

PAGE FROM THE PAST: SEASON 1952-53

THE seventh post-war League season was ushered in at Stamford Bridge on a note of high expectancy. Ted Drake had succeeded Billy Birrell, and John Battersby assumed full secretarial responsibility, having joined us as assistant-secretary in January 1949. The new Manager began by establishing a fresh "image" for the Club, and gone forever was the Pensioner as the Chelsea emblem.

Seven points came from the first four home games, with 4-0 wins over both Blackpool and Aston Villa, and better days seemed to have arrived. By Christmas, however, only fourteen points had accrued from twenty-one games, and Chelsea stood 20th in the table—only one point better off than Stoke City in bottom place.

New faces were obviously a top priority. Johnny McNichol had arrived from Brighton & Hove Albion during the close season and was soon followed by a series of other signings from lower divisions: Ron Greenwood (returning to his first club from Brentford), Leslie Stubbs (Southend Utd.), Frank Blunstone (Crewe Alexandra). Amateur Jim Lewis, from Walthamstow Avenue, was also drafted in, while Miles Spector, a boy winger at Hendon County Grammar School, played five games, including three cup-ties.

Among those who left the staff were goalkeeper Harry Medhurst (only temporarily, of course!), Billy Gray, Sid Bathgate and Benny Jones; Albert Tennant was appointed coach when Len Goulden moved on to Watford as manager.

For the second time in three seasons, the final League match, at home to Manchester City, was to determine the immediate future of the Club. This time the situation was more clear-cut, in that a Chelsea win would lift them above Stoke City and into a safe place in the table, the Potteries men having completed their programme.

Two controversial decisions helped to decide the match. First Eric Parsons was felled in a tackle that many thought was outside the area, but a penalty was given—

and gratefully accepted by John Harris. Five minutes later Jim Lewis added a second from a suspiciously offside position.

City reduced the arrears just before half-time, but McNichol scored No. 3, and once again there were celebrations for a last-ditch reprieve.

Despite the lack of sustained playing success, a new spirit had been instilled. The fifth round of the F.A. Cup was reached after six matches. At Derby a two-goal deficit at half-time became 1-4 with barely twenty minutes left, before three late goals from Parsons, Armstrong, and McNichol forced a replay. The second match went to extra time before another goal by Parsons brought victory.

Then came a marathon against West Bromwich Albion, stretching over four games and seven hours—Chelsea's longest tie up to that time. A 1-1 draw at Stamford Bridge was followed by a dour, goalless struggle at The Hawthorns. Up to Villa Park for part three, and another 1-1 result, but the fourth match at Highbury brought a second-half scoring spree—four goals to Chelsea coming in a 23-minute spell to settle the match.

But 72 hours was scarcely time to recover from such fatigue (three F.A. Cup-ties in a single week even by today's congested standards would surely be considered excessive), and Birmingham City won in a canter 4-0 at Stamford Bridge.

HOW THEY FINISHED IN 1952-53

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Arsenal ..	42	21	12	9	97	64	54
Preston N.E. ..	42	21	12	9	85	60	54
Wolverhampton W.	42	19	13	10	86	63	51
W.B.A. ..	42	21	8	13	66	60	50
Charlton Ath. ..	42	19	11	12	77	63	49
Burnley ..	42	18	12	12	67	52	48
Blackpool ..	42	19	9	14	71	70	47
Manchester U. ..	42	18	10	14	69	72	46
Sunderland ..	42	15	13	14	68	82	43
Tottenham H. ..	42	15	11	16	78	69	41
Aston Villa ..	42	14	13	15	63	61	41
Cardiff C. ..	42	14	12	16	54	46	40
Middlesbrough ..	42	14	11	17	70	77	39
Bolton W. ..	42	15	9	18	61	69	39
Portsmouth ..	42	14	10	18	74	83	38
Newcastle U. ..	42	14	9	19	59	70	37
Liverpool ..	42	14	8	20	61	82	36
Sheffield W. ..	42	12	11	19	62	72	35
CHELSEA ..	42	12	11	19	56	66	35
Manchester C. ..	42	14	7	21	72	87	35
Stoke C. ..	41	12	10	20	53	66	34
Derby Co. ..	41	11	10	21	59	74	32