to stop work. From May until I was finally told they were not going to publish I had heard rumours of Sports Pages closure which put me off from starting again until I knew what their intentions were. Although upset Yore was not going to publish I knew the amount of Yore's stock held by SP might make it difficult for them to invest in new projects. Now I have a new publisher I will aim to have it ready for the start of next season but as I do not control that it could be just as easily be next Christmas.

Brian Ellis

Luton.

Dear Mad,

Just a short note to say what a great read I think *Mad is*, and how well it keeps me up to date as I get nothing from the club!

Any Hatters fans out there who fancy dropping me a line or sending shirts or programmes - feel free!

Interesting looking back on Hatters days of old, does anybody else remember a young player (YTS, I think) called Mark Watts who made an appearance in a cup tie at Kenilworth Road in place of David Moss, I think? Any takers?

MT8134 Andy Babington,

HMP Ford, Arundel, Sussex.

The Wiltshire 'Atturrrr

The old curse of the 93rd minute winner (or loser from our point of view) has returned. Watching Sky Sports at 5:45; Millwall 1 Luton 1. At last - a point away from home!! So, I head through to the kitchen and "there's been a goal from the New Den..." Doh!!!! MN said afterwards he is sick of Luton not putting teams away and he is right. I know that a play off position was an impossible dream at the beginning of the season and the league position is a brilliant achievement in its own right, but we are losing to teams that we should not be losing to. How can we run Liverpool so close then get spanked 5-1 by Preston? How can we beat Reading then lose to Millwall??

Still; at least our players are allowed in pubs (those that are old enough that is). I see Mr Warnock has barred his payers from going down the local until the end of the season. And it was their round as well.

Del Horno and Messi - it reminded me of that classic episode of Porridge where Lenny and the other boxer have both taken bribes to "go down in the first" (as Gillian Tailforth would put it). How pathetic. The Champions League is supposed to be the standard bearer for what is best about football - yet all you see is this sort of crap. And as for Mourinho, I said in the last *MAAH* that I thought he was the only person qualified to manage England. In many ways I still believe that to be the case but his antics make him a very poor ambassador for Chelsea. And things have hardly looked better against West Brom and Fulham. What would the late, great Peter Osgood (RIP) have thought?

That said, Marlon and Mike's warnings about language during the Preston game were a bit petty. What are you supposed to say when you are 5-1 down??

The injury to Kevin Nicholls is a massive setback. He has, in my humble Wiltshire opinion, been one of the star players this year and his absence will severely hamper MN's desire for a strong end to the season. Oh, and by the way, Mike - sign the contract...pleeeeeaaaaase !!!!!

Just to round off, I saw a great piece of "one sided" reporting on the local news down here last month. The newsreader said (and this is true) "*and in sport, Swindon Town share eight goals in a thriller at Nottingham Forest*". Swindon actually lost 7-1! Even Keith Hayward's glasses aren't that rose tinted.

TTFN

UP THE POLL...

And we're not referring to Graham Poll! As usual, at this time of year, we ask you for your opinions on the season about to finish. It gives us a chance to get a feel for how the season as been for you, and a head start on filling the space that will be the first issue of next season.

Seeing no good reason to change a formula that works for us, there is no significant change to the voting system, with us providing a number of categories for you to nominate your 'favourites', but also fully expecting some comments alongside. If you feel there is a category we have omitted, please feel free to add to our list, which is not restricted by what we can think of.

Please send your nominations in these, and any other, categories, by post to 195 Cutenhoe Road, Luton, LU1 3NQ, or by email to keith.hayward1@ntlworld.com.

Best Town Player

Best Young Player

Best Town Performance

Worst Town Performance

Best Goal scored

Best Goal Conceded

Best Opponents

Worst Opponents

Idiot of the Year

Quote of the Year

Hero of the Year

Best Ground visited

Worst Ground visited

High Point of the Year

Low Point of the Year

Things to look forward to

Referees

If, in addition, there's anything you'd like to say about *Mad as a Hatter!* please feel free to mention it. We'll try and take on board any useful comments.



**The FA
25 Soho Square
London W1 4FA**

Dear Sir,

Our Head Coach, Mr Sven-Göran Ericsson, has asked me, on the eve of our departure to Germany for the World Cup Finals, for which we have qualified, to ask our fellow Home Nations to come to our assistance so that England may be 100% sure of winning the World Cup.

As you are no doubt aware from the winning of the Rugby World Cup and the Ashes, England's success boosts all British nations and we know how you all enjoyed basking in the reflected glory which bonds our ancient nations together.

To this end, we request and require that you furnish, forthwith, any information, which may aid us on our quest. We don't expect to need it, you understand, but one never knows.

What we have in mind is tactical appraisals of our opponents, whom you may have encountered whilst failing to qualify yourselves. Foreign styles of play, underhand methods of influencing the referee, latin diving, teutonic bullying, you know the sort of thing. Also, if there is any advice of the legality of two apparently separate islands in the Carribean forming a joint enterprise for the express purpose of winning a soccer match. In the capital here we find it quite extraordinary!

I know well you all take delight in the support of England whenever any of you manage a shock result and am sure of the same fullsome support from you chaps in this instance.

You remain, hopefully, our humble servants

Brian Barwick



**The Football Association of Wales
11 / 12 Neptune Court,
Vanguard Way,
Cardiff CF24 5PJ
CYMRU**

Dear Mr Barwick,

Thank you for your interesting and brilliant letter. As you know we are your nearest neighbours, and sharing a long border with you, know you more intimately and therefore love you more intimately than anybody else. How we enjoyed your Rugby victory! Bonfires were lit in remote areas all over rural Wales in celebration.

As you no doubt don't know, all correspondence from Lloedr is translaed from Saes to Cymraeg in accordance with the Rules of our Association. I had your brave letter translated and passed it to Dafydd ab Sylwtlyhatesinglish hew is hedd of our tactical spying unit.

I am sori to haf to tell ewe that there was a coch up in the translation which meant that Dafydd, completely by accident, got the whole thing arseways and provided all your opponents with a dossier on your players instead. In particular, I have to warn you that your manager may be targeted by dusky beauties who may give him the bends while he goes diving as it were. Also watch out for Paraguayan grannies in the vacinity of your only hope.

As ever, if there is anything else we can do for you, do not hesitate to ask.

Twll din pob Sais

Mervyn Miseri



FA Ireland
80 Merrion Square
Dublin 2

Ah Brian how's it going

All the lads here wish ye the very best in the World Cup. Sure don't ye know that?

We always want England to do well. There has been too much old guff about history and bad blood and we should forget about all that. We have anyhow.

I mean, nowadays who is interested in Pope Adrian (the only English Pope) blessing the English invasion which took all our lands and divided it up amongst the English? Who wants to know about Cromwell putting the women and children of Drogheda and Wexford to the sword; the Penal Laws that outlawed the one true Catholic faith and the outlawing of the beloved Gaelic language. The crushing of the brave rebels in 1118, 1250, 1336, 1388 1542, 1612. 1798, 1848, 1916. Sure we have forgotten all about the Famine, where one million of us were starved to death, skin and bone with grass stain about our hungry mouths with pestilence rapine and disease stalking every corner of the land whilst our young men fought in the front lines of the trenches of your imperial wars.

Having forgotten all that, and the unfinished business in a corner of our land, we would of course be delighted to support England, and we will. However, you must be aware of our longstanding emigrant links with seamus insert name of whoever the bastards are playing and so therefore, on this one occasion, our loyalties may be somewhat divided.

As a favour Brian: - my daughter is a big Man U fan and could you send over young Wayne's birth cert (and his folks) so she can send him a birthday card?

Yours as ever
Seán Ó Blarney



The Scottish Football
Association
Hampden Park
Glasgow
G42 9AY

Dear Brian,

F*ck off you English c*nts

Hamish McSporran

100 GOALS & COUNTING - 100 GOALS & COUNTING

Faster than a speeding full-back.
More powerful than a hefty centre-back.
Able to jump defensive midfielders in a
single-bound!

Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No - It's...

THE SUPER-POWERED STEVE HOWARD



100 GOALS & COUNTING - 100 GOALS & COUNTING