

Date: 10 February 1993 Opposition: Chelsea Competition: League	British Soccer Wk	Guardian		10 February 1993

BRITISH SOCCER WEEK

Reds' fire just an ember

Chelsea manager Ian Porterfield made changes in a bid to halt his side's alarming slump but they still extended their run of games without a win to 11. Porterfield axed Graeme Le Saux and relegated Graham Stuart to the substitutes bench along with John Spencer in a bid to change the Londoners' fortunes.

But the introduction of debutant David Hopkin and Darren Bernard and the restoration of 2.1 million pound club record signing Robert Fleck failed to spark a victory.

And Liverpool, even well below their normal high standards, came closest to ending the deadlock in a dismal, drab affair.

Kevin Hitchcock tipped over from Ian Rush in the 12th minute and also kept out a Steve McManaman shot and a John Barnes header.

Defender Gareth Hall cleared another Barnes effort off the line after 73 minutes while the England winger also shot wide, as did McManaman on the hour. Chelsea, clearly low on confidence after six defeats in 11 games, had chances too but lacked the composure to make them count.

In the 22nd minute Fleck teed up Barnard for a left foot shot that the impressive David James kept out with an acrobatic one-handed save while just before half-time Fleck flicked in a header that James also had covered.

Stuart joined the action and almost made an immediate impact when he burst past Stig Bjernebye and Barnes and fired in a low centre for Mick Harford whose shot was blocked and then scrambled away.

But the outcome looked certain well before the end though Chelsea may take some comfort from their first clean sheet in eight matches.

Souness spoke out about Barnes: "In the first half he didn't do a lot and for someone with his talent, and he has a great deal of talent, it is a crime when you don't get involved in the game. But he improved in the second half a lot and produced a far more positive performance. He could have won us the game with that header at the end if he had been a bit more on his toes."

But despite Souness' disappointment on the night he still reckons Barnes is the man for England adding: "For the game that they are going to play it would be impossible to leave John Barnes out."

Souness also claimed a moral victory, saying: "I felt we were the team most likely to get the three points and we have got to be happier than Chelsea having got a point away from home." Chelsea boss Ian Porterfield declared: "We have been having a disappointing run and although it wasn't a classic game we worked hard and were positive. That's the best result we have had for a while."

the guardian

Barnes fades into the gloom

A DISAPPOINTING match at Stamford Bridge provided more questions than answers. The Chelsea slump does not appear to have bottomed out and Liverpool's revival remains tentative.

Those who had come to see if John Barnes was ready to take his last chance at Wembley next week for England against San Marino would have left unconvinced. He started brightly enough with a couple of probing crosses but must hope that if Graham Taylor was here he left early. His near-post header in the final minute went straight at the keeper when it should have won the game.

'It's a crime when someone with that much talent doesn't get involved in the game,' said Graeme Souness. 'He didn't in the first half but got a bit more into it in the second.' But the Liverpool manager would not leave Barnes out of the England side. 'It is impossible to leave someone like John Barnes out when you are playing San Marino,' he said.

Leaving anyone out is not a luxury that injury-hit Chelsea can afford. Before this game they had failed to win a league match since December 5, dropping from fourth to 10th place. Liverpool were scarcely better with two wins in their last 10 games.

David Hopkin, the pounds 300,000 buy from Morton, made his debut on the right of midfield. He began well, delivering a perfect pass in the fifth minute that Harford could only respond to with a poor cross. By then, though, Chelsea had demonstrated the confusion and lacklustre midfield that is the source of their recent slide.

Robert Fleck, who had not started for Chelsea in four games, returned and showed his value in playing a one-two to set up Harford, who sent a low shot just wide.

The Scottish international then displayed his weakness when an excellent long ball from Hopkin in his own penalty area caught out the Liverpool defence but Fleck's lack of pace allowed the visitors to recover.

Only James prevented the home side opening the scoring in the first half when he stretched full-length to keep out a well-struck shot from Darren Barnard. Chelsea: Hitchcock; Hall, Sinclair, Townsend, Lee, Donaghy, Hopkin (Stuart, 66min), Fleck (Spencer, 85), Harford, Newton, Barnard.

Liverpool: James; Marsh, Jones, Nicol, Wright, Bjernebye, McManaman, Rosenthal (Hutchison, h-t), Rush, Barnes, Stewart.

Referee: J Martin (Alton).