

OUR VISITORS . . .

IN this life there are a lot of things which go on longer than we like, and so far as football is concerned one of these is the manner in which Chelsea have come to Highbury in recent seasons and gone away with both points. Indeed, we have to go back to the 1958-59 season to trace the last occasion on which we had the consolation of even one point from them here. Obviously this run of Chelsea success at our expense is something we would like to see ended today. Defeat is bitter enough, yet on top of that some of the Stamford Bridge club's victories at our expense have been quite substantial. It is high time the boot was on the other foot for a change, and we hope today ushers in a new sequence of victories for our team.

Following last season's fine achievement, when Chelsea were in the running for the championship almost to the last gasp, and finally had to be content with third place, many good judges regard them as likely to be strong contenders again. It was some consolation for their disappointment over the League championship that they should take the Football League Cup, also reach the semi-Final of the F.A. Cup, two achievements which, added to their League performance, made last season a very memorable one for the Stamford Bridge club.

One notable feature of last season's performances was the consistent scoring of their attack. The total of 89 goals was the highest in any post-war season apart from five years ago, when they totalled 98, thanks to a great contribution of 41 from Jimmy Greaves prior to his departure to Italy. Following the departure of Greaves, and his subsequent return to Tottenham, the main brunt of scoring in the Chelsea attack has rested on the capable shoulders of Bobby Tambling and Barry Bridges. In three of the last four seasons Tambling has led the list of Chelsea's League marksmen, but last winter, when he was switched from inside-right to outside-left, he finished fourth, though still with the useful total of 15 goals in League games, plus another ten in F.A. and League Cup matches. Bridges topped last season's marksmen with 20 League goals, closely followed by newcomer George Graham

with 17 and outside-right Albert Murray on the same mark.

This, incidentally, was the first time that Chelsea had four players finishing with a double-figure total of League goals in any post-war season. Indeed, this has happened only twice before in their history, first in 1929-30, when their four leading marksmen totalled an aggregate of 49 goals, and again in 1935-36 when their aggregate reached 50.

The advantages of having one's goal-scoring evenly divided among four forwards are too obvious to need stressing. Whether Chelsea can continue this season in the same vein as last remains to be seen. If they do, and presuming also that their defence retains the solidity of last winter, it seems clear that they are again going to be among the leading teams.

With defenders of the calibre of Peter Bonetti, Eddie McCreadie — who so worthily earned his first full Scottish cap last season against England and followed it with three close-season honours — Ken Shellito, John Hollins, Ron Harris and Marvin Hinton, so far as can be judged at this early stage Manager Tom Docherty seems just as well provided with defensive strength as last season, providing injuries do not upset calculations.

In addition to the regulars there are also several younger defenders at Stamford Bridge capable of stepping into the breach in case of need, as Youth captain John Boyle and others so ably demonstrated last season. John Hollins gained three England Under-23 caps, Albert Murray was chosen for six consecutive Under-23 games, while Bobby Tambling and Peter Bonetti also added to their previous honours in this class of football. Tambling, of course, has also played for England's full international side, a distinction in which he was joined last season by Terry Venables and Barry Bridges, both of whom were honoured for the first time.

Chelsea began their programme with a 1-1 home draw with Burnley, following this with a 2-2 draw at Stoke and a 3-0 victory last Saturday at Craven Cottage. On Wednesday they were home to Stoke City in the return game, this match ending in a 2-1 win for Stoke.