

Chelsea's 25 Post-war Seasons in the First Division

PAGE FROM THE PAST: SEASON 1959-60

THE 1950s came to their close with a season of little distinction for Chelsea, who finished 18th in the First Division table. A 1-0 win against Manchester United at Old Trafford in August suggested great things, but was followed seven days later by a 3-6 reverse in the return match at Stamford Bridge. This set the pattern. By mid-November only four points separated Chelsea in eighth place from West Ham United at the top, but four consecutive defeats ended any Championship aspirations.

Only three more League wins were recorded in the next four months, and relegation was avoided by no more than three points. Equally dispiriting was our F.A. Cup exit for the second year running by 2-1 against Aston Villa here in the fourth round after a 5-1 home victory against Bradford.

Surprisingly, home "gates" averaged 39,000. One reason was undoubtedly Jimmy Greaves, who followed his record-breaking 32 League goals of the previous season with another 29—five coming when Preston were beaten 5-4 at Deepdale the week before Christmas. With Peter Brabrook and Frank Blunstone the regular wingers, there was no lack of support on the flanks, but in the middle Greaves was too often on his own. Charlie Livesey, signed from Third Division Southampton, never established himself at centre-forward and in the deal which brought Johnny Brooks from Tottenham to Stamford Bridge in exchange for Les Allen Spurs got much the better value.

For the second consecutive season more than 90 League goals were conceded, including two sixes, a five, and five fours. The defence of Reg Matthews, John and Peter Sillett, Sylvan Anderton, John Mortimore and Stan Crowther appeared in at least half the games, but there was a lack of class and cohesion.

Chelsea's Reserves, however, were Football Combination Champions, and the Juniors won the South-East Counties

League for the fourth consecutive season. But the most notable achievement was the winning of the F.A. Youth Cup. Preston were our opponents in the Final, and after a 1-1 draw at home Bobby Tambling's hat-trick in a 4-1 second leg victory at Deepdale brought us the Cup for the first time.

At the season's end Chelsea disbanded their third team and withdrew from the Metropolitan League after seven years, with a consequent reduction in the professional staff from 44 to 32.

In a year which produced few milestones at senior level, Terry Venables played his first senior match away to West Ham in February as a 17-year-old amateur and Peter Bonetti made his debut at home to Manchester City on April 2nd. Not only did the new goalkeeper keep a clean sheet (the score was 3-0), but his display earned him a congratulatory handshake from his opposite number, Bert Trautmann.

That evening a newspaper headline ventured "The Chelsea Cat looks a Winner". A prophetic forecast, indeed, about the man who has since played more games than anyone else for Chelsea.

HOW THEY FINISHED IN 1959-60

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Burnley ..	42	24	7	11	85	61	55
Wolverhampton W.	42	24	6	12	106	67	54
Tottenham H. ..	42	21	11	10	86	50	53
W.B.A. ..	42	19	11	12	83	57	49
Sheffield W. ..	42	19	11	12	80	59	49
Bolton W. ..	42	20	8	14	59	51	48
Manchester U. ..	42	19	7	16	102	80	45
Newcastle U. ..	42	18	8	16	82	78	44
Preston N.E. ..	42	16	12	14	79	76	44
Fulham ..	42	17	10	15	73	80	44
Blackpool ..	42	15	10	17	59	71	40
Leicester C. ..	42	13	13	16	66	75	39
Arsenal ..	42	15	9	18	68	70	39
West Ham U. ..	42	16	6	20	75	91	38
Manchester C. ..	42	17	3	22	78	84	37
Everton ..	42	13	11	18	73	78	37
Blackburn R. ..	42	16	5	21	60	70	37
Chelsea ..	42	14	9	19	76	91	37
Birmingham C. ..	42	13	10	19	63	80	36
Nottingham F. ..	42	13	9	20	50	74	35
Leeds U. ..	42	12	10	20	65	92	34
Luton T. ..	42	9	12	21	50	73	30