

the 1906-7 season, when the manager took a chance by playing him in the first match.

A dream début

Off-hand I can't think of a parallel paragraph to this one in the whole story of the game. Hilsdon was there to fulfil the prophecy made by Robertson when he signed him on—to the effect that he would be the leader of the club's first team attack in the following season. It was a dream debut, with the Glossop goalkeeper at the receiving end of a barrage. Chelsea went even further than did the Wolves in their opening game of the current season—winning by nine goals to two.

Of those nine goals the new youngster got five. That dream debut got the headlines—in big type for those days. He got service from Jimmy Windridge of the kind he hadn't even dreamt about.

We didn't notice it at the time, but were frequently reminded later that the new boy was seldom quite so dangerous in front of goal as in matches in which he hit one just right in the early stages. During that first season with the club Hilsdon totalled twenty-seven goals in League games—a figure which, as you know, wasn't headed for some time by any Chelsea player.

Those figures, of course, were indeed memorable, as they played an important part in gaining for Chelsea the second position in the table at the finish, and in putting us into the First Division.

Honours in the offing

It is a mere truism to remark, as we have often done, that it is easier to get into the newspaper headlines than it is to keep there. First Division opponents paid more attention to Hilsdon—and better—than did those of the Second class, but Hilsdon went quite near to equalling the figures of that first season. He got twenty-four in League games in the following campaign, and one more than that in the third campaign. In each of those two seasons the next best individual scoring figure for Chelsea was nine.

In next to no time the feats and the play of "Gatling Gun George" compelled attention higher up. In a month or so he played for the Football League against the Irish League, and did his job by registering

a hat-trick. This representative match start was followed by the award of five international caps.

Victory by 9-1

In his second season as a Chelsea player Hilsdon exceeded in a Cup-tie the number of goals he had scored in his first League game with the club. In the first round of the F.A. Cup competition Worksop were beaten by nine goals to one. Hilsdon registered the first of that bunch. After other players had joined in the goal-rush Hilsdon got five more—all in a row.

The power of this import from West Ham faded a bit in the disappointing season of 1909-10, when the shortcomings of the Chelsea forwards in general landed the side in the nineteenth place in the table, and the drop back to the Second Division. In that campaign six was the highest figure in the scoring line of any Chelsea player.

All-round footballer

It is not easy to summarise, in a few words, the secrets of the success of Hilsdon as an attacker. Perhaps the best way to describe him in brief is to say that he was an all-round footballer. For one thing he had strength above average which is in the make-up of many fine players—in thighs which enabled him to come out with the ball in a tight struggle with an opponent.

On the run he could fire the ball goalwards like a bullet with either foot, and perhaps most useful of all, a highly developed positional sense, which instinctively took him into the right place at the right time.

He was the model for the weather-vane which adorns the top of the stand at Stamford Bridge. What an appropriate appreciation of a model footballer.

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