

87/88 **Easy does it**

WITH MARK Stein scoring Britain's first league goal of 1988, the Town made full use of their good fortune in meeting out-of-sorts Chelsea on Friday.

They hardly had to break sweat to see off visitors who had not won in their previous eight league games. Stein's 12th-minute goal which put the Town on top was a bit of a gift from Clive Wilson's ill-judged back pass. But it was taken with cool skill and composure, and Chelsea never looked like getting back into it.

Stein and Mick Harford were too lively and mobile for a hard-pressed defence, and Brian Stein enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere as the support man behind them. The defence was rarely troubled as Chelsea found no-one to capitalise on the prompting of Micky

LUTON TN 3 CHELSEA 0

Hazard, their only player who looked as though he was determined to achieve something.

Brian Stein lobbed the second goal in the 50th minute after Tim Breacker had headed a clearance back into the Chelsea penalty area, and the Town's third, in the 64th minute, was a centre-forward's classic, from Harford's header after a right wing run and cross by Breacker.

"Once we had got our second goal we played some nice relaxed football," said Town manager Ray Harford. "I was thinking about sending on the subs in the late stages to allow some of the others to rest their legs before the match at West Ham. I didn't need to — we were able to take it easy because Chelsea didn't set us too many problems."

Chelsea manager John Hollins accepted that the result was right, and refused to be drawn into criticising the offside flags that held up the game 24 times. His men were trapped 16 times, and Hollins said that the tactic of defenders pushing up behind the ball was fair and legitimate. Forwards, he said, had to learn how to beat it.

Chelsea's attack, despite the return of Kerry Dixon against his home-town club, was toothless.

Mr Hollins earned Chelsea's major honours, with a polite and thoughtful Press conference. On a day when chairman Ken Bates boycotted Kenilworth Road — he had banned Town directors from Stamford Bridge earlier in the season — the Chelsea manager accepted defeat gracefully, refused to blame the synthetic pitch, and left with a public thank-you for the way he and his players had been welcomed.

Mr Bates, and the 23 Chelsea supporters refused admission, might be grateful for missing a match which was not far short of humiliation for the Londoners.

MATCH DETAILS

LUTON TOWN: Sealey; Breacker, Foster, Donaghy, Johnson; Wilson, McDonough, Allinson; Brian Stein, Mark Stein, Harford. Subs: Black and Weir, not needed.

CHELSEA: Freestone; Wood, Clarke, McLoughlin, Dorigo; Bumstead, Hazard, C. Wilson; McAllister, Dixon, Durie. Subs: Wegerle and Hall, not used.

THE GOALS: Mark Stein, 12th minute, punishing a bad back-pass by Clive Wilson; Brian Stein, 50th minute, expert lob from Tim Breacker's headed pass; Mick Harford, 64th minute, header from Breacker's right wing run and cross.

OTHER STRIKES: Town five saved and six wide; Chelsea four saved and four wide. Corners: 4-3 to the Town. Offside: Town eight times, Chelsea 16.

ATTENDANCE: 8,018, a drop of 2,000 on Chelsea's previous visit.

REFEREE: John Key, — Rotherham — firmly in control throughout.

ENTERTAINMENT: Not as sharp as the result, but the Town were never in trouble defensively, always in control in midfield, and easily the better attacking outfit.