

CHELSEA FIND IT SO HARD REGAINING LEADERSHIP

Tambling produces vintage form: Kevan omission justified

By DAVID MILLER

Chelsea 3 Luton 1

ANY team who can win 3-1 without a player for whom £45,000 has just been paid ought to be more than pleased. Yet Chelsea made unnecessarily hard work of their victory, and Kevan, for the moment, probably has no place in this side.

What Chelsea need in the matches that lie ahead is a cool head rather than a hot shot, and Moore last night was unquestionably the answer, for he was the fulcrum on which the attack turned.

Tommy Docherty's brave decision to drop Kevan was justified.

It was only with 21 minutes left that anxiety on the terraces was eased with a penalty by Tambling and, 10 minutes later, a piece of genuine Tambling of which too little has been seen since Christmas. Long before then, though, Chelsea should have been strolling home.

For Luton, as uninspired as their colours of white and black, the spectre of relegation looms larger. They had only two shots to offer besides Turner's—from Pacey in the first half.

EDGY FINISH

Ahead of Stoke

It was as if Chelsea were haunted by some telepathic message that Stoke were busy beating Rotherham, so edgy and impulsive was their finishing, but with Tambling's two goals they keep ahead of Stoke who are in second place on goal average. Stoke have two games in hand, both away.

It is hard to tell whether anxiety was greater on the field or around it. The harder Chelsea tried—and how they tried—the more excruciatingly near were their misses.

If they did not hit the post, which Venables and Tambling both did, they missed by a hairsbreadth, which Blunstone and Bridges did repeatedly. Even the bumps in the ground seemed against them, for it was only the unevenness of the goalmouth surface that edged a shot by Blunstone from the wrong side of a post on the half hour.

Five minutes before, Blunstone had scored, juggling the ball on his head past Daniel with the touch of a Di Stefano or a Puskas and then glancing the ball in.

Turner scores

Seven minutes later Turner equalised, at the second attempt, as Chandler headed down Pacey's centre. Immediately Bridges volleyed over from three yards, twisting himself to reach Moore's header.

Thirteen minutes into the second half Baynham, not for the first time, parried brilliantly as Bridges blasted Blunstone's square pass from close range. The crowd sagged like a pricked balloon as the ball trickled past the post.

But then Bramwell obligingly handled on the line. Tambling hit the kick low, and low again as he burst past Kelly explosively 10 minutes later.

Chelsea.—Dunn; Harris, McCreddie; Venables, Mortimore, Upton; Murray, Tambling, Bridges, Moore, Blunstone.

Luton.—Baynham; Daniel, Bramwell; Morton, Kelly, Lownds; Chandler, Davies, Pacey, Turner, Jardine.