

No contest as Chelsea crash again

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Luton. 3 Chelsea. 0: By TREVOR HAYLETT

CHELSEA lurched from one abysmal display to another with a second successive three-goal defeat that places manager John Hollins under increasing pressure.

Chairman Ken Bates — protesting at Luton's ban on visiting fans — did well to stay away as his side made it nine League games without a victory.

Chelsea were devoid of ability, spirit and confidence as Luton took full advantage with goals from the Stein brothers and Mick Harford, who says he will sign a contract to stay at the club early next week.

Shambles

Winger Pat Nevin also missed out — dropped by Hollins who, following Monday's shambles at Norwich, brought back Mick Hazard and gave John Bumstead and Kevin McAllister their first outings of the season.

Amazingly, Hollins said afterwards the same side will face Tottenham today if Gordon Durie overcomes a calf injury.

It was left to Luton manager Ray Harford to put Chelsea's inept performance into perspective. He said there was no point making substitutions with today's visit to West Ham in mind — because his players were getting their rest on the pitch!

'We were coasting in the second half,' he said. 'Chelsea did not give us many problems.' Not exactly correct, because deep into the second half, they finally roused Luton goalkeeper Les Sealey to make saves from Hazard and Kerry Dixon.

Chelsea were caught 16 times in Luton's offside game and at the back gifted their opponents a two-goal lead.

Header

The first arrived from Clive Wilson, who left his 13 minute back pass short and Mark Stein nipped in. Soon after the interval Brian Stein was allowed time to lift a shot over Roger Freestone as his defenders stood and watched. They were exposed again in the 65th minute as Harford's header provided the perfect finish to Tim Breacker's strong run and cross.

Later Harford, wanted by West Ham and trailed by Manchester United, Rangers and Tottenham, said he was ready to sign a new two-year contract. 'I will consider it over the weekend and make a decision on Monday, but I don't see any problems,' he said.

Hollins moaned: 'We gave away two bad goals. I have not been able to put out the same team three games running, but at last I have 19 players fit. Now we must work hard to lift our heads.'