

EXTRA GRIT WINS IT FOR CHELSEA

HAVING half-secured their First Division place with holiday weekend success, Luton Town fell well short of recent standards at Stamford Bridge last night. Chelsea, slightly the better of two teams who struggled on a boggy pitch that had been over-watered, just about deserved to win.

It was poor entertainment for the fans, with the Town unable to get into gear. Ricky Hill, David Preece and Meka Nwajiobi were all missing, but should be back for the final Saturday home game of the season, against Leicester on Saturday.

Three points against Leicester will end the last lingering fear of relegation.

The Town will do it with something to spare if they show the determination and attacking skills that destroyed Arsenal 3-1 at Kenilworth Road on Saturday.

They are just as certain to be winners if the defence can buckle down as effectively as they did at Villa Park, when skipper Steve Foster and his men defended the lead snatched by Brian Stein in the 21st minute.

At Chelsea the defence played reasonably well, but the reorganised midfield and attack rarely got together to fashion dangerous attacks and Eddie Niedzwiecki did not have a difficult shot to save.

Les Sealey was not exactly overworked either, but Chelsea showed the more determination to win, even if the two-goal result flattered them a little.

Both teams suffered on a dreadful pitch, with even Chelsea officials admitting that they had overdone it when they decided to take the hardness out of the

**REPORT by BRIAN SWAIN
PICTURES: MARK RICHARDS**

ground. The hosepipe was left running for too long, and the bog in midfield made smart passing almost impossible.

Chelsea were looking for points to sustain a bid to qualify for Europe, and on last night's evidence will frighten the continentals little more than Norwich.

Power

But they produced the one moment of clean finishing that just about settled the game, with Kerry Dixon's aerial power giving him his 36th goal of the season.

There had been 26 minutes of uninteresting stalemate when Pat Nevin won a corner on Chelsea's left off Mal Donaghy. The Town half-cleared it, the ball went back to Nevin, and his cross to the far post was met by Dixon's leap and accurate angled header.

Questions might be asked about a defence beaten at a set-piece again, but Dixon deserved his goal even though Steve Foster

allowed him no other clear chances.

There were precious few opportunities at the other end either, with Frank Bunn, Mick Harford and Brian Stein unable to break through and rarely getting the sort of service they might have thrived on.

Peter Nicholas and Wayne Turner tackled willingly enough in midfield, but too often passes were held up by the mud, and Garry Parker, like many others, found the heavy conditions difficult to cope with.

Nigel Spackman looked the most dangerous midfielder, but Chelsea's flank attacks were mostly held up by the hard work of Tim Breacker and Mitchell Thomas.

The Town's problem was that they created so few chances you could not anticipate any real threat to the Chelsea goal, while the home side tried their luck

from any range and angle.

Les Sealey dived to scoop a cross-shot by Micky Thomas round the post, and from the corner his punched clearance dropped to John Bumstead, who drove a first-timer wide of target.

Chelsea just about held the edge as the game struggled into the last quarter, but the second goal was a tragedy for Mal Donaghy, who looked one of the classiest players on

the pitch.

Spackman tried a long-range drive, Sealey blocked, but failed to hold on and Donaghy, running back alongside Pat Nevin, pushed the attempted clearance into his own net.

That happened after 79 minutes, a rare moment of excitement in a match otherwise notable for a strange air of disjointed lethargy that affected both sides.



● **MINE!** Wayne Turner, supported by Frank Bunn, dispossesses Micky Thomas.

Match Details

CHELSEA 2 LUTON TOWN 0

HALF-TIME: 1-0 84/85

TOWN: Sealey; Breacker, Foster, Donaghy, Thomas; Parker, Nicholas, Turner; Brian Stein, Bunn (Mark Stein, 71 mins), Harford.

CHELSEA: Niedzwiecki; Jones, McLaughlin, Lee, Rougvie; Bumstead (Canoville, 85 mins), Spackman, Thomas, Speedie; Nevin, Dixon.

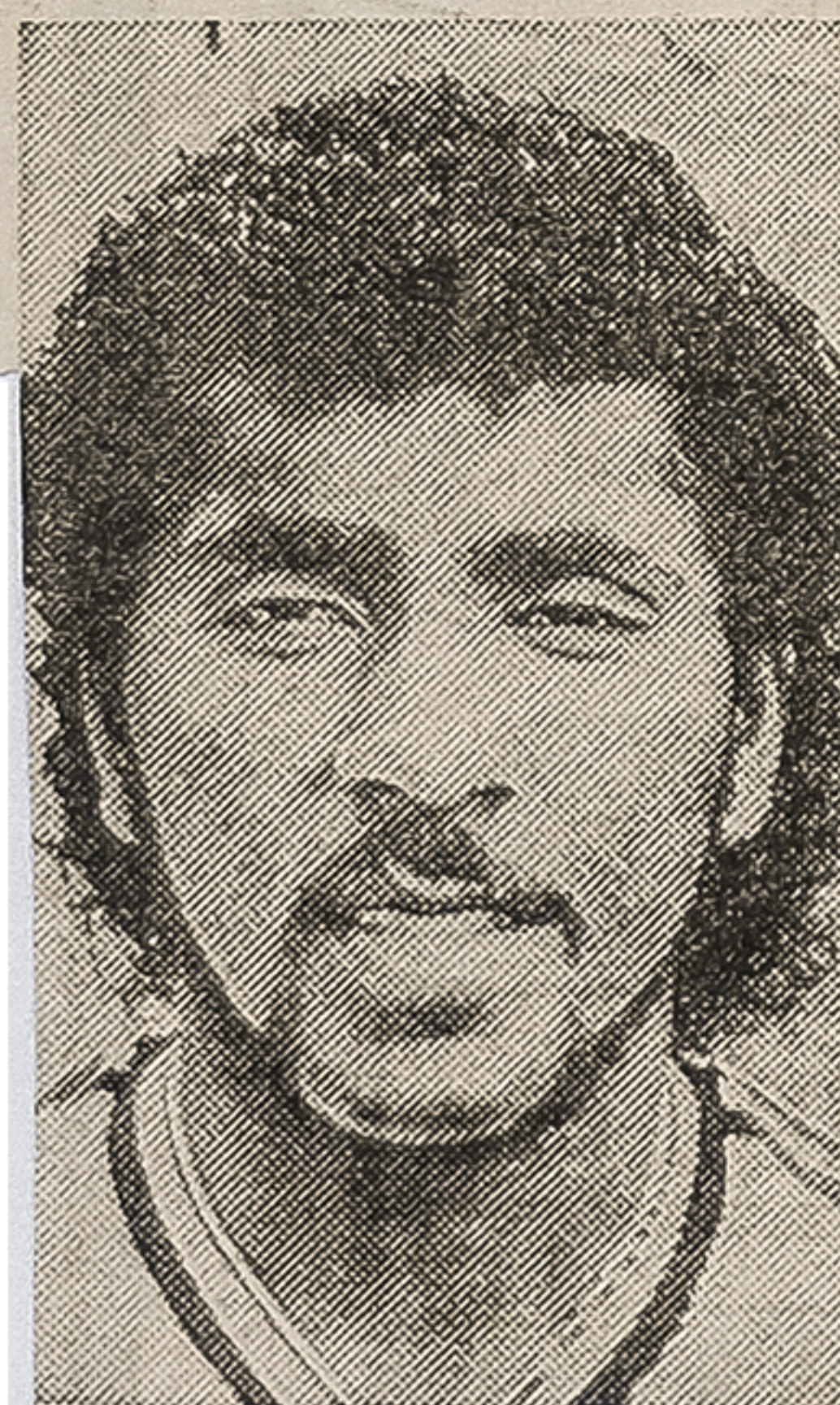
THE GOALS: Kerry Dixon, far post header, 26 minutes; Mal Donaghy own goal, 79 minutes.

OTHER STRIKES: Town four wide and two blocked; Chelsea three wide and five saved. Corners: 7-6 to the Town.

ATTENDANCE: 13,789, season's second lowest at Stamford Bridge.

REFEREE: Mike James, Horsham — was given an easy evening with no hassle from either team.

ENTERTAINMENT: Very poor, with neither side able to play good football on a surface which had been over-watered and bogged down both teams.



● **MISSING:** Hill, Preece and Nwajiobi should be back to face Leicester.