



VISITORS' VIEW

WATFORD come to Stamford Bridge today increasingly aware of their ability to do more than just survive in the Second Division. Their meteoric rise from the Fourth Division has made them one of the Football League's more fashionable clubs. Everything about Watford—the pop star chairman Elton John, thrusting, innovative manager and highly-respected backroom staff—is seemingly geared for success.

But at the start of this season there were signs of self-doubt, an unwelcome relic of the days when they struggled among the also-rans. A League Cup defeat by Colchester only served to emphasise the cynics' belief that the Watford bubble might be about to burst. The players seemed to doubt that they could continue the club's progress.

Despite a first-day defeat at Leicester, manager Graham Taylor restored his team's confidence with the simple message: "You are in the Second Division—enjoy it." He says: "We should relish this season. We are playing on good grounds against clubs like Chelsea with great traditions."

Watford's only previous experience of the Second Division was a brief and unhappy one. They spent three seasons struggling, eventually being relegated in 1972, with only 19 points.

No one doubts they are now better equipped for the challenge that faces them. They have a proven goalscoring pair in Ross Jenkins and Luther Blissett, a capable midfield and a defence that features the ever-improving Steve Sims.

Sims personifies the positive nature of the new Watford. He was signed from Leicester City last December at a club record fee of £200,000 and has surmounted initial problems to recapture the form that won him England Under-21 honours.

Blissett, the lean, lithe striker who leapt to national prominence with the two goals that knocked Manchester United out of the League Cup last season, has also gained international recognition.

Already this season he has given notice that he will be a handful for any Second Division defence. He has deft control and is nerveless in front of goal.

His partner Jenkins, the Football League's leading scorer last season with 29 goals, is equally dangerous. Gangling he may be, but his aerial ability makes him lethal.

Before Graham Taylor arrived at Vicarage Road, Watford had a lack-lustre past, enlivened by a run to the semi-finals of the FA Cup in 1970.

That was abruptly ended by Chelsea, who beat them 5-1 at White Hart Lane. The only man from that Watford team still with the club is Tom Walley, youth team coach.

Today marks Watford's first League visit to Stamford Bridge. They are averaging a point per game, and have drawn four of the season's first six matches in the Second Division.