

PENALTY EXPERT'S MISS ENDS HOPES

Teddington 2,
Hampstead 2
(Teddington won 5-4 on penalties)

HAMPSTEAD'S hopes of a grandstand climax to their season were dashed in the cruellest and most unsatisfactory way in Saturday's nerve-wracking Middlesex Cup semi-final at Teddington Lock.

After 30 minutes of dead-locked extra-time, Hampstead had the prize of a place in their first ever final jolted out of their grasp by penalty specialist Richard Chapman's miss in the penalty flick play-off.

Hampstead realise though that they should never have let such a crucial encounter reach such a desperately chancy finale. Having taken a two-goal lead against the run of play just before the interval, Hampstead allowed Teddington to force extra-time with a soft equaliser in the very last minute.

After weathering relentless midfield pressure from the underdogs, Hampstead's Tim Divon made the first clear breakthrough only to be foiled by goalkeeper Peter Doncom.

But on another rare raid

into enemy territory, centre-forward Norman Borrett shot Hampstead into a 30th minute lead with a splendid piece of opportunism.

Seizing on a ball Teddington had failed to stop cleanly, Borrett found the target with an unstoppable drive from the top of the circle.

With perfect timing two minutes before half-time Hampstead scored again, the irony being that it was Chapman who converted a penalty awarded against Doncom for pushing Geoff Smith.

But the second half belonged entirely to the hard-working Teddington side, who seemed less inhibited by the unusually narrow pitch at Shell's Lensbury leisure centre.

Teddington received their reward after 25 minutes, their central midfielder Clive Hicks flicking in a penalty awarded against Viji Vijendran, who unwittingly stopped a long corner shot with his foot in his last game as Hampstead skipper.

Having marked Hampstead's chief playmaker Brian Guest out of the game, it was entirely fitting that Hicks should rekindle his side's hopes.

Hampstead's chances of

surviving the late assault were then lifted as Teddington's left midfielder Chris Glenn was temporarily sent off for shouting at an umpire.

However, feeling they were home and dry, Hampstead dropped their guard and as soon as Glenn was allowed to return, Teddington took advantage of indecision by Hampstead goalkeeper Steve Pennington.

After insisting on taking a cross he failed to reach, Pennington was stranded off his line and let the shot from centre forward Robbie Williams slip under his foot.

Following the stale-mate of extra-time, the tie had to be decided by the method all sportsmen dread because no time for a replay was available.

Unlike Teddington, Hampstead were prepared for such an eventuality. But after each side had scored from their first penalties, Chapman opted to switch his aim

from the corner in which he had scored just before half-time.

Doncom, who dived to his right for every stroke, beat the ball out and thereby earned Teddington their final date with Hounslow or Southgate. Both sides converted their last three strokes but that was no use to Hampstead.

Reflecting on this disappointing end to a generally encouraging season, Hampstead manager Nick Coleman said: "It was a real nail-biter. We should never have surrendered our lead but Teddington certainly worked very hard.

"Still we have enjoyed our best season for years. Since the London League started ten years ago, we have never finished as high as ninth"

● **RICHARD CHAPMAN**
... hero and villain from the spot.

