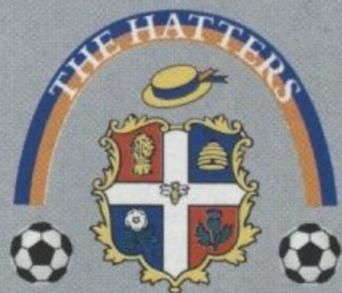


Luton Town Football Club



Merry Christmas



LUTON TOWN
FOOTBALL CLUB

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Official Matchday
Magazine

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Official Matchday Magazine

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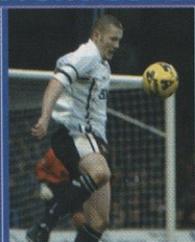
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Gareth Owen

The views expressed in this
programme are not necessarily those
of Luton Town Football Club.

Front Cover



ON THE BALL: Kevin Nicholls in
typical rumbustious action
against Rushden. Report and
more pictures: pages 38 & 39.

Inside Forward

A CUP-TIE at the Memorial Ground on Tuesday has resulted in the Town's home game with Bristol Rovers being postponed. Rovers were due here on Friday January 4 for a live TV match, but having beaten Plymouth in an FA Cup second round replay Rovers will be going to Derby instead.

But the blank weekend will be followed by an extra match on the following Tuesday: the game at Kidderminster, postponed when flu and injuries swept through Kenilworth Road in early December, will now be played on Tuesday January 8 (7.45pm). It is still an all-ticket game for Luton supporters - see page 10 for details.

Stadium A Step Nearer

THE Town welcomed the announcement this week that the government is grant-aiding Luton Borough Council road improvement plans, including a new dual carriageway spur road off junction 10 of the M1, close to the site for the new stadium. A previous scheme was approved by a planning inspector after a huge public enquiry, but rejected by John Prescott on the grounds that the road system would not cope.

Now improvements are in the pipeline, and Eric Hood, the Town's deputy chairman, said: "The club is delighted that the Council's bid for funds has been successful. Any project that improves the infrastructure at junction 10 and 10a is welcomed by the club. Clearly this is an important step forward for both Luton and the football club."

Mixed Emotions

DELIGHT and despair has marked the Christmas fortunes of two players. For Chris Coyne there was the huge pleasure of seeing his first child born, followed by an injury set-back a few hours later. For Liam George there was massive disappointment, with a transfer to Colchester just about wrapped up until Layer Road sent a message to the Town calling it off, saying that the striker had failed a medical.

Coyne nearly missed Saturday's game against Rushden. He was given time off the day before, to stay with his 22-year-old wife Rebecca after she went into labour at 3am on Friday morning.

It went on until 1am on Saturday, before Kieran Coyne weighed in at 7lbs 15oz. Sounds like another dominating centre-half in the making? "No," said Chris. "He'll be a striker - they earn more money!"

Chris got home at 4am and snatched four hours sleep, but turned down the manager's offer of a longer kip on Saturday afternoon.

"Watching my son born was an amazing experience," he said. "By kick-off time I was still on a high, feeling tremendous."

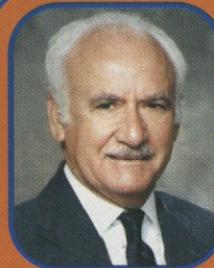
But ten minutes into the game he went down with a knee ligament injury after a collision with Ahmet Brkovic, and his game was all over, with Coyne admitting: "I was almost in tears."

After first aid he watched the rest of the game, and was pleased to see the team, with Russ Perrett replacing him, hold on for a clean sheet to see off Rushden. He had an appointment with a specialist later in the week - see page 8 for the latest news from the treatment room.

We hope Chris enjoys a speedy recovery, and everyone at Kenilworth Road offers congratulations on the new arrival. Mother and baby are doing fine.

Incidentally, Peter Thomson's absence from the Rushden side was because of a back injury. He had been unable to train all week, said Diamonds manager Brian Talbot, but it was not thought to be serious, and Talbot will decide on a possible offer for the striker after his loan from the Town expires in a couple of weeks time. The 24-year-old has not figured in the Town's league side this season, and is available for transfer at a nominal fee.

FROM THE CHAIRMAN'S OFFICE



ON BEHALF of myself and the directors, I would like to wish you all a very happy Christmas, with the hope that the New Year will be even happier for our football club!

I have been delighted with the progress we have made so far as we strive for promotion, and I put on record my thanks to everyone connected with the club, particularly Joe, the players and all the backroom staff, and to you, the supporters, for what has been achieved so far.

Results have been encouraging, and it has been good to see the excellent response from the local community, with attendances rising. Your support is very much appreciated - please keep it up, and, if possible, bring in more fans to shout for the team and help us achieve our ambition, and to continue our tradition of being a family club.

Mike Watson-Challis

DISBELIEF was the first reaction at Kenilworth Road when Colchester scrapped the transfer of Liam George. There is also a lot of sympathy for a player who was due to sign at Layer Road until he became one of the many flu victims in the Town camp three weeks ago.

Joe Kinnear explained: "The deal was done and dusted. Liam had come in to say his farewells, and we all wished him luck. But then he was hit by the flu, and had to go to bed for a couple of weeks.

"Now Colchester have pulled out, saying he has dodgy knees. It was a shock to me, as well as to Liam, and he is heartbroken. We all feel for him, but I am sure he will get over it."

The 22-year-old former Irish youth and under-21 international is back at Kenilworth Road, once more on week-by-week contracts.

And it is not the end of his world: as our last matchday magazine recalled in Roger Wash's column, Alan West once failed a medical at Sunderland and was told he would be in a wheelchair within two years if he continued to play football. The midfielder proved the medics well and truly wrong, and is still very much on his feet, having turned 50 last week, having had a wonderful career with the Town.

Restricted Access

WITH fans showing a lot of interest in hearing Joe Kinnear speak at the next meeting of Luton Town Supporters Club, on January 14, we have been asked to point out that ticket sales are restricted to LTSC members at present. If any are left after Friday January 4 they will be put on general sale. Admission is by ticket only, £2 for members, £5 for others. You can, of course, join LTSC today to qualify for the discount - call in at the Supporters Club kiosk in Kenilworth Road before or after the match.



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M. Watson-Challis

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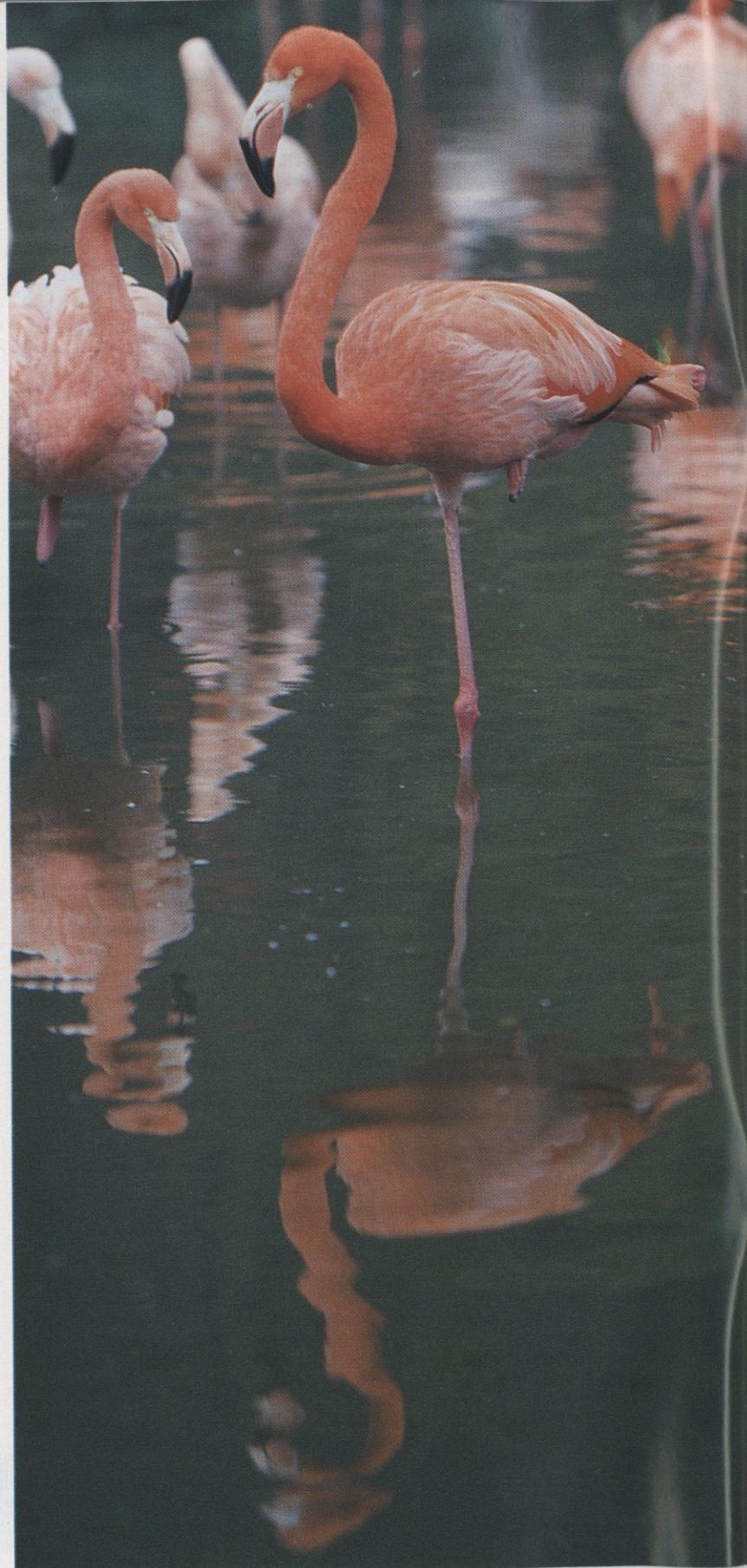
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Joe Kinnear

The Manager

ON BEHALF of myself, the coaches, and all the playing staff welcome to Kenilworth Road, and we offer our best wishes for a very Happy Christmas and a successful New Year. It will be, of course, if we can gather points from the hectic period that starts with today's game. Four matches in 11 days will test us, and it is important that we start the holiday programme with another home win today. That would put us bang on schedule for the big prize. If we can complete a double this afternoon we will have 45 points from the first half of the season, and then, hopefully, we could at least match that tally over the second half. And 90 points will see us complete the job we set out to do way back in August. If you look at last season's league tables, Brighton were champions with 92 points. Cardiff and Chesterfield went up with 82 and 80 respectively, although Chesterfield actually took 89 points before being disciplined by the league. A mere 72 points was enough to get Blackpool into the last play-off place, and they went on to win promotion.

It will be an unhappy memory for today's visitors, because Hartlepool finished fourth, five points ahead of Blackpool, but lost out in the play-offs. There is a lesson there, for all of us - we want promotion as one of the top three, preferably with the title as well.

We have seen enough so far this season to believe in ourselves, and I am pleased with the way the squad has performed. Obviously, I would have preferred a shorter injury list, but we have coped with that reasonably well, and hopefully some of our long-term injured men will be back before too long.

We have seen that the Third Division is a tough football school. Attitude, bravery and commitment are required in abundance, as well as skill, but the game is still about one simple basic: keep the ball, don't give it away cheaply, and deny the opposition possession as much as possible.

And when the other side has the ball, you have to be prepared to fight to get it back, because for sure this is no division for the faint-hearted. So far, we have got it right more often than not, and we were delighted to get another home win last week. Rushden were on a bit of a roll, and were obviously up for the game, and perhaps on run of play they might have counted themselves a touch unlucky to lose. Except, of course, for the fact that we scored, and kept a welcome clean sheet, and all their possession in the second half came to nothing.

The bad news was that Chris Coyne and Matt Spring had to go off injured, but fortunately we had Russ Perrett sitting on the bench waiting for his chance to return, and I thought he and David Bayliss did very well in the centre of defence. Peter Holmes also took his chance to do a good job, and Dean Crowe came up with another priceless goal to become our leading scorer.

The win was deserved, because the players worked very hard for it. It was a day when the points were more important than the performance, and I felt that the crowd understood that. The support was tremendous, easily the day's highest attendance in the division.

We fully appreciate the value of that kind of backing, and to lose only twice at home in the first half of the season would be reasonably satisfactory in my book. Hartlepool will be keen to make it three, to avenge their defeat against us a couple of weeks ago, and that game is still fresh in the memory. We had to work our socks off to hold on when they threw everything at us after we went down to ten men. But we did the job, and believe we can do another one today. Three more points will set us up nicely, before we play two away games in succession. As always, you can help by giving the team every encouragement.

Keep the faith! And enjoy the game.

Joe Kinnear

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5



Stuart Smith



Football in the Community

UNFORTUNATELY I have to start today with disappointing news. Regrettably, due to the poor weather conditions, we had to postpone Saturday's Railtrack Under 11's tournament. However I have managed to obtain an extension to the competition deadline. Therefore I will rearrange the tournament for a Saturday in January.

Hopefully all last week's entrants will still be available. Any other schools wishing to enter may of course do so - all they need to do is call me at the club. I will announce the new date as soon as I have secured pitches.

Today I am also able to announce a fantastic new scheme that will enable hundreds of children to come and watch Luton Town absolutely free.

The Nationwide Supporters of Tomorrow scheme, which was launched nationally in early November by Nationwide Building Society and The Football League, will enable more than 100,000 youngsters across the country to visit their local Nationwide League team, many for the first time.

Luton Town is supporting the scheme, which rewards individuals within schools who have demonstrated good practice, outstanding achievements, or undertaken community initiatives, by providing free tickets to attend Nationwide Football League games over the remainder of the season.

This club will distribute a total of 1500 tickets to over 70 schools to attend games from today onwards. The schools will use these tickets to reward selected pupils who have demonstrated at least one of three criteria.

The 100%er's Club is a scheme under which children will be rewarded with free tickets based on attendance at school over a given time-frame. The Goals Award Scheme will be for children who have gained some defined achievement at school, such as improved performance or extra curricular activity. The third qualification will be through the Improvement Scheme, for boys and girls who have demonstrated either a consistent level of acceptable behaviour

or substantial improvements over a given time period..

John Baker, area manager at Nationwide Building Society comments: "Nationwide Supporters of Tomorrow reinforces our on-going commitment to maintaining strong links with the local community. By distributing free tickets to schools and community groups we are able to offer youngsters the chance to see Luton Town live."

David Burns, chief executive at The Football League, said: "The response from all 72 Nationwide Football League Clubs to the scheme has been fantastic. Through the involvement of clubs from all divisions, and with the help of Nationwide Building Society, we are able to increase attendance by over 100,000 during the current season."

Peter Gandolfi, head of sports marketing at Nationwide Building Society commented: "We are delighted to be able to extend our sponsorship links with the Football League and to help clubs provide local youngsters with free access to football. "Nationwide Supporters of Tomorrow has been developed to encourage under 18's to support their local club and to reward those who have demonstrated good practice, outstanding achievement, or undertaken community initiatives."

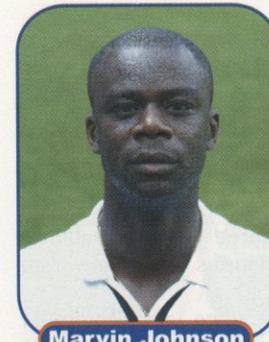
Head teachers will need to ensure that their nominations reach me at Luton Town as soon as possible: just write to me listing the students you are nominating. Also you will need to remember that the appropriate numbers of adults will have to be present to supervise. You can either take the adults tickets from your allocation, or by purchasing additional tickets from me at the club.

I do hope all schools take advantage of this scheme so that their pupils get the opportunity to watch the first team in action. For many I am sure it will be their first professional match and hopefully the start of a future generation of Luton Town supporters.

Enjoy the game today, and hopefully the lads can continue the current winning run.

Stuart Smith

For the latest ticket information call the Luton Ticket Office on: **01582 416976**



Marvin Johnson

Club Captain

I WAS one of several very happy footballers who played at Fratton Park on Wednesday. It was a reserves match, and we drew 2-2, but the

best thing from my point of view was that it confirmed I have got over my injury problems, and with luck I might be involved in the first team squad again as we go into one of the busiest spells of the season.

Aaron Skelton and Paul Hughes also got through the game OK, which must be good news for the club as well as for themselves, because we know that the strength in depth of the squad is likely to be well tested in the next week or two.

Rushden & Diamonds gave us a pretty severe test last week. They went home saying they thought they had done enough to get at least a point out of the game. I don't know about that, but we were delighted to make it back to back wins after the unwelcome shock of losing three times on the trot.

In football winning or losing becomes a habit, and it was vital for us to get the points gathered in again.

I was glad that we didn't look at all rusty after the blank weekend when the Kidderminster match was called off, and I thought we played some nice stuff early on. Later on Rushden came back into it, as teams usually do at some stage in every game, but the lads were strong and disciplined.

We are discovering that this is a very competitive league, and we seem to be one of the sides everyone wants to beat, a scalp to be prized.

Saturday was all about getting a result, with or without pretty football, and we have learned that you must not be an easy touch in this league. I think it takes a different sort of football to get out of the division. I remember our days in the old First Division, when the football skill quality was higher than we are meeting now. You only have to look at the Premiership games on TV to see the difference. Players have more natural ability, and more time on the ball at that level. We haven't met too many Thierry Henrys

or David Ginolas in the Third Division, although Jean-Louis Valois might be one to come close. Our opponents are invariably tough and competitive, with a strong physical presence, and we have had to learn to match those demands. I think we are doing so, and to go into today's game second in the table, with the season about to reach the half way point, is highly satisfactory. I'll take that at the end of the season!

Planning for today's match, we are looking at a programme of four games in 11 days, so the fitness and staying power of the squad will come under the microscope. It would have been five matches in 14 days, but the Bristol Rovers game has been postponed, and I am not sure if that is a good thing or not.

Most players prefer games to come thick and fast - it's better than training for five or six days between matches, and you are always keen to get out there again as soon as possible after every match, to keep a winning run going, or to put things right if you have lost.

Some of the lads are disappointed to see the Bristol game chalked off the January fixture list because they were looking forward to being on live TV. I have told them that it gives you an extra buzz, as I well remember!

Fortunately the Kidderminster game has been slotted in for Tuesday week, so we will not be inactive for too long.

Our Christmas, of course, will probably be a bit different from yours. We are hoping the gaffer will give us a day off tomorrow, and it will be training as usual on Christmas Eve, with more training starting at 9am on Christmas Day. I will have to leave home at 8am for that, but I am pretty confident my children, Kristian, 9, and Yazmin, nearly 4, will make sure I am awake well before then to see what Father Christmas has brought.

I think they will get most of what they have asked for.

I hope that goes for all of us: Happy Christmas to you all, and please, Santa, help us to bag a sackful of points!

Marvin Johnson

Hattershop new catalogue now available to receive yours phone **01582 41622** and ask for the Club Shop



Bruce Sewell

Treatment Room

IT IS mostly good news from the treatment room today, except for the addition of Chris Coyne to the injured list, facing an absence of a

month or more after his weekend to remember. The only consolation for him is that the injury sustained against Rushden could have been worse. He has sprained a knee ligament, and when it happened we had worries that it might have been a tear. Thankfully, after seeing a specialist in mid-week, it is not as serious as that, although he will have to sit it out over the Christmas and New Year games.

Four players have got over injuries to put themselves in the frame for the holiday matches after proving their fitness in the reserves at Portsmouth on Wednesday. Marvin Johnson and Aaron Skelton both completed the full 90 minutes, with no adverse reactions. Paul Hughes was given an hour, and was well pleased with the way it went after three months of treatment following his ankle ligament injury.

We took him off as a precaution, and to give Adam

Locke a 30-minute run-out, and he too sailed through it. Like the other three he is available to the manager for the Christmas and New Year matches.

Carl Griffiths, out of action since late September with a stress fracture of the leg, is making steady progress, and is due to come out of plaster on New Year's eve. Hopefully, having had the leg immobilised for six weeks, we will get confirmation that the bone has healed. It will still be a lengthy process for him to regain fitness, and we cannot yet forecast when he might be able to resume his place in the first team squad.

Lee Mansell is jogging again after his ankle injury, but needs more time to complete his recovery, while Peter Holmes picked up a lower leg injury in the Rushden match, and will probably have to miss today's game, but should be available again within a week or so.

Finally, a word about Liam George: I felt it was very unfair the way he was treated by Colchester, and we all feel very unhappy for him. So far as I am concerned he is fully fit for football, as he proved once more with an appearance in the reserve game in midweek.

Bruce Sewell



Cherry Newbery

Club Secretary

FIRST today, in wishing everyone a very Happy Christmas and a peaceful and prosperous New Year, I

would like to thank everyone for the usual generous support given at our last home game when we had another charity collection. It raised the magnificent sum of £624.43 for the Mayor of Luton's Christmas Appeal.

For many of us, the traditional Christmas festivities begin with the annual Carol Service, and once more it was a great pleasure to be there. It was very well supported, and the church looked lovely, with beautiful Christmas trees and lights. It was nice to welcome a lot of new faces, as well as many old friends, and our thanks go to our club chaplain, the Rev Catherine Bell, and to our guest speaker, Alan West, who is a former Luton Town midfielder and now pastor of Luton Christian Fellowship.

It was a very happy occasion, with supporters and club staff all enjoying each other's company - and the coffee and mince pies afterwards!

It was also a time for reflection for some of us. The last time we were in Luton Parish Church was a week or so earlier, for the funeral of Derek "Stitch" Kirkpatrick, our kit man. The turn-out was tremendous, adequate proof of the deep respect we all had for a good man. Meanwhile, the football club routine continues, with plenty of work for everyone as we embark on a hectic holiday programme.

Part of the routine at our last home game was a little out of the ordinary. Let me set the scene: it is 3.35, we are leading 1-0, the team is playing well, and problems with the water supply have been sorted out.

I am hoping to see some of the match, but then I receive a call asking me to meet an important visitor in reception.

The FA Drug Control Department has arrived. They turn up without notice, at training

grounds or any reserve or first team match, to carry out random drug tests on players. We are required to prove secure facilities for them to use to carry out the tests, and the secretary of Rushden and I had to pulled three names from each of our teams, two for testing, and one reserve.

Each player selected has to go straight from the pitch to the testing room - one of the coaches' offices in our case last Saturday - and you may have noticed a steward going round to the dug-outs shortly after half-time to pass on the names of those chosen.

The testing can take a considerable time, and while it is not always welcomed by the players involved we all accept that sadly, in today's world, it is necessary to ensure that our sport is as clean as possible. We have not had the results yet, but our players were all happy in the knowledge that they knew they were clear.

The match result, of course, put everyone in a nice Christmassy mood, and that could hardly have been better timed because our players had their annual do on Saturday evening, and by all accounts it was a great success.

Hopefully we will have another victory to celebrate this afternoon, and I am sure that, like me, you will be delighted that once again today we have the Salvation Army band from Dunstable performing traditional Christmas carols for us.

As you may have read elsewhere in today's match day magazine, don't forget that our home game with Bristol Rovers, which was due to be a live TV game on January 4, has been postponed because they will be in the FA Cup instead. But we have football a few days later - the all-ticket game against Kidderminster has now been fixed for the following Tuesday, January 8. See page 10 for more details.

Finally, once again here's wishing everyone a very happy Christmas, and lots of points!

Cherry Newbery

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Ticket News

Nationwide League Division Three



Oxford United v Luton Town

Wednesday December 26, 2001, kick-off 3pm

This is NOT an all-ticket match. However, tickets at discounted prices are available in advance from Kenilworth Road
 Prices: Adults £14, junior and senior citizens £8.50
 Pay on the day prices, subject to availability: Adults £17, junior and senior citizens £11.



Nationwide League Division Three



Southend United v Luton Town

Saturday December 29, 2001, kick-off 3pm

This is NOT an all-ticket match. However, supporters are advised to purchase their tickets in advance from Kenilworth Road.
 Prices: Adults £14, junior and senior citizens £8.



Nationwide League Division Three



Luton Town v Exeter City

Tuesday January 1, 2002, kick-off 3pm

Tickets are on sale at normal match day prices
 Cash turnstiles will be available on the day, subject to availability, but please note there are NO CONCESSIONS on cash turnstiles.



Nationwide League Division Three

Luton Town v Bristol Rovers

MATCH POSTPONED

This game, scheduled for Friday January 4, has been postponed because of Bristol Rovers' FA Cup commitment. At the time of going to press no new date has been arranged

Nationwide League Division Three

Kidderminster Harriers v Luton Town

Tuesday January 8, 2002, kick-off 7.45pm

This match is ALL TICKET for Luton supporters, with none available on the day
 Prices: Seats £13 adults, £9 junior and senior citizens
 Terracing £10 adults, £7 concessions
 Tickets bought for the original date in December will still be valid.
 Supporters unable to use those tickets can obtain a refund by applying to the Luton ticket office by January 7 at the latest



Nationwide League Division Three



Cheltenham Town v Luton Town

Saturday January 12, 2002, kick-off 3pm

At the time we went to press we are still awaiting a decision on whether this will be an all ticket match.
 Tickets will be on sale from the Luton ticket office from January 2 onwards
 Prices: Seats - £13 adults, £10 concessions, £5 children under 14
 Terracing - £11 adults, £7 concessions, £3 children under 1



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By using our telephone hotline system you can order match tickets up to 48 hours prior to any game by ringing

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 Saturday December 29: 10am to 12 noon
 Monday December 31: 10am - 4pm
 Tuesday, January 1, 2002: 9am - 5.30

You can order tickets via email on:

ticketoffice@lutontown.co.uk

Pre-Match Entertainment

This afternoon's pre-match and half time entertainment is managed by our PA announcers Justin Dealey and Steve Faulkner.

1.45 Gates Open - music starts

HALF TIME

2.10 Club mascot Happy Harry runs on the pitch.

3.50 Golden Gamble - Winning ticket picked by Luton Town Player.

2.15 HMV Album of the Week - THE GREATEST HITS (THE RECORD) - THE BEE GEES

3.55 Run down of half time scores from around the country

2.20 Team line up to be announced.

4.00 Repeat of dedications

2.25 The UK's No1 single - ROBBIE WILLIAMS & NICOLE KIDMAN - SOMETHING STUPID

4.05 Teams arrive back on pitch to theme song "Gimme Some Lovin".

2.30 Dedications announced.

4.55 FULL TIME

2.35 HMV single of the week - GORDON HASKELL - HOW WONDERFUL ARE YOU

Matchday music supplied by

2.40 Town Teaser - Check out page 37 for today's question



2.55 Teams run out to our new song - The Blues Brothers "Gimme Some Lovin".

Arndale Centre.

2.57 Final run down of the teams.

If you would like your dedication read out, please contact the Club prior to matchdays.

3.00 THE BIG KICK OFF

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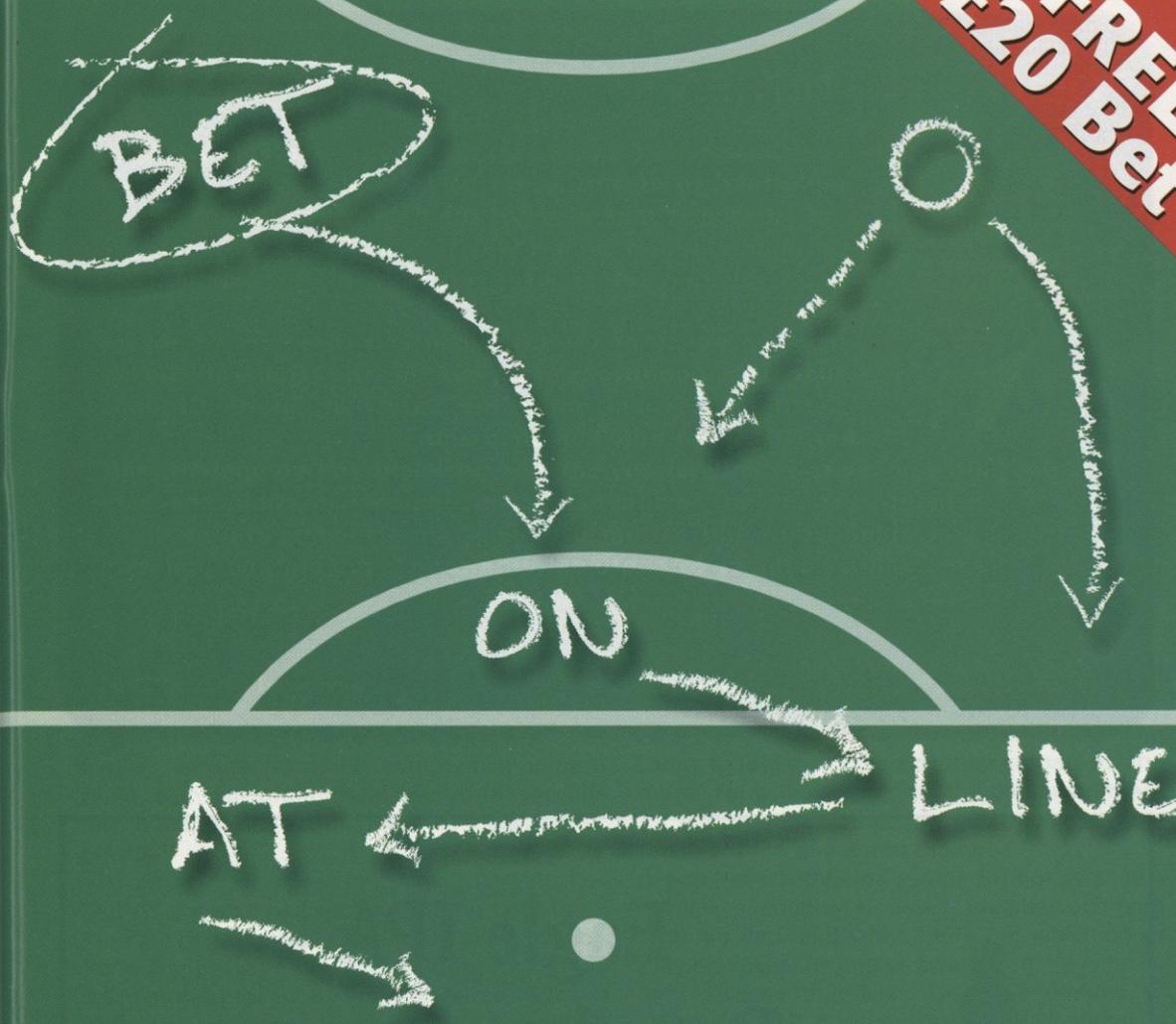
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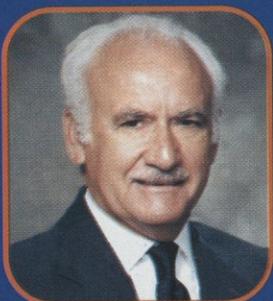
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POLICY STATEMENT - SPECTATOR SAFETY



The Chairman and Directors of Luton Town Football Club undertake to ensure as far as humanly possible that all activities that take place at the Kenilworth Road Stadium are conducted in such a way that as far as is reasonably practical the safety of everybody at the stadium is assured.

It is the policy of the Chairman and Directors to ensure that the conditions set out in the General Safety Certificate, issued under the Safety at Sports Grounds Act, 1975, are fully complied with.

It is the Club's policy to provide at any activity sufficient and competent staff and management systems to ensure as far as humanly possible the safe admission, accommodation and exiting of spectators attending the stadium. These systems will be subject to continual monitoring, testing and updating where necessary.

Mike Watson-Challis Chairman

Reviewed August, 2001.

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Commercial Corner



Linda Layton

AMONG the many people in our executive lounges and boxes today, we give a special welcome to staff and customers of a well-established local company, Sunrise CNC Milling Ltd, who are sponsoring this afternoon's game. The engineering company is based at Greenwood Court, Ramridge Road, Round Green, and part of the sponsorship deal is that they are entitled to a write-up here to help them burnish their image, or drum up extra business. But Sunrise ask us to use the space to pass on one simple message: they are very proud to be sponsoring the game, and wish the team, and everybody connected with the club, including all supporters, a very happy Christmas and, hopefully, a very successful New Year. We couldn't have put it better ourselves, and offer similar wishes from the commercial department, with our gratitude to everyone who has loyally supported Luton Town by backing our efforts.

TODAY'S match ball sponsor is long-time Town fan Paul Hilliard, from Cranbrook Drive, Sundon Park. The package has been bought for him as a Christmas present by his wife, Karen. "We are both avid fans, and I wanted to find something different as a present," she said. "So a few of us have got together to enjoy a day out at Kenilworth Road in one of the executive boxes."

Naturally, we hope Paul and his friends, particularly Anna and Mark Slough, and Michael and Mark O'Shea, Karen's father and her brother, have a day to enjoy, topped off, of course, by a good Hatters victory.

EIGHT-year-old Niall Girling is this afternoon's commercial mascot, and it will be a day to remember for the little lad from Heacham Close, Lewsey Farm. He has a VIP day out thanks to sponsorship from the Galaxy Centre, the major town centre landmark in Luton, which attracts over two million people annually for a variety of entertainment.

Niall's day out starts with a visit to the dressing room, to join the players as they prepare for the game. He will also go onto the pitch with them for the pre-match rituals, which means he gets the chance to shoot into the net.

A pupil at Southfields Junior School, Niall is a regular spectator at Town matches, coming with his dad, and when he is not watching or playing soccer he enjoys swimming. He is probably pleased that Liam George's transfer to Colchester fell through, because the striker is Niall's favourite player.



Niall Girling

Linda Layton

Golden Gamble

WHEN can a quid be worth £700? Answer: When and the other half to the club.

it is spent on our Golden Gamble lottery. The jackpot grows bigger and bigger every match, and at the last home game, against Rushden & Diamonds, John Shaw and Reg Tingey, from St. Neots, were the winning two-man syndicate who collected £700 in readies.

We cannot guarantee that the prize will always be that big, because it depends on sales, with half of each £1 going to the prize fund



But so far 11 winners have been very happy with their "investment" because they have shared a total of £6,495, an average of £590 each. We think it is a decent flutter, and as usual Golden Gamble ticket sellers will be on duty in all parts of the ground today. The draw is made

at half time, with the prize available for collection immediately in cash.

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Goals Info:



Where



20 Goals



17 Goals



6 Goals

How

Shots.....22
Headers.....13
Volleys.....7
Penalties...1
Free Kicks...0
O.G.s.....0

Top Scorers

Crowe.....8
Griffiths...7
Taylor.....5
Howard....4
Nicholls...3
Forbes....3
Valois....3

2001-2002

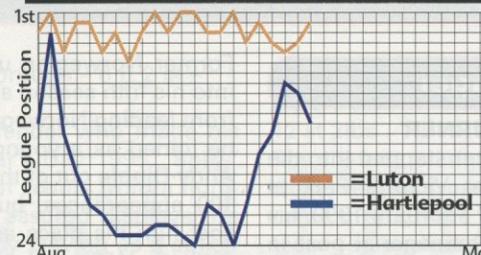
Highest Gate
7,696
vs Rochdale
Lowest Gate
5,066
vs Lincoln
Average Gate
6,728
Players Used 32
Clean Sheets 6
Failed to Score 2
Consec. Wins 2 games
Consec. Defeats 2 games

Hatters' Last 10

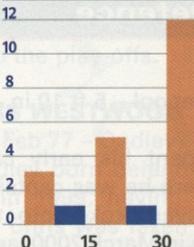
Res	Opp	Ven	Opp Pos
W	Rushden	H	8th
W	Hartlepool	A	9th
L	Macclesfield	A	23rd
L	Hull	H	5th
W	Shrewsbury	H	6th
L	Mansfield	A	5th
W	Swansea	H	18th
W	Halifax	A	20th
L	Rochdale	H	2nd
L	Scunthorpe	A	9th

check out the stats @ www.soccer-stats.com

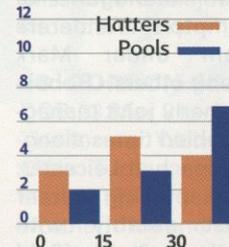
Seasonal Progress Comparison



When Goals have been Scored



When Goals have been Conceded



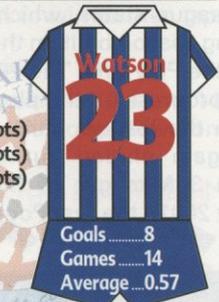
Dean Crowe (Luton)



Goals.....8
Games.....12
Average...0.67

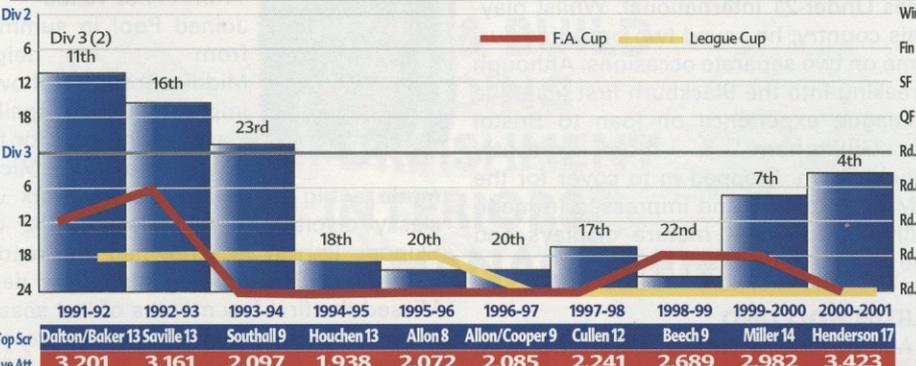
Top Scorers Comparison Gordon Watson (Hartlepool)

7 games.....	Total Games Scored In.....	6 games.....
6 games.....	Games Scored 1 Goal.....	5 games.....
1 game.....	Games Scored 2 Goals.....	0 games.....
0 games.....	Hat-tricks.....	1 game.....
W->L.....0 (0pts)	Season's Results and	W->L.....0 (0pts)
W->D.....3 (6pts)	(loss of points) without	W->D.....0 (0pts)
D->L.....0 (0pts)	the two goalscorers goals	D->L.....1 (1pts)
3 games.....	Maximum scoring run.....	3 games.....
3 games.....	Maximum Dry Spell.....	5 games.....
5.....	Shot.....	4.....
1.....	Header.....	2.....
2.....	Volleyed Shot.....	2.....
0.....	Penalty.....	0.....
0.....	Direct free Kick.....	0.....



Goals.....8
Games.....14
Average...0.57

Hartlepool United's Last 10 Years - The Complete Record



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Sunday 23 December, Sky Sports 1

Wolverhampton v Preston
Wednesday 26 December, ITV Sport Channel
Everton v Manchester United
Wednesday 26 December, ITV Sport Select

Welcome to Hartlepool United F.C.

The Manager



CHRIS TURNER

Chris Turner stepped into the hot-seat at Victoria Park at the end of February 1999, his first solo managerial post in the League after a successful spell as manager of Wolverhampton Wanderers youth team under Mark

McGhee where he took - among others - Robbie Keane into the first team. Formerly joint manager of Leyton Orient during troubled times alongside John Sitton and a youth coach at Leicester; Turner had a distinguished playing career between the posts, most notably with Manchester United, Sunderland & Sheffield Wednesday. His first task was to preserve the club's league status, which he achieved & the following season built on this success & took the side to the Play-offs. The 2000-2001 season saw further progress on the playing front and fourth place in the league, although Play-off success once again eluded Turner's side. Won the Division 3 Manager of the Month award for January 2001 - the first Pool chief to do so in ten years.

In Goal

1. ANTHONY WILLIAMS

DOB 20 Sep 77- Ogwr- 6 ft 2 ins - 13 st 8 lbs
Signed from Blackburn Rovers, Williams is a former Wales Under-21 international. Whilst playing for his country, he saved two penalties during a game on two separate occasions. Although never breaking into the Blackburn first team, he gained League experience on loan to Bristol Rovers, Gillingham & most recently Macclesfield Town. Stepped in to cover for the injured Martin Hollund and impressed immediately with his confident mature displays and made the goalkeeper's jersey his own.

21. MARTIN HOLLUND

DOB 11 Aug 74 - Stord, Norway - 6 ft 2 in. - 12 st 9 lbs

Former Norwegian under-21 international now into his fifth season at Victoria Park. Joined Pool from leading Norwegian side Brann Bergen who he joined as a youngster. Initially kept veteran Andy Dibble out of the side and clocked up over 100 appearances, but injury early last season cost him his place as automatic first choice to Anthony Williams.

In Defence

2. PAUL ARNISON

DOB 18 Sep 77 - Hartlepool - 5 ft 10 in - 10 st 12 lbs

Local boy Arnison spent his early career at Newcastle United, where he was captain of the reserve team, but never broke into the first eleven. Signed on loan in March 2000, and a permanent contract shortly afterwards. Comfortable at either right back or in midfield, Arnison has also shown his versatility playing in the heart of the defence when required.

3. MARK ROBINSON

DOB 24 Jul 81 - Guisborough - 5 ft 9 in - 11 st 0 lbs

A left back with a sweet left foot, Mark is a good striker of the ball, with good defensive qualities & attitude and particularly dangerous from set pieces. Made his league debut on the first day of last season at Lincoln, and was used sparingly.



4. MICKY BARRON

DOB 22 Dec 74 - Lumley - 5 ft 11 in - 11 st 10 lbs

Joined Pool in summer 1996 from neighbours Middlesbrough following an impressive loan spell. Voted Player of the Year for two successive seasons, Micky has

made a big impact at Victoria Park with his classy displays in the heart of the defence. Skipper Barron is renowned for reading the game well & organising his fellow defenders. Missed the first few months of last season after knee surgery but virtually ever-present after November.



Today's Visitors



5. GRAEME LEE

DOB 31 May 78 - Middlesbrough - 6 ft 2 in - 13 st 8 lbs

A young, cool-headed defender who made his league debut on New Year's Day 1995, 'Spike' has attracted the interest of scouts from a number of clubs for his cool, assured displays. He has shown his versatility by playing as a striker when needed, scoring 8 goals. Missed the majority of last season due to knee surgery on two occasions, he returned to play a part in the run in to the play-offs.

6. CHRIS WESTWOOD

DOB 13 Feb 77 - Dudley - 5 ft 11 in - 12 st 10 lbs
The Dudley born defender signed from Telford United in 1999, having previously played for Wolves. Chris was taken through the youth set up at Molineux under Chris Turner's wing and joined up with Turner shortly after his appointment as Pools boss. Another ever-present last season his classy, assured displays have attracted the attention of scouts from higher division clubs. Scored his only goal of last season - and only the second of his career - in October.

15. JONATHON BASS

DOB 1 Jan 76 - Western-Super-Mare - 6 ft 0 in - 12 st 2lbs

The six-foot tall right back was signed during the close season from Birmingham City where he came through the ranks to make his debut as a teenager against Blackburn Rovers in October 1994. He made 67 appearances for the Blues, but missed the majority of last season due to a shoulder injury.

18. GORDON SIMMS

DOB 23 Mar 81 - Larne - 6 ft 3 ins - 12 st 3 lbs
The former Wolves trainee was snapped up by Chris Turner under whose wing Simms had started his career with the Black Country club. A Northern Ireland Under-16 and Under-18 international, he celebrated signing for Pools by being named in the Under-21 squad on the same day and has gone on to win further caps.

20. JAMES SHARP

DOB 02 Jan 76 - Reading - 6 ft 2 in - 14 st 6 lbs
Joined the club from Andover Town on the rec-

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ommendation of Mark McGee James soon became a favourite with fans with his robust defensive displays and is renowned for his long throws. Previously a YTS at Reading, he has played in America and in non-league football for Aldershot, Wokingham as well as Andover. Created club history by winning both Player of the Year Awards.

In Midfield

7. MARK TINKLER

DOB 24 Oct 74 - Bishop Auckland - 6 ft 2 ins - 13 st 0 lbs

Mark joined Pool from Southend in November 2000. A former Leeds United trainee he made his League debut in November 1991 and played 26 first team games before being transferred to York City for £85,000 in March 1997. After making 95 appearances at Bootham Crescent he followed his Manager, Alan Little, to Southend in August 1999 for a fee of £40,000 and was a regular in the Roots Hall set up until Little was replaced by Dave Webb. Chris Turner, looking to strengthen his midfield, snapped up Mark after admiring his first time control and passing abilities. The solid midfielder made a huge difference alongside Tommy Miller and Paul Stephenson after his free-transfer arrival.

14. TOMMY WIDDRINGTON

DOB 1 Oct 71 - Newcastle - 5 ft 9 ins - 11 st 12 lbs

A tough-tackling midfielder who made 75 Premier League appearances for Southampton before moving to Grimsby for £300,000. After 89 games for the Mariners scoring 8 goals he moved on to Port Vale before joining Pools during the close season.

16. DARRELL CLARKE

DOB 16 Dec 77 - Mansfield - 5 ft 10 ins - 11 st 6 lbs

An exciting attacking midfielder who joined Pools from Mansfield for an undisclosed fee during the close season. Came through the ranks with the Stags and went on to make 135 appearances finding the net 24 times.

17. PAUL STEPHENSON

DOB 2 Jan 68 - Wallsend - 5 ft 10 in - 12 st 12 lbs

The former England Youth international played in the same Newcastle United side as Paul Gascoigne & Pool legend Joe Allon. A £300,000 move to Millwall was followed by spells with Gillingham, Brentford & York City, before joining Pools in March 1998. Playing in a central midfield role Paul has been outstanding for the past

two seasons and was rewarded with an extended contract.

25. TONY SWEENEY

DOB 05 Sep 83 - Stockton - 6 ft 0 ins - 11 st 7 lbs

Young midfielder who has progressed through the Youth team and Reserve ranks. Made debut as a substitute against York City in October 2001.

26. PAUL SMITH

DOB 22 Jul 76 - Easington - 6 ft 0 ins - 13 st 3 lbs

Made 112 appearances for Burnley in 8 seasons, a strong left-sided midfielder who signed in November. Made his debut as substitute at Plymouth and full debut at home in the 4-0 victory over Hull.

Up Front

8. RITCHIE HUMPHREYS

DOB 30 Nov 77 - Sheffield - 5 ft 11 ins - 12 st 7 lbs

Made an immediate impact in the 1996-97 season as Sheffield Wednesday's out-and-out striker scoring 3 times in his first four games, but lost his place to accommodate David Hirst and later their Italian imports. His talent was recognised early in his career with an England Under 21 call up. A change in managers saw him playing left-back which reduced his goal-scoring opportunities. Moved on to Cambridge in February 2001 and joined Pools in the summer.

9. TONY LORMOR

DOB 29 Oct 70 - Ashington - 6 ft 2 in - 13 st 13 lbs

An experienced goal-scorer in the traditional centre-forward mould, who signed from Mansfield for an undisclosed fee. Started his career at Newcastle United, and has played for several clubs including Lincoln, Chesterfield and Preston who paid £130,000 for his services. Lost his regular starting place due to knee surgery, but regained it towards the end of last season and scored vital goals in the run in to the play-offs.

10. KEVIN HENDERSON

DOB 8 Jun 74 - Ashington - 5 ft 11 in - 13 st 12 lbs

Live-wire, hard-working forward who returned

to his native North East in 1999. Kevin joined Burnley from Northern League Morpeth Town in December 1997, opting for Turf Moor ahead of a number of clubs - including Pool. Has made one of the central striking roles his own & contributed often-spectacular goals. Ended last season as second leading goalscorer with 19 goals after netting eight the previous campaign. Signed a new, long-term contract to keep him at Victoria Park last season.

12. JERMAINE EASTER

DOB 15 Jan 82 - Cardiff - 5 ft 10 ins - 12 st 3 lbs
Another product of the Wolves youth set-up, pacy striker Easter is a former captain of the Wales Under-18 side. After signing in March he scored on his debut for the reserve side and made several appearances as substitute for the first team towards the end of the season.

19. ADAM BOYD

DOB 25 May 82 - Hartlepool - 5 ft 9 in - 10 st 12 lbs

Manager Turner awarded locally born Adam a professional contract during his Scholarship period. He made a sensational home debut, coming on as a late substitute & scoring a spectacular winner against Shrewsbury. Has yet to win a regular first team spot but is highly rated by Turner and forms part of his plans for the future.

23. GORDON WATSON

DOB 20 Mar 71 - Sidcup - 5 ft 10 ins - 12 st 8 lbs

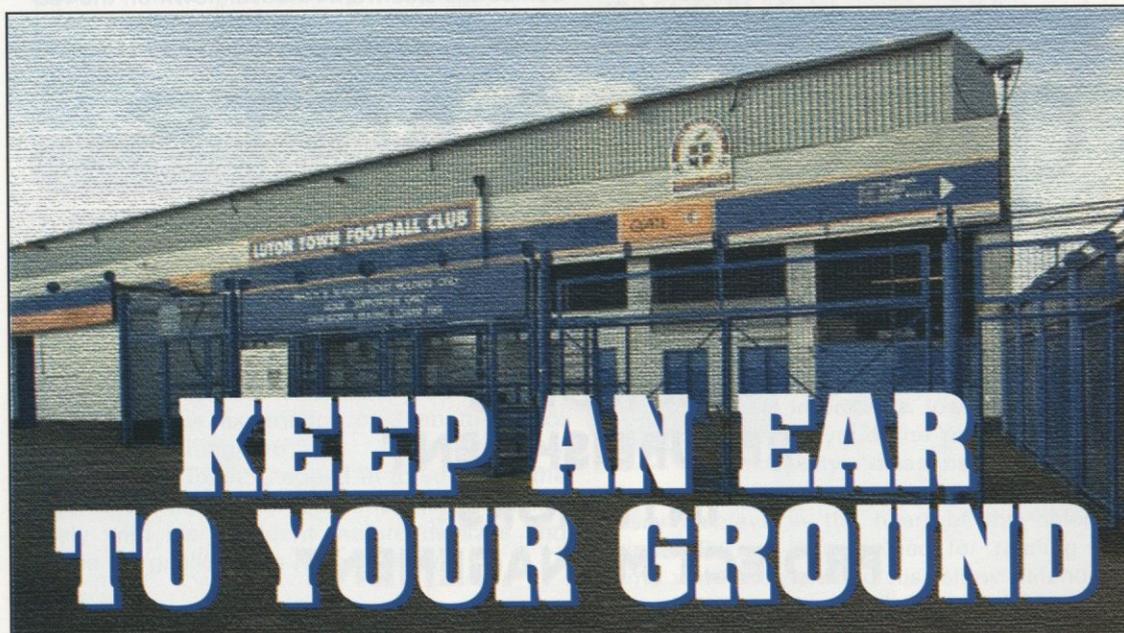
Started his career with Charlton then moved to Sheffield Wednesday, Southampton (for £1.2 m) and Bradford City where he suffered a horrific career-



threatening injury. He successfully sued for damages and won a substantial award. Has been playing for Portsmouth Reserves this season after taking a break from the game. Signed until end of season.

27. JON PARKIN

DOB 30 Dec 81 - Barnsley - 6 ft 4 ins - 13 st 7 lbs
Signed on loan from Barnsley where he made 13 first team appearances, often as a central defender. Made debut for Reserves at Mansfield.



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Happy Harry

Junior Hatters

GREETINGS to all young football supporters, including our visitors from Hartlepool this afternoon. We hope we all have a very happy Christmas, and a peaceful, prosperous and promotion-winning New Year.

As already reported, our Christmas party was the usual huge success, and we have a special picture feature from it on the following pages.

Our thanks to all who helped, and especially the Town players, who all turned up and proved once again how friendly they are, and how much they appreciate their supporters, of all ages. It was a cracking party, and if you are a young Luton supporter who would like to be invited to the next one, all you have to do is join the Junior Hatters. It is open to all boys and girls aged from 0-16, and there are lots of benefits, including subsidised trips to a lot of away games, and the chance to be picked out of the hat to be mascot at a match. If you would like to know more, ask at the club shop in Kenilworth Road.

Happy Harry

Sorry, but we have not got space today to publish our usual photo of the mascot group at last Saturday's game, against Rushden and Diamonds. It has been held over to the matchday magazine for our next home match, against Exeter on New Year's Day.

Today's Mascot



EIGHT-year-old Danny Hogwood, from Pomeroy Grove, Luton, always enjoys coming to watch Luton Town, and you will normally hear him shouting his encouragement from the Kenilworth Lower Tier. But this afternoon, before he takes his seat alongside his grand-dad in row K, block

B, he will have some very pleasant and enjoyable duties to perform.

At every home game we select a name at random to be the Junior Hatters mascot, and the choice has fallen on Danny today. It will be a day to remember, with an early start, because the mascot's first duty, having got into his Luton Town kit, is to join the players who are doing the same, in the dressing room before kick-off.

Our mascots all report what good company they are, very friendly and helpful to young supporters who are often a touch over-awed until they discover that the players are very approachable.

Danny will be especially pleased to meet Jean-Louis Valois, because the French wing wizard is his

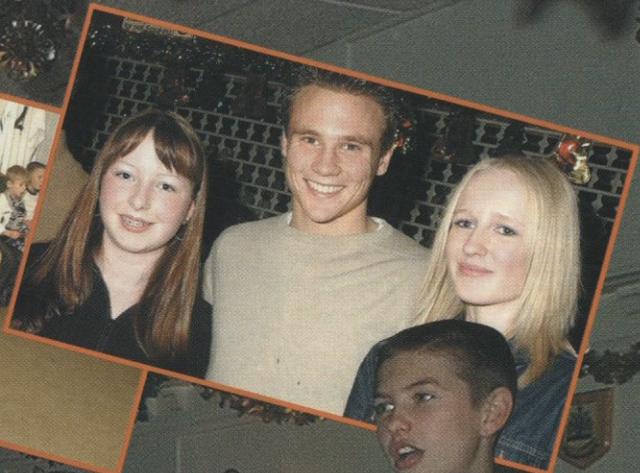
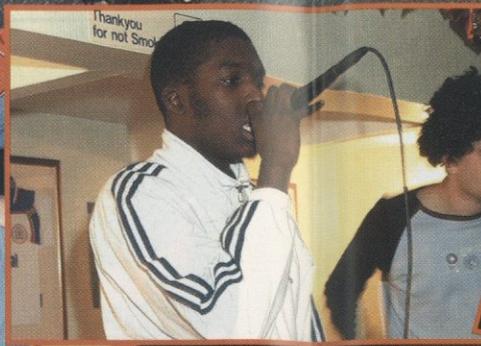
favourite player. Having sampled the dressing room atmosphere, the mascot goes onto the pitch for the warm-up and pre-match facilities, and joins the skippers and match officials in the centre-circle for the toss of the coin for choice of ends. We hear that quite often the referee add his contribution to the mascot's day out by letting him have the coin after it has served its purpose.

Today's mascot is mad keen on sport. He goes to Warden Hill School, and plays football for Bushmead Wanderers in the Chiltern Youth League. Danny is also a member of Luton Swimming Club.

We are sure he will have a cracking day out, and if you would like the chance to be a VIP young supporter in future, all you have to do is be a member of the Junior Hatters. You can pick up an application form, and get more information, at the club shop at the top of Kenilworth Road.

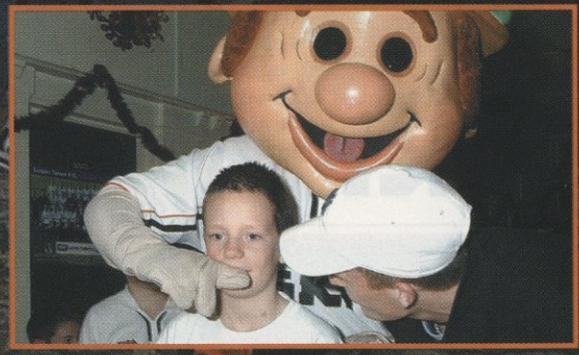
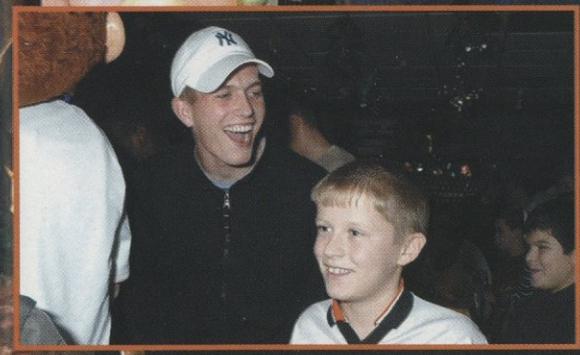
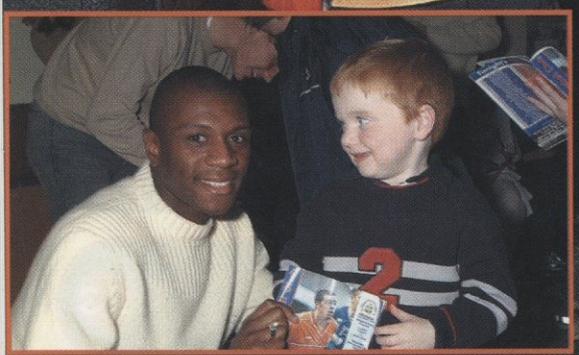
And even if you are not lucky enough to have your name picked out as mascot, we also choose ball boys or girls for each home game. We have two on duty this afternoon: Karl Hilton, from Moat Lane, Limbury, and Mark Glendenning, of Eastfield Close, Stopsley.

**If you would like to join the Junior Hatters, call the Club Shop on:
 01582 411622**



Merry Christmas, Everyone!

THE JUNIOR Hatters enjoyed their traditional Christmas Party at Kenilworth Road, with Santa Claus one very popular visitor - but even he was not in as much demand as the players. Gareth Owen's picture selection captures the flavour of the occasion.



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Hatters Away

CHRISTMAS gives us two away games on the trot, thankfully both easy journeys, to Oxford on Boxing Day and to Southend next Saturday. Both games kick off at 3pm.

On Wednesday we will be making our first-ever visit to the new Kassam Stadium, which has replaced the old Manor Ground, and a big bonus for supporters is that the complex includes a car park. It has space for 1,100 cars, and no charge is made to use it, but the advice from Oxford is that you might need to arrive early to be sure of parking because they anticipate a big crowd. It is also worth noting that Town supporters intending to travel can save money on the match admission price by buying tickets in advance from the Town ticket office - see page 10 for details. You can also buy in advance for the Southend game.

If you prefer some-one else to do the driving, the Bobbers Travel Club and Town on Tour, part of the Luton Town Supporters Club, will be running coach services to Oxford and Southend.

Town on Tour's service to Oxford will leave Maple Road at 12.30pm, and the fare is £10 for LTSC members, £9 for members who are senior or junior citizens. For non-members the fare is £11, although you can qualify for the discount immediately if you join LTSC when you book your seat.

The Bobbers give a service to the outlying villages as well as to Luton, and for Oxford they leave Cranfield at 11am, picking up passengers at various points en route to Luton before leaving Kenilworth Road at noon. Their fare is £8.50, and £7 for juniors and pensioners.

For the game at Southend the Bobbers leave

For all away games the Bobbers Travel Club and the Luton Town Supporters Club have kiosks in Kenilworth Road where seats can be booked on match days. At other times Town on Tour sell through the club shop in Kenilworth Road, while Bobbers bookings can be made by ringing Paul Deason on 01234 750996. The Town on Tour mobile number for out of office hours is 07960 567465.

Cranfield at 10.30 and Kenilworth Road an hour later, while Town on Tour will leave the ground at mid-day. Fares on both services are the same as for Oxford

DIY to The Kassam Stadium

YOU can drive to Oxford in just over an hour via the M1 south, M25 west and M40 west. Leave M40 when you see Oxford signposted, and see below for the final approach.

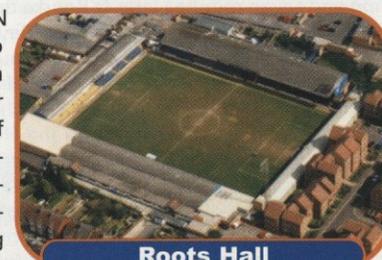
The cross-country route is shorter in miles, takes a little longer, but is a more pleasant drive. Leave Luton on the A505, through Dunstable, and follow the signs to Aylesbury. There pick up the A418 and go beyond Thame to join the A40, which is signposted to Oxford.

On the outskirts of Oxford you come to the Headington roundabout, with the ring road running left and right. It used to be straight on here for the Manor Ground, but for the Kassam Stadium turn left onto the ring road, and you will reach the ground in about five minutes - just follow the signs.

Mileage: 50.

The Road to Roots Hall

YOU CAN drive to Southend in about an hour and a half if the motorways are running smoothly, but parking in the side



Roots Hall

streets near the ground can be a little difficult. Leave Luton on the M1 going south, and then take the M25 east through Hertfordshire and into Essex. Leave M25 at junction 29 to follow the A127 to Southend, 19 miles further on. Follow the signs towards the town centre, and you should pick up signs directing you towards the football ground. At a roundabout near a large Tesco turn right, and within half a mile, at the next roundabout, make another right turn, still on the A127 signposted to central Southend, and the ground is just ahead of you, on the right.

Mileage: 80

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Roger Wash

All our **yesterdays**

Struggles with the Pool

Hartlepool United have not been regular visitors to Kenilworth Road for league fixtures over the years with our only clashes coming over four successive seasons in the 1960's.

The initial meeting took place at Kenilworth Road on 12th February 1966 during our first ever season in the old Division Four. The Town were making an ultimately vain attempt to bounce back first time to Division Three on the back of a tremendous home record and the goals of John O'Rourke.

We had won our last two games 3-1, at Bradford P.A. and at home to Aldershot, and a crowd of 6,131 gathered to see if we could force our way into a top four position.

Hartlepoons United, as they were then known before changing to Hartlepool in 1968 and then Hartlepool United in 1977, were struggling at the wrong end of the table and made it clear from the start that they would happily settle for a point.

On a heavily sanded, muddy pitch the Town forwards were bogged down in the first half against an uncompromising Hartlepoons defence but four minutes after the break O'Rourke lifted the gloom when running 35 yards with the ball before slamming it into the net.

With this goal out of the blue came a new determination and seven minutes later O'Rourke doubled the lead deftly flicking home a header from a Ray Whittaker free kick. The crowd now settled back to a goal avalanche which failed to arrive but not for lack of effort.

Whittaker hit a post and Graham French had two shots brilliantly saved by Les Green in the Hartlepoons goal before the away side caused a few scares towards the end after pulling a goal back through Peter Thompson. The return was played three weeks later with both sides having won their games in between times. French was missing when the players assembled for the long train trip north and Chairman Tom Hodgson was sent to track him down finding him at home nursing a sick wife. Hodgson then went to find David Pleat, who had only played twice that season after breaking a leg, and the pair drove the 230 miles to Hartlepool in four hours which was some going in the days before the present extensive motorway network. They arrived with half an hour to spare!

Obviously bad feeling had carried forward from the previous game and the contest soon developed into brawl with a young Bruce Rioch carried off early on after being kicked up into the air. With substitute Tony Read still taking off his tracksuit, Hartlepoons opened the scoring through Ernie Phythian but the kicking con-

tinued while the referee lost control. Just before the interval Read was sent off after head butting Barry Ashworth to become the first substitute to be dismissed in league football (unless someone knows differently!).

Just after the break Fred Jardine was sent off for kicking Cliff Wright once too often and freed from the close marking Wright scored the second goal on the hour.

The nine men of Luton battled hard but could not find a way back and at the end of the game Luton manager, George Martin, was beside himself with rage at the less than even handed display by the referee. Why, even the mild mannered John Moore received a booking.

The sides met up the following season but this time the boot was on the other foot with Hartlepoons making a bid for promotion with the Town struggling to avoid re-election.

Young Pools boss, Brian Clough, had built a tidy squad and on Good Friday 1967 a crowd of 8,442 assembled at Victoria Park to see the Town surprisingly, given their abysmal away record, put on a much better show than that of twelve months previously.

In a game ruined by a gale force wind Hartlepoons eventually stole the lead in the 55th minute when Jardine and Moore were harshly penalised for sandwiching John McGovern in the area leaving Phythian to net from the spot.

Out of the blue the Town equalised on 70 minutes when French slammed the ball home from 25 yards but they could not hold on with Jim Mulvaney scoring through a crowd of players nine minutes from the end. Even so the Hatters had the chance of a late leveller when King struck a fierce shot from 20 yards which hit the underside of the bar and cannoned out. The Town officials moaned afterwards that if Hartlepoons had modern goalposts rather than old fashioned square ones the ball would have gone in!

After losing 1-5 at York the following day a surprisingly healthy crowd of 7,370 turned out at Kenilworth Road on Easter Monday to see the return with Pools. Most wished they had not have bothered as the Town put on a poor display and virtually handed the away side the points on a plate. Tony Parry and McGovern scored before the interval with the Town unable to unlock a tight Hartlepoons defence after the break.

A match to forget!

Hartlepoons failed to win promotion but were up amongst the front runners throughout the following campaign, along with the Town, even though Brian Clough had gone to carve a bit of a name for himself at Derby.

In an early season clash at Kenilworth Road the Town



Bruce Rioch about to head a snowball at Hartlepool in January 1968.

missed a host of chances against a resolute Hartlepoons and it was left to Rioch to strike a typical blockbuster, following a powerful run, to separate the sides.

By the time of the return, the following January, the Town were still in the chasing pack but had not won away for two months. Hartlepoons, however, were on for a fifth straight victory and set about the Hatters from the start on a snowbound, hard surface.

The Town battled hard but were unable to prevent a 1-2 reversal although they soon found their form again and went on to walk away with the Division Four title with Hartlepoons finishing third.

The following season saw the parting of the ways with

Hartlepool relegated after one season in Division Three and the Town narrowly missing out on promotion. Pool got off to a poor start to the campaign and by the time of the visit to Kenilworth Road in October they had recorded only one victory.

The game went with the form book with goals from Laurie Sheffield, Rioch and Brian Lewis settling the issue on a sodden surface which was only pronounced playable just before the start.

Hartlepool had the last laugh, however, as two months later in the return, a solitary goal from Peter Blowman made it four defeats in a row for the Hatters at Victoria Park.

Roger Wash

Yesterday's pages



The Town had introduced a new 'pocket sized' programme at the start of the 1961/62 season but by the time of Hartlepoons first visit to Luton in February 1966 it was beginning to look very tired.

Much of the 'Club Notes' section of the Hartlepoons issue was taken up with worries about the new parking restrictions imposed on the Dunstable Road side of the ground and how gates would be affected.

Living in Ivy Road as a child I can remember cars, coaches and buses parked nose to tail on both sides of the narrow road and the scrum that ensued after the game. Ambulance and fire engine access was not needed as we were tough in those days!

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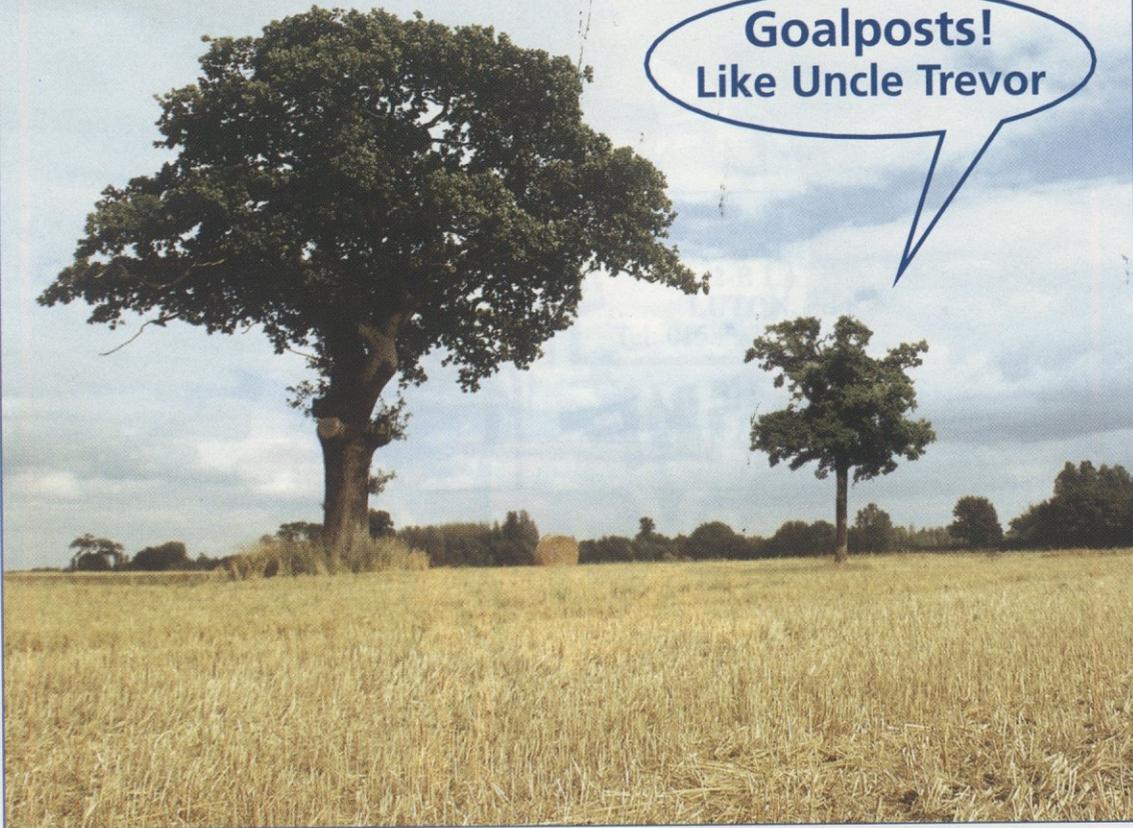
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In the event of evacuation from all or part of the stadium, you will receive instructions over the public address system on how you should leave. In an evacuation of the main stand you will be instructed to use the pitch. Stewards will direct you to the nearest exit. It may be that your normal exit route will not be available. On leaving the stadium, you will find some roads closed to pedestrians, to enable swift and unobstructed access for the emergency services. Please leave the area of the ground as quickly as possible, by the route directed. Your co-operation will be most appreciated.



Geoff Lovell, Safety Manager.



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TOWN TEASER

OUR Town trivia quiz is offering another little prize to a supporter again this afternoon. Listen to the PA announcer before kick-off for your chance to have a go. If you don't know the answer, it can be found elsewhere in this programme.

For the Rushden game we asked about a Town striker on loan to the Diamonds, and the answer, of course, was Peter Thomson.

TODAY'S QUESTION

Today we play our second game of the season against Hartlepool. What was the score, and who got the Town goals the last time we met?

Fans on the road

SUPPORTERS of Rushden & Diamonds boosted last week's gate to the second highest of the season, on a day when football is traditionally hit by Christmas shopping. The Diamonds brought the biggest travelling support we have seen so far for the local derby, the first away crowd into four figures.

Visitors to Luton

Cheltenham	.467
Southend	.912
Oxford	.869
Lincoln	.217
Torquay	.326
Darlington	.302
Rochdale	.679
Swansea	.395
Shrewsbury	.351
Hull	.887
Rushden	.1,134

Hatters Away

Carlisle	.1,097
Reading(WC)	.889
Bristol Rov	.761
Exeter	.712
York	.849
Orient	.2,089
Plymouth	.461
Scunthorpe	.961
Halifax	.774
Dagenham(LDV)	.330
Mansfield	.2,166
Southend(FAC)	.1,560
Macclesfield	.741
Hartlepool	.346

Total:	.6,539
Average:	.594

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Action Replay



Luton Town 1 Rushden & Diamonds 0 (HT 1-0)

PRE-MATCH talk in the Town dressing room before the first-ever league visit by last season's Conference champions was about winning, with or without a good team performance. In the event, the points the Town needed to reclaim second place in the table were gathered by a mixture of one inspired moment in attack, and a lot of very determined hard work in defence.

Rushden had enough possession, especially in the second half, to leave manager Brian Talbot complaining that they ought to have gone home with at least one point. What they are learning, he said, is that the Third Division is a much harder league than the Conference, quicker, stronger, and more resilient. His team had lost only one of its previous 14 league games, but has been shot-shy too often - they had collected five away draws by scoring only once in that seven and a half hours of football.

At Kenilworth Road they met a Town team with huge appetite for success, and Talbot confessed that it was not much good having the opposition on the ropes if you could not deliver a knock-out punch.

How they must wish they had someone with the predatory sharpness of Dean Crowe, who poached his eighth goal of the season from 12 starts. It was fair reward for the way the Town shaded the first half, despite losing two influential

players - Chris Coyne's top-of-the-world pleasure at being a father for the first time turned to agony when he limped out after only ten minutes with a knee injury. Fortunately, Russ Perrett, fit again after a calf muscle strain, was on the bench, and joined David Bayliss in a central defensive pairing which was willing to give everything to blunt the threat of Onandi Lowe and Duane Darby.

Matt Spring became another calf injury victim, and could not return for the second half, but Peter Holmes put in an impressive performance as his deputy as the Town were forced to defend in numbers when Rushden went for broke after the interval. Mark Ovendale had only a couple of saves to make on a day when neither goalkeeper was seriously troubled, and the final piece of the winning jigsaw was the third substitution. Ian Hillier went on in place of Jean-Louis Valois, releasing Matt Taylor to go into midfield, and with Rushden so heavily committed to attack, with four men upfield, it was a shame the Town could not find a way through to hit them on the break. We are learning to accept the needs of this division: it might not be pretty football all the time, but Joe Kinnear's requirement is simple: points are more important than performance as we meet the challenge of winning promotion at the first attempt.

Match Details

Luton Town: Ovendale; Boyce, Coyne (Perrett 10 mins), Bayliss, Taylor; Brkovic, Spring (Holmes HT), Nicholls, Valois (Hillier 75 mins); Howard, Crowe.

Unused subs: Emberson, Forbes.

Booked: Steve Howard, Emmerson Boyce and Ahmet Brkovic for fouls, Mark Ovendale for time-wasting.

Rushden & Diamonds: Turley; Sambrook, Peters, Hunter, Underwood; Hall, Hanlon (McElhatton 85 mins), Butterworth, Burgess; Lowe, Darby (Partridge 57 mins)

Unused subs: Pennock, Setchell, Brady.

Booked: Richie Hanlon, dissent

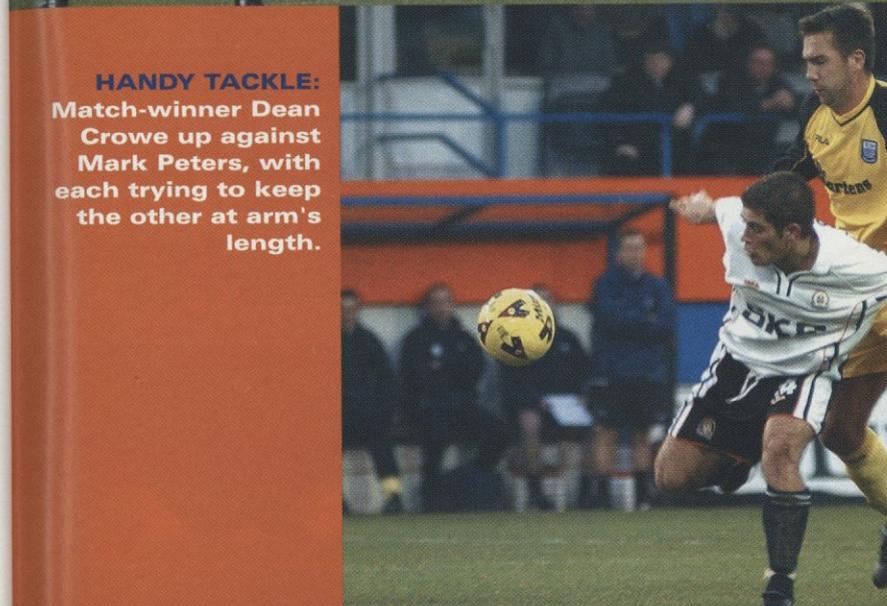
The Goal: Dean Crowe, 34 minutes at the end of a terrific high-speed move: Matt Taylor fed Steve Howard who turned into a left winger and delivered a fizzing centre into the goalmouth. Paul Underwood sliced an attempted clearance off a post and to Ahmet Brkovic, who returned the ball rapidly for Crowe to apply a close-range finishing touch.

Referee: Paul Danson, Leicestershire.

Attendance: 7,495, including 1,134 in the away end



HATTER ON TOP: Russ Perrett, who returned after Chris Coyne was injured, is well above Jamaican international striker Onandi Lowe

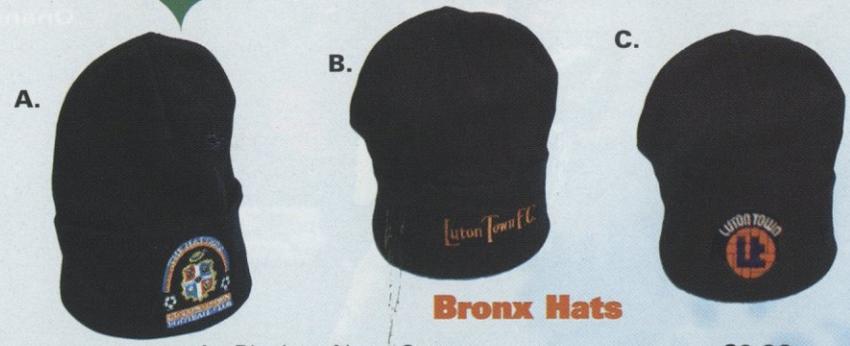


HANDY TACKLE: Match-winner Dean Crowe up against Mark Peters, with each trying to keep the other at arm's length.



ELUSIVE: Jean-Louis Valois was well-marked, with Andrew Sambrook the Rushden defender trying to keep tabs on him on this occasion.

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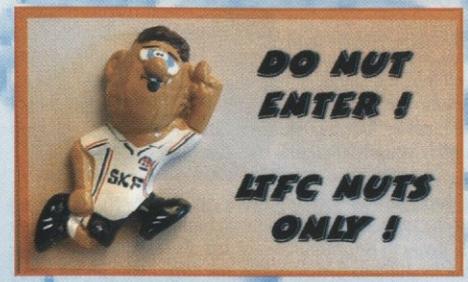
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Brian Stein

In Reserve



Luton Town 1 Swindon Town 0

OBVIOUSLY it was pleasing to get another win in the Avon Insurance Combination, but I was not too happy about our overall team performance.

Players worked hard, but made too many mistakes and wrong decisions, and I felt Swindon had enough of the game to have got a draw.

We had an experienced team, with Carl Emberson in goal, and Russell Perrett, Stuart Fraser and Jean-Louis Valois returning after injuries. We also had a couple of trialists, French centre-half Bogaczyk, and striker Andrew Martin, who has been made available by Crystal Palace.

They both seemed to find it difficult to fit into our shape, with the result that we were not the best balanced side you have ever seen.

I expected more from our side, although we did keep the ball a bit better in the second half, after a poor first-half showing. Swindon had a few half-chances, mainly because of our sloppy passing giving them the ball too often. Emberson did OK, although he was not over-worked.

The goal came after 70 minutes, with Andrew Fotiadis, who had gone on as a sub, playing in Peter Holmes. He showed good technique, scoring from the rebound after the keeper blocked his first shot in a one-on-one.

Fotiadis looked quite lively, and Stuart Douglas could have finished the game when he did well to get onto a pass by Holmes

at the end of our best passing move of the match. Douglas got in with only the goalkeeper ahead of him, tried to lob him, and put the ball into the stand.

Luton Town: Emberson, Mortara, Perrett (Gillman 60 mins), Bogaczyk, Fraser, Dogbe, Holmes, Brennan, Valois, Martin (Douglas HT), Murphy (Fotiadis HT).

WE now have a mid-season break in the Avon Insurance Combination, with our next game scheduled on Wednesday January 9, away to Brighton. We are still awaiting a date for our next match in the Bedfordshire Premier Cup - we will be away to Wootton Blue Cross in the second round, having beaten Leighton Town in the first.

Appearances (as sub in brackets): Brennan 13, Fotiadis 11, Holmes 10, Ovendale 7, Stirling 6(2), Gillman 6(1), George 6, Foley 6, Fraser 5(2), Locke 5, Brkovic 4(1), Mansell 4(1), Johnson 4, Bruce 4, Dryden 4, Murphy 3(5), Thomson 3(4), Osborn 3(3), Douglas 3(2), Ward 3(1), Everitt 3, Dogbe 3, Leary 2(2), Emberson 2, Mortara 2, Valois 2, Crowe 1(1), Skelton 1, Forbes 1, Hillier 1, Spring 1, Perrett 1, Boyce 1, Deeney 1, Ofori 1, Iagnostal 1, Hogg 1, Bouchuers 1, Djorkaeff 1, Maher 1, Hodges 1, Menetrier 1, Huck 1, Street 1, Bogaczyk 1, Martin 1, Okai 0(2), O'Leary 0(1), Jeffrey 0(1), Hall 0(1).

Goals: Fotiadis 6, Brennan 4(2 pens), Brkovic 2, Murphy 2, Thomson 2, George 2, Hodges 1, Gillman 1, Locke 1, Skelton 1, Everitt 1, Holmes 1.

Brian Stein



John Moore

Youth Soccer



Northampton Town 4 Luton Town 0

AFTER doing reasonably well in the first half, when the score-sheet was blank, our second-half performance was poor, and sub-standard defending throughout the team cost us the game.

It was a dodgy pitch, frosty, bare down the middle, and only just playable, but both sides wanted to play and the ref went with it.

At half-time we just needed to step up things a little, but we failed to do so, and a very good goal in the first ten minutes of the second half gave Northampton a lift. Their right back showed marvellous skill, dribbling through us to set up a forward with a good cross after drawing the goalkeeper.

After that our midfield didn't get to grips with the game on a day when the need was to pass the ball longer and get players up in support. Northampton did that better than we did, showing more energy and more appetite for success. We have never preached long-ball tactics at Luton, but some days players need to appreciate that a long

pass can be a good one, so long as it is effective, played with a purpose and not just a hopeful punt upfield.

The fourth goal was a late penalty, so perhaps the scoreline flattered the home side a little, but on the day we could have no moans about a very disappointing result and performance. We fielded a decent team, with one trialist, 18-year-old Mark Palmer, who has played first team football at Letchworth. He felt he did not do himself justice, but to be fair there was not much help around him.

Luton Town: Brill, Dogbe, Carroll, Palmer, Davies, Deeney, Foley, O'Leary, Dillon, Okai, Osborn.

WE HAVE a mid-season break now, until we resume Football League Youth Alliance action with an away game at Kidderminster on January 5. The lesson to be drawn from the first half of the season is that we are not as good as we think we are!

Our next home fixture is against West Brom, scheduled for January 12 at Luton Rugby Club, Newlands Road, Farley Hill, with an 11 am kick-off. Admission is free, and spectators are welcome.

Appearances (as sub in brackets): Okai 13(2), Osborn 13(2), O'Leary 12, Foley 11(4), Carroll 11(2), Dillon 11(2), Gillman 11(1), Davies 11(1), Jeffrey 9(3), Judge 9(3), Dogbe 9(2), Brill 8, Leary 7, Murphy 7, Chatfield 6, Bruce 5(1), Howells 3(1), Barnett 2(3), Deeney 2(1), R. Mansell 1, Beckwith 1, Shire 1, Garrett 1, Palmer 1, Burrell 0(1),

Goals: Judge 6, Osborn 4(1p), Murphy 4, Davies 3, Carroll 2, O'Leary 2, Dillon 2, Gillman 1, Jeffrey 1, Foley 1, Leary 1.

John Moore

Avon Insurance Combination Results and Fixtures

AUG	Wed 15	Barnet	A	3-0	Fotiadis 2, Hodges
	Wed 29	Millwall	H	1-0	Brennan pen
SEPT	Wed 12	Leyton Orient	A	3-2	George, Brkovic 2
	Thur 20	Barton (BPC)	A	5-0	Gillman, Locke, Brennan, Thomson, Fotiadis
	Wed 26	Gillingham	H	2pm	
OCT	Tue 2	Cardiff	A	1-2	Fotiadis
	Mon 8	QPR	H	3-3	Everitt, Brennan pen, Thomson
	Mon 15	Crystal Palace	A	0-1	
NOV	Wed 14	Bristol City	H	1-1	Fotiadis
	Wed 21	Cambridge(LC)	H	3-1	Skelton, Fotiadis, George
	Mon 26	Leighton Tn(BPC)	A	4-2	Brennan 2, Murphy 2
	Wed 28	Norwich(LC)	A	0-0	
DEC	Wed 5	Oxford	A	postponed	
	Wed 12	Swindon	H	1-0	Holmes
	Wed 19	Portsmouth	A	7pm	
JAN	Wed 9	Brighton	A	7pm	
	Wed 16	Wycombe	H	2pm	
	Wed 23	Bournemouth	H	2pm	
	Wed 30	Brentford	A	7pm	
FEB	Wed 6	Bristol Rov	A	7pm	
	Wed 13	Norwich	H	7pm	
	Wed 20	Cheltenham	A	2pm	
	Wed 27	Colchester	H	7pm	
MAR	Wed 13	Peterborough	H	7pm	
	Wed 20	Southend	A	2pm	
	Mon 25	Cambridge	A	2pm	
APRIL	Wed 3	Reading	H	2pm	
	Wed 10	Northampton	H	2pm	

AVON INSURANCE COMBINATION LEAGUE TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Q.P.R.	11	6	5	0	30	11	23
Portsmouth	11	7	2	2	19	10	23
Cardiff	10	6	3	1	19	9	21
Norwich	12	6	3	3	22	16	21
Crystal Palace	11	6	2	3	22	15	20
Oxford	11	5	4	2	12	13	19
Reading	10	5	2	3	17	10	17
Wycombe	10	5	2	3	17	11	17
Brentford	10	5	2	3	21	16	17
Millwall	11	4	5	2	19	15	17
Peterborough	11	5	2	4	18	20	17
Luton Town	9	4	3	2	13	9	15
Bristol Rovers	10	4	2	4	10	11	14
Leyton Orient	10	4	1	5	17	25	13
Gillingham	9	3	3	3	14	9	12
Southend	10	3	3	4	11	13	12
Cheltenham	12	3	3	6	10	23	12
Bristol City	8	2	4	2	10	9	10
Colchester	12	2	3	7	14	21	9
Brighton	8	1	4	3	8	9	7
Cambridge	10	2	1	7	10	17	7
Northampton	10	1	4	5	9	17	7
Bournemouth	9	1	4	4	7	18	7
Barnet	10	2	1	7	8	21	7
Swindon	11	1	2	8	9	18	5

League Cup Group A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Luton	2	1	1	0	3	0	4
Norwich	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
Cambridge	2	0	0	2	2	6	0

Football League Youth Alliance Results and Fixtures

AUG	25	Rushden & D	H	1-2	Leary
SEP	1	Walsall	A	4-4	Osborn 2 (1p), Murphy, Davies
	8	L. Orient (Cup)	A	0-0	
15	Kidderminster	H	3-1	Carroll, Davies, Murphy	
22	Cambridge	A	1-2	Judge	
OCT	6	Northampton	H	4-2	Murphy, O'Leary, Osborn, Dillon
	11	Cheltenham(FAYC)	A	4-3	Gillman, Judge, Osborn, Jeffrey
13	Colchester (Cup)	H	2-3	Foley, Murphy	
20	West Brom	A	2-3	Judge, Davies	
27	Peterborough	A	3-0	Carroll, Judge 2	
NOV	3	Southend (Cup)	H	2-0	Dillon, Judge
6	Brentford (FAYC2)	H	0-2		
10	Notts County	H	1-2	O'Leary	
24	Cambridge	H	0-2		
DEC	15	Northampton	A	0-4	
JAN	5	Kidderminster	A		
12	West Brom	H			
19	Notts County	A			
26	Peterborough	H			
FEB	9	Rushden & D	A		
16	Walsall	H			

FL Youth Alliance South Central Conference League Table

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cambridge Utd	11	6	2	3	21	11	20
West Brom	10	6	2	2	19	17	20
Notts County	9	5	2	2	13	12	17
Northampton	11	4	2	5	17	15	14
Walsall	11	3	5	3	20	19	14
Rushden & D	10	4	2	4	16	18	14
Kidderminster	10	3	2	5	13	16	11
Luton Town	10	3	1	6	19	22	10
Peterborough	10	2	2	6	13	21	8

check out the stats @ www.soccer-stats.com

Records

- Highest Gate 10,755 Hull
- v Plymouth
- Lowest Gate 1,356 Macclesfield v Hartlepool
- Highest Agg Score Scunthorpe7
- Darlington1
- Biggest Home Win Scunthorpe7
- Darlington1
- Biggest Away Win Exeter0
- Scunthorpe4
- Consec. Wins Plymouth5
- Games Unbeaten Plymouth19

Average Attendances

	2000	4000	6000	8000	10000
Bristol Rovers					7,064
Carlisle					2,920
Cheltenham					3,558
Darlington					4,047
Exeter					3,451
Halifax					2,004
Hartlepool					3,523
Hull					9,742
Kidderminster					2,842
Orient					4,870
Lincoln					3,060
Luton					6,728
Macclesfield					2,069
Mansfield					4,339
Oxford					6,143
Plymouth					5,142
Rochdale					3,342
Rushden					4,265
Scunthorpe					3,729
Shrewsbury					3,626
Southend					3,901
Swansea					3,710
Torquay					2,525
York					2,621

Goals - When Scored

	0-15	15-30	31-45	46-60	61-75	76-90
BR	0	2	4	1	2	6
CU	3	4	4	4	0	3
CT	2	6	5	3	10	7
Da	1	5	4	2	9	6
EC	5	5	5	2	6	2
HT	2	4	3	2	1	4
HU	1	1	7	4	7	6
HC	3	6	4	9	5	10
Ki	1	3	2	4	3	7
LO	3	5	4	7	3	7
LC	1	4	2	3	5	7
LT	3	5	12	6	9	8
MT	3	2	5	3	5	3
OU	5	7	6	5	5	9
PA	4	6	7	4	5	6
Ro	4	5	4	5	7	7
RD	3	6	4	2	4	4
SU	8	6	7	4	7	6
ST	6	1	6	2	9	9
SW	5	2	2	5	2	8
SC	4	7	4	2	3	6
TU	3	2	3	2	2	4
YC	3	1	6	4	4	8

Form Guide: Home & Away

Home Form	most recent results to left	Away Form
LLLLD	Bristol Rovers	LDDLL
WLLDW	Carlisle	DLDDL
WWDDD	Cheltenham	WLLDD
WWWLL	Darlington	LLLDL
WDWWW	Exeter	WWLDL
LWDLD	Halifax	LLLDL
LDWWW	Hartlepool	WLWLL
WDWDW	Hull	LWLLW
WWWDL	Kidderminster	LWVLL
DWLWL	Orient	LDLDW
DLWDW	Lincoln	DDDLW
WLWWL	Luton	WLLWW
WVDLL	Macclesfield	WLLWW
WDWWL	Mansfield	LWVLLW
WWDDL	Oxford	LLLWL
WWWWW	Plymouth	DWDWW
LDWDD	Rochdale	DLWLW
WDWWD	Rushden	LLDWD
WWWVW	Scunthorpe	LDWDW
LWVWL	Shrewsbury	WVLLW
DLWWW	Southend	WVLLL
DLVDWL	Swansea	LWVLL
LLLWW	Torquay	DLLLL
LLLWW	York	LDDLL

Clubs' top scorer & the points their goals have won

see key below	Leading Scorer	GS	Sc1	Sc2	HT	Gms/Gls/Gm	Pts	Run	
York	Michael Proctor	8	6	1	0	22	0.36	11	2
Mansfield	Chris Greenacre	14	10	2	0	21	0.67	10	4
Hull	Gary Alexander	13	9	2	0	21	0.62	10	5
Shrewsbury	Luke Rodgers	13	8	1	1	22	0.59	9	4
Plymouth	David Frio	7	7	0	0	19	0.37	8	2
Cheltenham	Julian Alsop	10	6	2	0	20	0.50	7	2
Carlisle	Ritchie Foran	6	6	0	0	16	0.38	7	3
Torquay	David Graham	4	4	0	0	21	0.19	7	1
Luton	Dean Crowe	8	6	1	0	12	0.67	6	3
Darlington	Barry Conlon	6	4	1	0	20	0.30	6	1
Macclesfield	Lee Glover	7	5	1	0	21	0.33	5	2
Exeter	Chris Roberts	6	4	1	0	19	0.32	5	2
Halifax	Paul Harsley	6	4	1	0	22	0.27	4	2
Rochdale	Kevin Townson	7	3	2	0	19	0.37	3	3
Lincoln	Lee Thorpe	6	4	1	0	15	0.40	3	1
Swansea	Mamady Sidibe	5	3	1	0	14	0.36	3	2
Scunthorpe	Martin Carruthers	10	6	2	0	21	0.48	2	2
Oxford	Jamie Brooks	6	4	1	0	14	0.43	2	1
Kidderminster	Dean Bennett	5	5	0	0	19	0.26	2	5
Southend	Mark Rawle	4	2	1	0	16	0.25	2	1
Bristol Rovers	Martin Cameron	4	4	0	0	18	0.22	2	2
Hartlepool	Gordon Watson	8	5	0	1	14	0.57	1	3
Orient	Steve Watts	6	4	1	0	13	0.46	0	2
Rushden	Duane Darby	5	1	2	0	13	0.38	0	2

Biggest Wins & Heaviest Defeats

Club	Win -vs-	Defeat -vs-
Bristol Rov	3-2 Luton	1-3 O's, Rush
Carlisle	3-0 Scunthorpe	0-3 Plymouth
Cheltenham	4-1 Macclesfld	1-5 Hull
Darlington	4-0 Exeter	1-7 Scunthorpe
Exeter	2-0 Torquay	0-4 Scun, Darl
Halifax	2-0 Swan, Tray	1-4 Southend
Hartlepool	4-0 Hull	0-2 Ornt, Linc
Hull	5-1 Cheltenham	0-4 Hartlepl
Kidderminster	4-1 York	0-4 Shrewsbury
Orient	3-0 Oxford	1-4 Scunthorpe
Lincoln	3-0 Swansea	1-3 York
Luton	5-1 Torquay	1-4 Mfld, Mac
Macclesfield	4-1 Luton	0-4 Mansfield
Mansfield	4-0 Macclesfld	0-3 Plymouth
Oxford	3-0 Cheltenham	0-3 Ornt, Hull
Plymouth	3-0 vs 3 clubs	1-2 Rochdale
Rochdale	3-1 Mansfield	2-4 Orient
Rushden	3-1 Mans, BstR	0-3 Kidderminster
Scunthorpe	7-1 Darlington	0-3 Carlisle
Shrewsbury	4-0 Kidderminster	1-3 Hart, Scun
Southend	4-1 Halifax	0-2 vs 4 clubs
Swansea	4-2 Exeter	0-3 vs 3 clubs
Torquay	2-1 vs 5 clubs	1-5 Luton
York	3-0 Torquay	0-4 Hull

Numbers

Club	PU	CS	FS
Bristol Rov	27	6	11
Carlisle	34	7	10
Cheltenham	23	6	5
Darlington	29	7	7
Exeter	29	7	7
Halifax	23	8	11
Hartlepool	24	7	8
Hull	26	10	5
Kidderminster	27	9	9
Orient	32	7	5
Lincoln	21	7	6
Luton	32	6	2
Macclesfield	25	6	11
Mansfield	22	8	4
Oxford	25	6	9
Plymouth	21	14	6
Rochdale	27	8	4
Rushden	32	10	10
Scunthorpe	25	9	7
Shrewsbury	22	8	4
Southend	26	7	8
Swansea	29	6	10
Torquay	37	4	12
York	27	4	6

Key: GS=Goals Scored; Sc1=Games Scored 1 Goal; Sc2=Games Scored 2 Goals; HT=Hat-Tricks; Each club's leading league scorer and avg. goals per game (Gls/Gm). Next column shows taking off their goals, how many Points (Pts) lost. Last figure show best scoring Run in consecutive games.

NUMBERS: PU = Players Used CS = Clean Sheets FS = Games Failed to Score



Brian Swain

Third Division Scene

WE WERE indebted to an old friend or two for adding to our pleasure last week when the victory over Rushden & Diamonds took the Town back up into second place in the table.

Other results did us a favour - Plymouth were the only other top five team to win, at home to Darlington. Mansfield and Hull, previously second and third, were both beaten, with Phil Gray doing us proud in Oxford's home success over Mansfield. The former Town star was out of favour when Mark Wright was manager at Oxford, so much so that he was shunted out on loan to Conference club Boston. But Wright has resigned as manager after a spot of bother with the FA following an altercation with a match official, and Ian Atkins, best known to us as a former manager at Northampton, has taken charge as director of football.

He restored Gray to the squad, and sent him on for the last 15 minutes, when Mansfield were winning 2-1. And Gray, now 33, tapped in an equaliser and then headed the winner. His only other goal this season was way back in August.

It was Mansfield's first defeat in eight league and cup games, a run that started with their 4-1 win over the Town in early November. While Gray took the headlines, Oxford's defence earned their share, by keeping 20-goal Chris Greenacre quiet. The Mansfield goals were a penalty and an own goal by Wayne Hatswell

Hull's promotion challenge is being undermined by their away form, and they were beaten at Scunthorpe, their fourth defeat on their travels this season. They have lost three of their last four away games, but the odd one out is still a painful memory - it was at Kenilworth Road. One of the Scunthorpe goals came from Lee Hodges, who wanted to join the Town in the summer.

Another marksman on Saturday was Graeme Tomlinson, helping Exeter to move up the table, and peg back the opposition, by beating Kidderminster at St. James's Park. His career, which began at Manchester United, included a loan at Kenilworth Road which ended prematurely when he broke a leg in his first start for the Town. He has become a firm favourite at Exeter, and on Saturday began their recovery with an equaliser as they beat Kidderminster 2-1.

Perhaps the day's most surprising result, but very welcome indeed for us, was Rochdale's first home defeat of the season, on the day when new manager John Hollins was making his debut as replacement for Steve Parkin. Five wins and five draws was the Dale home record until Southend nicked a 1-0 victory, only their second away win of the season. The other was at Rushden in early September, since when their travelling record showed seven defeats, and one draw, including their 2-0 loss at Kenilworth Road. Steve Broad got the goal at Rochdale, with Southend holding on with ten men for the last ten minutes because goalkeeper Darryl Flahavan was sent off for handling outside his area.

Today's visitors had a frustrating afternoon: having made the long journey to Bristol Hartlepool's game against the Rovers was abandoned after only ten minutes because the pitch was frostbound. It means that the record will show them playing the Town twice in succession, and as they seek revenge for our win at Victoria Park a fortnight ago they bring with them a mixed away record, notable mainly for only six goals scored in ten away games so far, compared to 20 in a dozen home matches. But the defence has helped out, conceding an average of one goal every away game. They have three away victories so far, at Shrewsbury, Macclesfield, and Swansea. They drew at Southend, and went home pointless from visits to Leyton Orient, Scunthorpe, Lincoln, Rushden, Torquay and Plymouth.

Our league table is not up to date, because some clubs have given in to Christmas shopping and played last night: Hull v Southend, Mansfield v Exeter, Shrewsbury v Macclesfield and Swansea v Bristol Rovers.

Brian Swain

Today's other Third Division fixtures

- Darlington v Cheltenham
- Halifax v Kidderminster
- Leyton Orient v Lincoln
- Rochdale v York
- Rushden v Carlisle
- Scunthorpe v Plymouth
- Torquay v Oxford

Nationwide League Division Three

	HOME					AWAY					Pts	
	P	W	D	L	F A	W	D	L	F A			
Plymouth	22	8	0	2	18	5	6	6	0	14	6	48
Luton Town	22	7	2	2	21	8	6	1	4	22	20	42
*Mansfield	22	8	2	1	25	11	4	3	4	12	14	41
*Hull City	22	8	3	0	24	5	3	4	4	13	17	40
Rochdale	22	5	5	1	18	9	6	1	4	14	13	39
*Shrewsbury	22	6	2	3	18	11	5	2	4	15	14	37
Scunthorpe	22	6	3	2	23	11	3	5	3	15	13	35
Cheltenham	22	5	5	1	21	13	3	3	5	12	18	32
Rushden & D	22	5	4	2	16	11	2	5	4	7	10	30
*Exeter	22	5	4	3	15	17	3	2	5	10	18	30
Kidderminster	21	5	4	1	12	4	3	1	7	8	16	29
Darlington	22	7	2	2	17	5	1	3	7	10	26	29
Hartlepool	22	5	3	4	20	10	3	1	6	6	10	28
*Southend	22	6	2	3	18	10	2	4	6	16	27	
L. Orient	22	5	2	4	19	16	2	4	5	10	17	27
Lincoln	22	4	3	4	11	9	1	7	3	11	14	25
Oxford	22	4	3	4	16	14	2	4	5	7	13	25
*Macclesfield	22	3	4	4	13	13	3	3	5	8	16	25
*Swansea	22	2	5	4	11	12	4	1	6	15	22	24
York	22	4	1	6	10	15	2	3	6	16	25	22
Torquay	22	5	1	5	11	14	1	3	7	5	17	22
*Bristol Rovers	21	3	4	4	10	13	2	3	6	5	12	21
Carlisle	22	4	3	4	10	9	0	5	6	8	18	20
Halifax	22	2	6	3	8	11	2	1	8	7	21	19

*Not including last night's matches: Hull v Southend, Mansfield v Exeter, Shrewsbury v Macclesfield, Swansea v Bristol Rovers

To watch these games call 0808 100 0101

Coventry City v Bradford City Sunday 23 December, ITV Sport Channel	Wolverhampton v Preston Wednesday 26 December, ITV Sport Channel
Liverpool v Arsenal Sunday 23 December, Sky Sports 1	Everton v Manchester United Wednesday 26 December, ITV Sport Select

You can e-mail the programme editor at brian.swain@btinternet.com

Today's Squads

Luton Town

1	Mark Ovendale
2	Aaron Skelton
4	Matthew Spring
5	Russell Perrett
6	Marvin Johnson
7	Adrian Forbes
8	Kevin Nicholls
10	Carl Griffiths
11	Liam George
12	Chris Coyne
13	Stuart Fraser
14	Andrew Fotiadis
15	Matthew Taylor
16	Carl Emberson
17	Emmerson Boyce
18	Adam Locke
19	Steve Howard
20	Peter Holmes
22	Dean Brennan
23	Jude Stirling
27	Paul Hughes
28	Jean Louis Valois
30	David Bayliss
32	Lee Mansell
33	Ian Hillier
34	Dean Crowe
35	Ahmet Brkovic

Hartlepool United

1	Anthony Williams
2	Paul Arinson
3	Mark Robinson
4	Micky Barron
5	Graeme Lee
6	Chris Westwood
7	Mark Tinkler
8	Richie Humphreys
9	Tony Lormor
10	Kevin Henderson
12	Jermaine Easter
14	Tommy Widdrington
15	Jonathon Bass
16	Darrell Clarke
17	Paul Stephenson
18	Gordon Simms
19	Adam Boyd
20	James Sharp
21	Martin Hollund
23	Gordon Watson
25	Tony Sweeny
26	Paul Smith
27	Jon Parkin

tick if playing tick if substitute

Today's Officials

Referee: George Cain, Merseyside

Assistants: Tony Conn, Hertfordshire (red flag); Phil Crossley, Kent (yellow and red flag)

Fourth Official: Gary Young, Bedfordshire

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