

Gallagher sinks Eagles once again

“WEAK CLUB CULTURE AND DIRECTION.” “RESTORE THE PRIDE AND IDENTITY.” “THE FANS ARE THE CLUB.” These were the banners hoisted up by the Homsdale Fanatics in the opening minutes of the game, aimed directly at Roy Hodgson and chairman Steve Parish. This follows a run of 3 wins in 18 for the Eagles, who haven’t beaten Chelsea in their last 12 attempts.

The major criticism of Roy Hodgson has been his unwillingness to give Palace’s young players a chance. With the likes of Michael Olise, Marc Guehi and Ebere Eze all ruled out he was given little choice. Matheus França and Adam Wharton were both given their first league starts by the 76-year-old, having arrived in the summer and January windows. In the other dugout, Pochettino has no problem developing young players, operating Cole Palmer in the false 9 with Noni Madueke and Nicolas Jackson either side of him.

Chelsea’s dry form front of goal was highlighted throughout the first half as they created very little in the way of clear cut chances. Palace also struggled with their best chance falling to Jean-Philippe Mateta, who’s right footed effort was swallowed up by Petrovic. But come’t h the hour come’t h the man, and Jefferson Lerma duly obliged. After an excellent tackle on Madueke from Tyrick Mitchell, the Colombian sent a thunderous strike into Petrovic’s top corner from 25 yards out. Selhurst Park roared with celebration that the club has had little of this season.

The stadium was united in singing their rendition of Three Little Birds on the other side of half time. It came after Michael Oliver had technical issues, delaying the start of the second half. The song seemed to spark new life into Chelsea, as former Palace loanee Conor Gallagher slammed home a Malo Gusto cross 90 seconds after the restart. Chelsea had renewed energy and continued to pile the pressure on Palace’s backline, a stark contrast from the opening 45.

Petrovic did well to parry a powerful Matheus França strike wide of the post with 15 minutes remaining. But it was heartache for the South Londoners as Gallagher swept Cole Palmers cutback past Henderson in injury time. Enzo Fernandez piled on Palace’s misery just minutes later as he coolly slotted in Chelsea’s third, ensuring 3 points would be going back to West London.

Palace go to Everton next, and just 5 points off of the drop, it will be a must win for Roy Hodgson’s side. Chelsea will try and build on this win, as they face a daunting trip to the Etihad on Saturday.