

By Albert Sewell

BETWEEN OURSELVES

Programme Editor

SOMEbody had better check Liverpool's galloping start—Chelsea tonight for preference—or their brilliance might soon render Bill Shankly speechless, and that would never do. Not that Chelsea have begun badly, with that 4-0 win against Leeds boosting the players' pool by £100 in *The Sun's* "more goals in the First Division" campaign. But in the opening days of the season perhaps the finest form of all was shown by the Leicester magistrates, fining five Leicester and Arsenal first-day terrace offenders a total of £600. As he handed out the punishment, the chairman of the bench warned: "We can only hope that high fines will get some sense through these thick skulls; penalties will rise until football hooliganism is stamped out in this city."

Which brings us quickly to the question of consistency. Between them the Football League and the Football Association—with the approval of the Players' F.A.—have gone some way towards achieving this in a disciplinary sense with the new charter imposing 3-match suspension on a player sent off and a 2-match ban if 12 penalty-points are accumulated. All suspensions automatically begin ten days after "qualification" except when players appeal (and not too many of those, gentlemen, or you'll throw a gi-normous spanner in the works).

So at last we have welcome signs of consistency on the disciplinary front for League club players. Now let's have the same for fans who don't know how to behave—at Leicester rates, please, not London. In the Midlands court two Arsenal followers were each fined £100 for "threatening behaviour". The same charge on the same day cost a Chelsea fan and a Leeds supporter £7 each at West London. At Leicester again a local fan was fined £150 for carrying an offensive weapon—a house brick; back at West London a man who struck a police officer in the mouth at the Chelsea-Leeds game was fined £50. How's that for consistency?

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It stood out in Chelsea's mail last week as one letter in about two hundred. The other 199 all complained, in varying degrees, about crowd troubles at the game against Leeds, and when I last saw them the Chairman and the Secretary were still earnestly going through them and trying to solve everyone's problems, Chelsea's included.

With one side of the stadium out of use Chelsea could, of course, have asked for an opening fixture against any of half-a-dozen of the lesser crowd-pulling opponents. But when the League computer came up with Leeds they decided to let things stand on the basis that it might be better to meet all the difficulties at the start rather than perhaps be lulled through an "easy" opening and coming to the major problems later.

That is not to say some new and unexpected situations won't arise at this the season's first night match at Stamford Bridge. Whatever they may be, you can be sure Chelsea will do all they can to sort them out as quickly as possible.

But it won't be of much help to the fan who wrote that "one letter in two hundred". It was full of praise for the 4-nil start against Leeds . . . he had no complaints about match arrangements . . . he wished us "all the best" right through the season. And he wrote on rather special ruled paper. The address he wrote from was special, too: H.M. Prison, Isle of Wight.