

A GLIMMER OF HOPE IN DEFEAT

By ROGER DUCKWORTH

Chelsea 2, Luton Town 0

NEXT weekend Luton go to Liverpool and, if they can let a poor old Chelsea side beat them 2-0, one dreads to think what Liverpool, on form, could inflict upon them.

They just can't do a thing right. On Saturday they muffed two icing-coated chances in the first half and became so distressed at their inept finishing that they seemed to give up the ghost.

Luton's chances of escaping relegation now are something like your chance of winning the pools.

On top of that, they are now the points paupers of the Football League. Even Workington, bottom of the 92 clubs, managed to increase their score to ten on Saturday by drawing at Bradford.

Luton have amassed nine points from 20 games. What a depressing picture it is.

But, as the fabled Phoenix of Arabia that set fire to its nest of spices and came out laughing, some good always seems to come out of the bad.

Luton's bit of good on Saturday was the emergence of blond Paul Futch, a tough and talented 18-year-old from Chester, who made his debut for the club after serving his time in the reserves.

It was time well served.

This lad is going to be a good 'un. One could not fail to be, to put it mildly, surprised at the coolness of a teenager making his First Division debut in the superb setting of Chelsea's re-built stadium.

It didn't seem to upset him a bit, and with John Faulkner, he had a fine game in the middle of Luton's defence.

Hoping that the lad will not become too big for his boots by such early praise, it is only fair to point out that he is good in the air, hard at close quarters, and cool-headed when taking the ball clear of danger.

Steve Buckley, another youngster with a big future, had a good game. He allowed himself to be pulled out of position a couple of times, but his tackling at speed is well-timed and committed. So is his distribution.

Splendid

The other member of the defence, John Ryan, also had a fair afternoon, and he did a good deal of overlapping in an effort to give the forwards something to peck at. They couldn't manage it.

Alston never stopped trying, but his nerve seemed to leave him after making the miss of all time in front of goal after a splendid run on the right by Anderson, which had dragged the Chelsea defence and goalkeeper Phillips out of the goalmouth.

For Alston it added insult to injury. Three minutes earlier he had opened the Chelsea defence for Spiring, who also fluffed his chance of easing Luton's plight by side-footing the ball wide.

Spiring did not have a good game, often looking about half away from what he was



Kids were great — Harry

LUTON manager Harry Haslam watched a training match between his first team and reserves at Laporte's training ground today, but before he left his office he said: "I'm sick as a dog."

"How can you miss chances like we did on Saturday and hope to do anything?" It was unbelievable.

Earned

"But one good thing to come out of the match was the performances of the two kids — Paul Futch and Steve Buckley. They did a great job."

"I think I have proved that I was right to hold Paul back until I did. I knew he wouldn't fade."

Will the pair be in the side for Saturday's trip to Anfield? "Tooright," said the Luton boss. "They have earned it."

Did Mr Haslam contemplate any further changes for the weekend? "I have to get the side right by trial and error," he said. "I shall be looking at both the experienced players and the kids very closely indeed this week."

"We've got it all to do now."

ROGER DUCKWORTH

MATCH DETAILS

CHELSEA: Phillips, Locke, Graham Wilkins, Hay, Harris, Ray Wilkins, Cooke, Kember, Garland, Hutchinson, Sissons. Sub: Houseman.

LUTON TOWN: Horn, John Ryan, Buckley, Anderson, Faulkner, Futch, Jim Ryan, Alston, Spiring, West, Aston. Sub: Husband.

REFEREE: Mr P. Walters (Bridgwater).

HUTCHINSON (Chelsea) in 49 minutes

KEMBER (Chelsea) in 75 minutes

ATTENDANCE: 19,009