

ABOUT OUR VISITORS

IF we beat Stoke City this afternoon, nobody will be able to say we have won out of turn, for they have been a "bogy" team to Chelsea in recent seasons. They took three points from us in 1962-63, when we were both in the Second Division, and they repeated the performance last winter, drawing 3-3 here and winning the return 2-0.

Their victory at our expense last March, marked the beginning of a spell in which Stoke lost only four of their last eleven League fixtures, a sequence which enabled them to pull away from the lower places in the table. Just previously they had registered only a single victory in ten League outings.

Stoke have been playing much more consistently this season, and six away games have brought them three wins and a draw.

The "Potters" have spent heavily in the transfer market in recent years, and their team today includes some of the most experienced players in the country, despite the continued absence of Stanley Matthews.

Ex-Hammer in Goal

Goalkeeper Lawrie Leslie shortly completes a year at Stoke, having joined them from West Ham on October 26, 1963. A former Scottish International, he made his debut for City the same day, and has been a regular choice ever since.

This season Bill Asprey has played exclusively at right-back, though in the past he has filled a number of positions. Born at Wolverhampton he is Stoke's longest-serving player, having signed professional for them in 1952.

Fair-haired Tony Allen, one of Stoke's own discoveries, made his first-team bow in September 1957, a few months after turning professional. Capped by England three times in full Internationals, he is now within sight of his 300th League appearance, his total at the start of this season being 272.

Another of the club's signings last season was Calvin Palmer, who joined them from Nottingham Forest in September 1963, at a substantial fee. Skegness-born, he has played at right-back, right and left-half, and in the two inside-forward positions in the past year.

After appearing previously at wing-half and inside-right, George Kinnell was switched to centre-half in January, and has remained there since. He joined Stoke from Aberdeen last November, and has fully justified the substantial outlay.

Eccles-born Eric Skeels makes up a most competent middle line. Signed as a professional in 1958, he was given his first senior opportunity in March 1960, and quickly gained a regular place. He missed only three League matches last winter.

Dobing for Matthews

Although most of his games for his two previous clubs, Blackburn Rovers and Manchester City, were at inside-forward, Peter Dobing has settled down well at outside-right with Stoke. A native of Manchester, he joined the Potters from Manchester City in the summer of 1963, and was their second highest scorer last season with 16 goals in 39 League appearances.

Also born in Manchester, Dennis Viollet came to prominence with Manchester United, gaining England honours while at Old Trafford. He was transferred to Stoke in January 1962, and his form recently has been as good as at any previous stage of his career.

A week after Stoke visited us last October, John Ritchie was recalled at centre-forward, in place of the former Scottish International Jackie Mudie. He celebrated by scoring two goals in a 4-3 win at Bolton, and went on to score 15 times in nine successive League and League Cup games. Although obviously