

LUTON'S GLORY BOYS

Now watch the Town climb up the table

Luton Town 4, Chelsea 0

IT'S GOING TO be a happy New Year for Luton. Last night they thrashed Second Division leaders Chelsea out of sight and left the snow-covered Kenilworth Road pitch with the ecstatic cheers of their fans ringing in their ears.

It was their finest performance of the season and underlined that the form in the last two matches, which had threatened a tousing for somebody, could still take them back to the verge of the promotion issue before 1977 is very old.

The only thing which sticks in Luton gullets is that they lost those last two matches. They could have won at Bolton and Orient, and had they done so they would have been in sixth place today.

But that's the way the Christmas cake crumbles. Holiday programmes win and lose promotion for many clubs.

At least Luton showed that they still mean it. Once referee Clive White had made an afternoon decision that the match should go ahead, the Town adjusted themselves mentally.

Manager Harry Haslam told me after the game: "Before we started I went into the dressing room and told the lads: 'I know it's Christmas, but I don't want fairies.'

"They knew what I meant. It was cold out there, but they got stuck in from the start. There was no shying off from tackles, or not going for 50-50 balls. I think we showed a few people a few things tonight."

And coach Roy McCrohan added: "We should have won at Bolton. We would have done but for a couple of lapses of concentration."

Superb

"And I still can't understand how we lost to Orient. We should have murdered them."

"It came right tonight. We've been aiming to do that to someone for a long time. It came at the right time against the right team."

The Luton fans in the 14,000 crowd urged the team on with verses of "Jingle Bells," and taunted the humiliated Chelsea fans with chants of "Four-Nil" to the tune of Amazing Grace.

And from Luton's point of view, amazing grace it was too. While Chelsea slithered and blundered on the snow, Luton showed elegant balance and tremendous understanding.

By ROGER DUCKWORTH

The passing throughout the side was superb, but the most pleasing thing for Luton supporters was the determination to win every ball, coupled with the skill to use it aggressively.

Chelsea looked as if they couldn't believe it when they found themselves two goals down after 12 minutes. But, if truth be known, they also looked as if they didn't want to play.

I guess they had gone to Luton thinking the game would be off. When it was on they had the wrong frame of mind. One almost felt sorry for their young skipper Butch Wilkins as he urged and almost pleaded with them to pull themselves together.

But Chelsea couldn't match Luton in midfield. Brian Chambers, Alan West and Lilly Fuccillo were superb.

But in attack Jimmy Husband stole the show, with great backing from the untiring Ron Futcher and a second half performance of high value from the skilful, wily Jimmy Ryan.

So Luton's skills were evenly spread. In defence full-backs Steve Buckley and Paul Futcher gave perhaps their best performances of the season. Paul Futcher once again showed his international class, making light of the conditions and cutting Finnieston and Lewington out of the game.

John Faulkner was his usual uncompromising self, and with Luton so on top, he ventured forward on many

occasions showing good control and finesse in distribution.

Luton's glee was born in the first minute of the match. Price crossed from the right, Husband knocked the ball back across the goal, and Fuccillo ran in to shoot past a bewildered Phillips.

The Chelsea goalkeeper, standing in for the injured Bonetti, had a nightmare. A few minutes later he fluffed a left-wing cross from Ron Futcher, and Fuccillo should have had another. Graham Wilkins somehow scrambled the ball off the line.

A minute later Phillips was again hesitant, and goal-thirsty Ron Futcher headed just wide.

Then Chambers was given all the time he wanted to volley in Luton's second from near the penalty spot. He doesn't miss those.

In Luton's goal, Milija Aleksic gave another confident performance, and as Chelsea tried to take the edge off their embarrassment late in the game, he made a series of brave saves.

He reminds one of former Luton goalkeeper Sandy Davie with the speed he leaves his

LUTON TOWN: Aleksic; Price, Buckley; Chambers, Faulkner, Paul Futcher; Husband, West, Ron Futcher, Fuccillo, Ryan. Sub: Hill.

CHELSEA: Phillips; Locke, G. Wilkins; Stanley, Droy, Hay; Britton, R. Wilkins, Finnieston, Lewington, Swain. Sub: Harris.

REFEREE: Mr Clive White (Harrow).

ATTENDANCE: 14,605 (after recount)

Goals (all Luton): Fuccillo (1min), Chambers (12min), Husband (58min), Buckley (88min).



■ It's a goal. Brian Chambers (left) volleys Luton's second (above), and below Jimmy Husband makes it 3-0



line and in the way he gives little thought for personal safety as he plunges among the feet.

Had Ron Futcher not been caught offside several times in the second half, Luton may have had a few more goals. The third was a peach. West started it and then fed a through-ball for Husband to crash the ball past poor Phillips from the edge of the box.

And Jim Ryan went close with a marvellous solo effort before the unhappy Phillips brought down Price in the goalmouth, and Steve Buckley converted the penalty.

DIVISION TWO										
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts			
Chelsea	22	12	6	4	36	30	30			
Bolton	21	12	4	5	37	27	28			
Wolves	20	10	6	4	50	26	26			
Blackpool	21	9	8	4	32	23	26			
Nottm For	20	9	7	4	42	23	25			
Sheff Utd	21	7	8	6	26	27	22			
Millwall	19	9	3	7	31	25	21			
Oldham	19	8	5	6	25	27	21			
Blackburn	20	8	4	8	21	27	20			
Charlton	18	7	5	6	37	32	19			
LUTON	20	8	3	9	32	29	19			
Fulham	21	6	7	8	31	31	19			
Southmptn	21	6	7	8	34	38	19			
Bristol R	21	7	5	9	30	35	19			
Hull	19	5	8	6	22	23	18			
Carlisle	22	6	6	10	25	39	18			
Notts Cnty	18	7	3	8	26	31	17			
Cardiff	20	6	5	9	28	34	17			
Burnley	20	4	8	8	24	31	16			
Plymouth	20	3	9	8	24	32	15			
Orient	18	4	6	8	18	24	14			
Hereford	19	3	5	11	27	44	11			

MATCH DETAILS