

By Albert Sewell

# BETWEEN OURSELVES

*Programme Editor*

**S**TRANGE things sometimes happen on the fixture list when Cup draws are made. Take today's tie. Since Bolton Wanderers dropped from the First Division in 1964, Chelsea have lost the habit of playing them for points, yet this afternoon the teams meet for the third time in four months in the knock-out business. In the fourth round of the League Cup back in October, Bolton achieved a 1-1 draw here, but in the replay at Burnden Park Chelsea put things right by six clear goals, three of them from Tommy Baldwin.

The only other occasion when the clubs have clashed in the Cup was more than half a century ago, in the old first round (equal to the present-day third round) in season 1919-20, when Chelsea won by the only goal at Bolton. So, as far as Cup football goes, the Blues have a 100 per cent success record to maintain against the Trotters. There has been many a milestone meeting between them in the League since Bolton first trotted out at Stamford Bridge in season 1907-8. Did you know, for instance, that on August 31, 1946—the day League football was resumed after the last war—Chelsea kicked off with a full house here and a 4-3 win against . . . Bolton Wanderers?

For the most dramatic Chelsea-Bolton match, you needed to be here on the last day of season 1950-51. So far as Chelsea are concerned, that Saturday afternoon of May 5 was the daddy of all relegation dramas. Sheffield Wednesday and Everton were the others involved, and the three clubs knew that, come the final whistle, two of them must fall through the trapdoor into the Second Division. By the greatest of good fortune for Chelsea, the Wednesday and Everton clashed at Hillsborough while the Blues were at home to Bolton, who stood seventh in the table.

All three relegation-threatened sides kicked off with a chance of escape. Everton needed a draw at Sheffield to be safe; Wednesday could stay up if they beat Everton and Chelsea lost to Bolton; Chelsea's survival depended on victory over Bolton coupled with a win for Wednesday. Alfred Hitchcock could not have improved on it as a suspense-thriller, and as a memory-jogger for both sets of fans here today, this was how the teams lined up at Stamford Bridge: Chelsea—Robertson; Bathgate, Tickridge, Dickson, Saunders, Mitchell, Campbell, Bentley, Smith, Armstrong, Gray. Bolton—Hanson; Ball, Howe, Wheeler, Barrass, Edwards, Codd, Corfield, Lofthouse, Moir, Langton.

In those days, Chelsea fans got their kicks out of relegation escapes, not, as now, from the winning of cups. They certainly had their moneysworth that afternoon. With two spring-heeled leaps, Roy Bentley headed two past Stan Hanson in 19 minutes, and Bobby Smith made it 4-0 with goals just before and after half-time which even Bolton's keeper applauded as he picked the ball out of the net.

With 15 minutes to go, the result from Sheffield came through (they had kicked off earlier than Chelsea), and the statisticians in the crowd got busy working out whether Wednesday's 6-0 win was better than Chelsea's 4-0 in the final assessment of goal averages. It wasn't . . . and when the whistle went you would have thought Chelsea had won the Championship. All three clubs had finished with 32 points, but Chelsea were safe—by one twenty-fifth of a goal! And as the team filed off a field swarming with delirious supporters, the stands shook with the applause of a near-40,000 crowd. Come to think of it, perhaps all the excitement that day was the start of the North Stand getting a touch of the tremors that finally closed it this season!