

Chelsea lose to a touch of Stein magic

81/82

THE FINAL result was much more enjoyable than the game itself as the Town put themselves within three points of the championship at Stamford Bridge on Saturday.

Chelsea looked like a side who knew they were going to be second best, and the Town hardly had to move out of bottom gear to beat them.

The normal tactics for away games almost made it stalemate. Seeking to contain Chelsea at the back and then look for something on the break, the Town found it all too easy to do the containing in midfield.

With Ricky Hill's sparkle missing from midfield because of his ankle injury the Town seemed content to ease their way through the game.

Neither side put consistent pressure on the opposing goalkeeper, yet for a spell towards half-time Chelsea threatened to take control.

Before kick-off they gave bottles of champagne to the Town players, a gift from Chelsea's new chairman Ken Bates, and in an early flourish Chelsea looked as though they might finish their home season with a sparkle.

But none of their work produced clear chances, and the Town hit back with their first shot at goal. Micky Droy fouled Brian Stein 25 yards from goal and Hill's deputy, Raddy Antic, curled the free kick around the wall into the net.

That was in the 25th minute, and it stung Chelsea into greater effort. The Town defence caught the jitters for a time and Jake Findlay made a couple of timely saves before the equaliser was conceded two

CHELSEA 1
LUTON TOWN... 2

minutes into first-half injury time.

It stemmed from a poor headed clearance by Brian Horton. Gary Chivers was put clear on Chelsea's right wing. Alan Mayes had the first bite at a tempting cross, but his header was saved, only for Clive Walker to beat Clive Goodyear to the rebound and toe-poke the equaliser in from close range.

The Town improved in the second half, and Steve White put a good chance wide with a header from Stein's left-wing run and cross.

But in the 54th minute Chelsea were sunk by a brilliant individual effort by Stein. Lil Fuccillo and Kirk Stephens worked the ball down the inside-right position, with Stein reaching Stephen's through-pass just ahead of goalkeeper Steve Francis. Stein chipped the ball over the keeper, and was then in an impossible position, just inside the penalty area but only a yard from the by-line.

The chance looked to be gone, but Stein kept cool and carefully clipped a shot into the net off the inside of the far post for a goal I shall remember for years. It was a touch of pure magic on an afternoon that would have been mundane without it.

STAMFORD BRIDGE DETAILS

TOWN: Findlay; Stephens, Goodyear, Donaghy, Money; Antic, Horton, Fuccillo; Stein, White, Moss. Sub: Small, not used.

CHELSEA: Francis; Locke, Lee, Droy, Hutchings; Pates, Chivers, Fillery; Rhoades-Brown (Canoville, 75 mins), Mayes, Walker.

THE GOALS: Raddy Antic 25-yard free kick for the Town, 25 minutes; Clive Walker for Chelsea, two minutes into first-half injury time; Brian Stein classic from an impossible angle, 54th minute.

OTHER GOAL ATTEMPTS: Town four saved and two wide; Chelsea four wide and five saved. Corners: 5-4 to Chelsea.

ATTENDANCE: 15,044.

REFEREE: Mike Taylor, Walmer.

ENTERTAINMENT: Result the most enjoyable feature of a game in which the Town might have played better if the opposition had put up more of a scrap.