

By Albert Sewell

# BETWEEN OURSELVES

Programme Editor

FOR beaten cup teams and camp followers, they ought to do away with the sort of Sundays we've endured these past two weeks. By the time you go to bed on Saturday night, you've fought off, worked off or drunk away the wave of disappointment that hit you at twenty to five (or ten past), but next morning, as the Sunday papers drop through the letter-box, the anguish starts all over again.

Come last Sunday morning, a good many must have felt like the little lad who peered from his window high over Fulham Road, looked at the slanting rain-rods striking the deserted road below and said: "Never mind, it would have been a rotten day anyway for them to drive round the borough in an open-top bus. . . ."

In truth, we would all have gladly got drenched to the skin to have had the League Cup Final victory parade staged in our parish instead of in the Potteries. But football is not only a game full of ifs and buts; it is about losing as well as winning. And, looked at in the right light, even defeat can be seen to have some value in that it helps to keep things in perspective. For unless you've suffered the heartaches, you cannot fully appreciate the moments of glory and success. It has happened to other great clubs . . . Leeds, Manchester United, Liverpool among them. It has happened to Chelsea before; now it has happened again. And just as Chelsea emerged from previous deep disappointments to their triumphs of the past two seasons, so, I am sure, they will turn the latest adversity to advantage and use it to add to the character of the side.

Just how do you begin to figure it all out when Chelsea, the team who beat Real Madrid in Athens last May, go out of the F.A. Cup from a two-goal start against Orient? And how to explain that Chelsea played better last Saturday and lost to Stoke than they did in the F.A. Cup Final against Leeds two years ago, when they survived at Wembley and won the replay? To say "that's football" seems all too glib an answer, but can you come up with any *real* explanation?

Wembley last Saturday proved—and disproved—quite a few points. Surely, the greatest thing that came out of the match for Chelsea, the big bonus for the future, was the performance of Chris Garland. What aggressive running, intelligent positioning, constant effort and unceasing challenge up front. In six months since he arrived at Stamford Bridge he has advanced his soccer education by all of two years, and this despite the fact that he has been bothered on and off by niggling injuries.

It disproved the widely expressed belief that Stoke's "old men", Peter Dobing and George Eastham, would fade from view on Wembley's stamina-testing pitch. It put a question-mark against the value of previous Wembley experience, in which respect Chelsea kicked off handsomely ahead on points.

And Wembley last Saturday may have brought a change of perspective to the thinking of the modern game. In recent times the impression has grown that matches are decided in midfield, which explains why "engine-room" players have commanded the biggest proportion of six-figure transfers in the last season or two.

I cannot remember Wembley's midfield being as completely collared in a Cup Final as it was by John Hollins, Alan Hudson and Charlie Cooke against Stoke, particularly in the second half. But it didn't win the day for Chelsea. No, whatever the theorists may say, cups and titles, League matches like today's, still hang largely on what happens in the box, in the goalmouths and on the taking of chances, particularly half-chances . . . just as they have always done.

So goodbye last Saturday. Here's to today and Chelsea's tomorrow. Remember the title of the song—the one that rose to seventh in this week's hit parade. For Blue is **still** the colour . . . very much it is.