

PAGE FROM THE PAST: SEASON 1956-57

THE eleventh chapter in Chelsea's post-war story brought many changes in personnel, and three of the all-time "greats" were to leave the Stamford Bridge scene. First, Roy Bentley moved to Fulham after nine seasons in which he established a new Chelsea scoring record with 128 goals in 324 League appearances, and became one of the game's outstanding players in the role of "roving" centre-forward.

In November Eric Parsons, one of the most popular players ever to wear the blue shirt, went to Brentford. Few supporters of that time will forget his contribution to the Championship side, and especially those electric dashes along the right flank, invariably made head-down and at great speed. And Ken Armstrong, having broken Chelsea's record for the highest number of League appearances up to that time (362), emigrated to New Zealand, where he still lives. He had joined the Club direct from Army football and no more devoted servant ever played at Stamford Bridge. A solitary England cap (albeit against Scotland in a memorable 7-2 win at Wembley in 1955) was poor International reward for an outstanding performer.

Other changes resulted from a spate of serious injuries. Left-back Peter Sillett missed the season's first eleven games with knee trouble. In September centre-half Stan Wicks, who had been appointed captain at the beginning of the season, received the injury to his left knee which ended his career. To complete the sorry tale left-winger Frank Blunstone broke a leg in the fourth round F.A. Cup-tie at Tottenham in January.

Amid such setbacks, a final League position of 13th was reasonable. Only two victories came from the opening eleven games, but for the rest of the season an average of a point-a-game was maintained. Easter, when all three games were won—with eleven goals scored in the home matches against Everton (5-1) and Newcastle United (6-2)—was a highlight, and Chelsea made history by flying back from

the 2-1 victory at Newcastle on Good Friday (until then, the Football League had banned air travel).

To make good the losses through transfers and injuries, new faces arrived. Reg Matthews, an England goalkeeper, came from Coventry City to take over from big Bill Robertson; Ian MacFarlane arrived from Aberdeen and made 30 First Division appearances at right-back.

More significantly, the conveyor belt starting at Junior level was now delivering the goods. Peter Brabrook was already the regular first team outside-right. Les Allen and Ron Tindall shared the centre-forward duties and Tony Nicholas also played in nearly half the League games. Other "Drake Ducklings" to receive their senior baptisms included Bobby Laverick, Mike Harrison, Derek Gibbs, Paul Berry, Dick Whittaker and Wally Bellett.

The most amazing Chelsea Junior of all was starting out on a fabulous career—Jimmy Greaves scored more than 100 goals in all matches for the Club's youth sides that season at an average of more than two goals per game. He made his first-team debut in Ken Armstrong's testimonial match, against Leicester City, at the end of the season. What a future lay before him.

HOW THEY FINISHED IN 1956-57

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Manchester U. ..	42	28	8	6	103	54	64
Tottenham H. ..	42	22	12	8	104	56	56
Preston N.E. ..	42	23	10	9	84	56	56
Blackpool ..	42	22	9	11	93	65	53
Arsenal ..	42	21	8	13	85	69	50
Wolverhampton W. ..	42	20	8	14	94	70	48
Burnley ..	42	18	10	14	56	50	46
Leeds U. ..	42	15	14	13	72	63	44
Bolton W. ..	42	16	12	14	65	65	44
Aston Villa ..	42	14	15	13	65	55	43
W.B.A. ..	42	14	14	14	59	61	42
Birmingham C. ..	42	15	9	18	69	69	39
Chelsea ..	42	13	13	16	73	73	39
Sheffield W. ..	42	16	6	20	82	88	38
Everton ..	42	14	10	18	61	79	38
Luton T. ..	42	14	9	19	58	76	37
Newcastle U. ..	42	14	8	20	67	87	36
Manchester C. ..	42	13	9	20	78	88	35
Portsmouth ..	42	10	13	19	62	92	33
Sunderland ..	42	12	8	22	67	88	32
Cardiff C. ...	42	10	9	23	53	88	29
Charlton Ath. ..	42	9	4	29	62	120	22