

'IT'S NOT THE END'—HASLAM

76/77 by ALAN HOBY

Chelsea 2 Luton 0

YOU COULD SEE the nervous tension etched on the faces of Chelsea's youngsters as they ran out onto the bonehard Stamford Bridge pitch. Still painfully vivid was the nightmare of that 1-3 Good Friday disaster at Fulham.

How would they fare against a promotion-orientated Luton outfit which had won 23 points from 12 games? Against a side which could field such diverse talents as John Aston, Jimmy Husband, and Paul Fletcher?

ANXIETY

We soon knew. Although at times their play and passing was as ragged as a beggar's coat, and, in the first half they were so screwed up with anxiety that they got into one or two terrible knots in defence, Chelsea roared back to the top through sheer courage and character.

Praising his team afterwards Chelsea manager, Eddie McCreadie said: "It was a great result after losing yesterday. I had a long talk with the team after losing to Fulham and I had another 20 minute chat with my back four just before today's game—and they certainly responded."

Harry Haslam, the Luton boss, said: "The lads are sick, I'm sick, but it's not the end of the day."

Haslam's injured full back, Paul Price, carried off in the first half with a badly bruised left eye, had to go to hospital for a precautionary check. "He was suffering from double

vision," he said, "but it is not as serious as we first thought."

If Chelsea occasionally gave their supporters heart attacks in the 31,911 crowd, Luton, astonishingly, gave practically nothing at all in the way of attacking fireworks.

Two efforts — a Dave Geddes header and a Jimmy Husband volley — were the only real threats to Peter Bonetti's citadel and he saved both.

Chelsea had five clear-cut chances to score and their opening 14th minute goal was a small masterpiece. From man-of-the-match Ray Lewington's searching through pass Steve Finnieston held off two defenders and swept the ball home.

Then, after some alarming moments in Chelsea's defence, John Sparrow steamed up from left-back, screamed to Lewington to leave the ball and hit a low 20-yard rocket through the one open space into the Luton net.

And that was that. We never saw poor lack-lustre Luton again.