

CHELSEA GIVEN AN EASY RIDE BACK TO THE TOP

THERE was little to suggest that either team could do well in the First Division when the Town stumbled at a major hurdle in the promotion chase on Saturday at Stamford Bridge and allowed Chelsea to regain first place in the Second Division.

Chelsea, who had been run off the park the previous day at Fulham, were gifted the points by a Town team which showed hardly any fight.

The Town had a five-minute spell of concerted pressure after Chelsea had scored their opening goal, but for much of the game the action was too tense and mistake-prone and confined to midfield.

Four or five Town players might have faced the chop if the reserve resources were stronger.

The defence came through well enough, despite having to be reorganised when a wild kick by Ken Swain caught Paul Price full in the face.

The young full-back was wheeled off on a stretcher, then given hospital treatment for severe concussion and double vision.

Graham Jones took his place, and settled down to underline his potential with a strong no-nonsense approach to tackling and the willingness to press forward to try to get the midfield moving.

Chelsea had already gone into the lead by then, after Jim Husband had lost possession in midfield to Ray Lewington. With the Town's back four



● Paul Price, the full-back whose run as an ever-present in the team since he replaced John Ryan was ended by a kick in the face from Ken Swain at Chelsea. It left him suffering from concussion and double vision, and paved the way for another youngster, Graham Jones, to come into the side against Orient.

Jack Taylor's reaction to the Price incident left Town officials baffled: he gave a free-kick against Swain, but took no other action beyond supervising operations when Price was carried off on a stretcher.

moving forward, Lewington's swift interception and through pass caught them square and Steve Finnieston ran through to score.

That was after 14

Chelsea Details

CHELSEA 2 LUTON TOWN 0

Half-time: 2-0

Brian Swain's Verdict ★ ★

TOWN: Aleksic; Price (Jones 36 minutes), Buckley, Faulkner, Paul Fitcher; Chambers, West, Fuccillo; Husband, Geddis, Aston.

CHELSEA: Bonetti; Locke, Sparrow, Wicks, Harris; Stanley, Wilkins, Britton, Lewington; Finnieston, Swain. Sub: Dempsey, not needed.

THE GOALS: Finnieston, 14 minutes, after Lewington robbed Husband and laid on the chance; Sparrow, 38 minutes, from half-clearance by West.

ATTENDANCE: 31,911, biggest at any Town game this season.

ENTERTAINMENT: In short supply, with both teams tense and over-anxious.

REFEREE: Jack Taylor, Wolverhampton—in his last season and looking as though he is living on his reputation.

minutes, and the Town's only attempt at goal in the first half was a header by David Geddis which Bonetti clutched with some difficulty.

The grey-haired goalkeeper looked dodgy in his handling of high crosses, but the Town were never able to capitalise, with John Aston and Jim Husband both having poor games.

The game was decided in the 38th minute by a cracking second goal by full-back John Sparrow. It underlined most of the Town's failings.

Alan West, threatening to burst back to top form but not quite making it, headed a cross out to just beyond the edge of the penalty area.

The Town's midfield cover was nowhere, and

Sparrow punished the slackness with a tremendous first-time drive which sent the ball whipping into the corner of the net at grass-top height.

Geddis, re-called to the front line because Ron Fitcher had an ankle injury, found himself on his own for most of the game, and on balance the Town could be thankful that Chelsea did not score more.

Ray Wilkins wasted a chance he should have taken, and a mistake by Paul Fitcher gave Swain a "goal" which was snapped up beautifully from an off-side position.

The Town's only reply was a tame volley by Husband after a headed pass by Geddis. Bonetti clutched it under the bar with little difficulty.