

Luton rue missed chances

Chelsea ... 1, Luton ... 0

CHELSEA have become such a thoroughly professional team, during one and a half seasons in the First Division, that they now can ease their way through bad patches to win games they might easily have lost.

Luton are still in the process of discovering the need to make full use of opportunities to strike decisive blows, especially when their opponents are at their most vulnerable.

Those are two of the more important reasons why Chelsea are lurking dangerously among the championship challengers while Luton are not quite able to keep pace with the leaders.

The Londoners should have fallen several goals behind in the first half, at Stamford Bridge on Saturday, after being unsettled at the back, out-manoeuvred in midfield and blotted out up front by the competent opponents.

Manager's orders

Instead, Chelsea came out after the interval still level obeyed manager John Hollins's orders to tighten their game, soon took the lead, then held on to it without playing particularly well.

The issue was settled, in the 55th minute, with a move of admirable simplicity, Dixon nodding on Niedzwiecki's long clearance and Speedie driving it fiercely home.

So was Luton's diligent, skilful work wiped out in a few seconds — leaving Hill, guilty of missing several good chances North, who hit the bar, and Foster, off target from close range, regretting their failure.

Meanwhile, Mr Hollins who that morning had released Pates, Chelsea's influential captain, to attend the birth of his first child, was more than happy to see victory clinched on a very difficult day. "I'm glad we have half times" he commented.

Chelsea.—Niedzwiecki; Lee, Dublin, Rougvié, McLaughlin, Bumstead, Nevin, Spackman, Dixon, Speedie, Hazard.

Luton.—Sealey, Breacker, Thomas, Nicholas, Foster, Donaghy, Hill, Stein, Newell, North (Daniel 77), Preece.

DONALD SAUNDERS