

Hoddle's glee at Peacock double

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(CAC)
CHELSEA 2 LUTON 0 BY RICHARD BOTT

IT WAS never quite a rhapsody in blue but it was the sweetest music Chelsea have heard for a quarter of a century at Wembley yesterday.

Glenn Hoddle, the man who orchestrated this FA Cup semi-final triumph without pulling on his boots, was the first to acknowledge the fact. "I have only been at the club eight months. Some of our supporters have been waiting 24

years to reach the Cup Final. This was for them," said Hoddle.

"The club has gone through the doldrums. Now it is at Wembley again but there is still one more step to go.

"You ask me who we want in the final? We have beaten Manchester United twice already this season and lost twice to Oldham. That should give you your answer!"

The young manager they call the "pass master" watched Gavin Peacock snuff out the last flickering candle of the Endsleigh League with two stunning goals. Chelsea needed them too.

Luton, unlikely contenders for a place in the sunshine on English football's gala day next month, took the fight to their Premiership opponents with a nerveless relish.

The daunting atmosphere of Wembley, even with the attendance dropping below 60,000, seemed to hold no fears for the team that wily old fox David Pleat had gathered together for barely half a million pounds.

Luton played with such spirit there was always a chance the straw boater would come back into fashion on Cup Final day.

What Luton lacked, in the early evening, was a cold-eyed assassin who now has Manchester United in his sights.

Peacock, a £1.25 million buy from Newcastle last summer, rocked Luton back on their heels in the first half when they



PEACOCK POUNCES . . . Chelsea sharp-shooter Gavin smashes home the 13th-minute opener

were running the show. Then, three minutes into the second half, when Luton still believed they had the capacity and the talent to win the game, Peacock demolished all their ambitions.

Up in the stand, his father Keith, a player with Charlton and a manager at Gillingham, sat as proudly as Hoddle did on the bench.

Inspired

And long after the final whistle had shrilled, Peacock was still on the turf consuming every moment and memory of his afternoon.

Manchester United beware. Peacock has already undone them twice in the Premiership this season.

Not surprisingly, the Chelsea striker said: "Of

course we would like United in the final. But now we have to go on and win it. Reaching the Cup Final means so much to us. It has kept our season alive and inspired us in the League.

"Luton kept plugging away but I think the second goal was the killer." Chelsea demonstrated their quality as a side able to counter-attack under the severest pressure. They did so after 13 minutes when Luton were driving them deep into their own territory.

A free-kick from Frank Sinclair, after their impish captain Dennis Wise had been fouled, was helped on with two nifty back-headers by Tony Cascarino and John Spencer. There was Peacock waiting to pounce

and to thrash a shot past the giant New Yorker Jurgen Sommer in Luton's goal.

Peacock's second strike was also courtesy of Cascarino and Spencer but it was his own bravery and twinkling feet that took him clear to beat Sommer for a second time.

Marvellous

That was after 48 minutes and Luton, for all their courage and endeavour, knew there was no way back.

It took them until the 88th minute to conjure a truly positive chance, Julian James heading over the bar from a cross delivered by David Preece.

Kerry Dixon, once the pride of Stamford Bridge, and that young

blossoming star Scott Oakes were held in a vice-like grip by Chelsea's Scandinavian defenders Erland Johnsen and Jakob Kjedlbjerg.

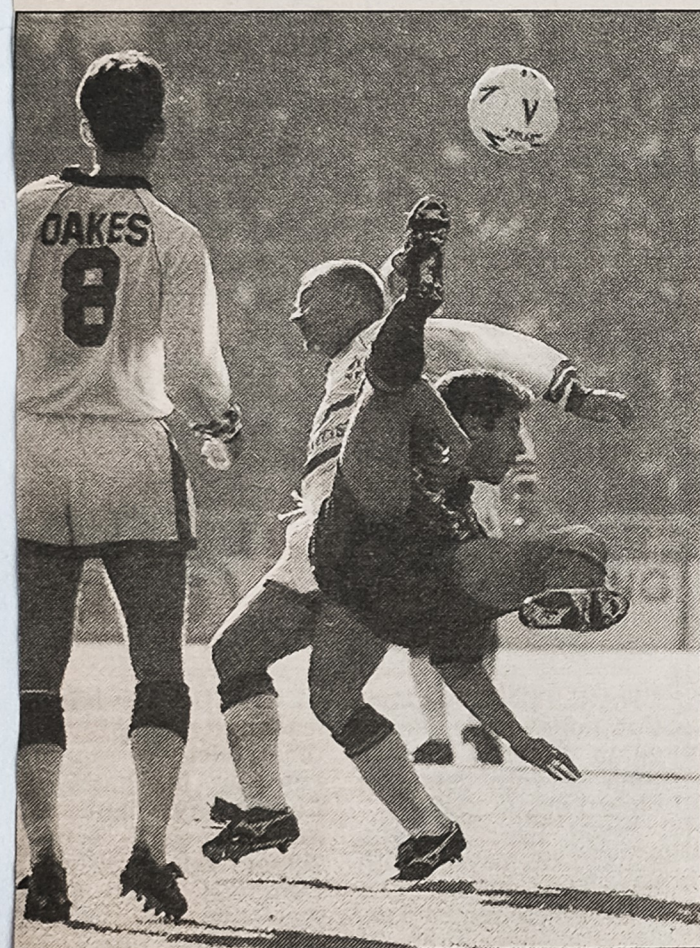
As the Chelsea hordes lifted the roof with choruses of "We'll Keep The Blue Flag Flying High" and gave Prime Minister and Blues fan John Major a crumb of comfort, the losing manager took it on the chin.

David Pleat said: "It's been a marvellous experience for my team. They will just have to be brave and live with it now."

CHELSEA: Kharine, Clarke, Johnsen, Kjeldbjerg, Sinclair, Burley (inj 41, sub Barnard), Newton, Spencer, Peacock, Wise, Cascarino.

LUTON: Sommer, Dreyer, James, Peake, Linton (inj 66, sub Hartson), Telfer, Preece, Hughes, Harper, Oakes, Dixon.

REFEREE: R. Dilkes (Mossley).



HIGH-FLIER . . . Peacock beats David Preece