

SPEEDIE

DAVID SPEEDIE's superb 55th minute winner kept Chelsea snapping at the heels of leaders Manchester United. But they lived dangerously before clinching the points.

Luton dominated the opening 20 minutes and should have been ahead at the interval.

Chelsea boss John Hollins admitted: "I was glad when half-time arrived and I had the chance to tell the lads a few truths. It seemed to work and we began to get a grip on the game."

The decider could hardly have been more simple. A mighty goal-kick from Eddie Niedzwiecki was turned on by Kerry Dixon for the abrasive Speedie to burst through and hammer home his 15th goal of the season.

It was no more than Speedie deserved. He gave the Luton defence more problems than Dixon and was only foiled in the first-half by a tremendous reflex save by Les Sealey.

Dixon never seems to be at his best when England boss Bobby Robson is watching and could have scored twice in breakaways.

He strayed into an offside position before putting the ball into the net in the early stages and when Micky

David stops Luton gallop

By REG DRURY
Chelsea 1 Luton 0

Hazard sent him clear in the 23rd minute Dixon shot wide with only Sealey to beat.

But Luton's Ricky Hill squandered two better chances. He smacked the ball straight at Niedzwiecki in the 18th minute with Chelsea all at sea after a David Preece free-kick.

Clear-cut

Hill had a more clear-cut opening on the stroke of half-time from a Mitchell Thomas left-wing cross. But unmarked Hill fired the ball low and wide of the far post.

Chelsea also survived a first-time Mark North drive which rattled the bar. But they made the most of their luck and eventually their greater experience up front began to tell.

The pressure from the Dixon-Speedie combination

curbed the adventure of the Luton back four and Peter Nicholas — so influential in midfield at the start — was forced to reinforce his defence.

There is something in the chemistry of these two teams which makes them cancel out each other. Luton manager David Pleat summed it up: "Games with Chelsea are always hard but never lift me out of my seat."

Even Pat Nevin, so often Chelsea's star turn, was inhibited. He was more in evidence for his industry than his inspiration, even if he did force Sealey into one spectacular save.

As Hollins said: "You can't play well every match. And with the other top clubs winning I was just happy with the result."

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

LUTON.—Sealey, Breacker, Thomas, Nicholas, Foster, Donaghy, Hill, Stein, Newell, North, Preece.

CANON SUNDAY BEST: Speedie.