

By Albert Sewell

# BETWEEN OURSELVES

*Programme Editor*

IF you'd been on a certain South Coast beach last summer, you'd have seen a young lad throwing himself about between makeshift goalposts as his friends kept up a barrage of shots. Nothing special about that, you might say. No, except that Jeffrey, the boy on holiday from Tooting, is a cripple, and every dive across the sand was made on legs that will never allow him to grow up and become a real goalkeeper.

But day after day through his holiday he kept it up and I daresay it will be the same this coming summer. "He's in a world of his own when he gets diving about on the sand," said his father. "He fancies he's Peter Bonetti. Peter is his idol. He's never seen him play, but watches him whenever Chelsea's matches are on television . . ."

I sent young Jeffrey a signed picture of our Peter, and it has pride of place on the wall of his bedroom. To him, Peter is way up there on a hero's pedestal, and the boy has taste, because as both a fellow and as a goalkeeper they don't come any better. You can take it that every Chelsea player is somebody's boyhood hero, and it's the same with the stars of teams all over the country.

All right, so they don't seek the adulation—but it happens. And when it happens, and they are being looked up to, there's an extra responsibility that goes with being a star. It's something that has to be lived with . . . and, human nature being what it is, some can live with it more easily than others.

George Best is one of those "others." Except on rare occasions when the opposition button him up—as Chelsea did at Old Trafford last Saturday—he can turn on the magic pretty consistently out in the middle, which is where the image, the hero-worship begins. But it needs to be lived up to off the field as well and, as that recent tiresome episode showed once again, he cannot always be relied upon to do so.

Maybe the day is approaching when a treatment table and a massage bench will not be enough in the dressing-rooms of the top clubs, and a psychiatrist's couch will also have to be installed to help players who find that the pressures of modern football are too much for them.

I hope it will never come to that. Better by far if the League, the F.A., the clubs could come up with a system that will "school" players for stardom off the field as well as on it, from the time they come into the game as young professionals . . . make them aware at the earliest age that responsibilities as well as rich rewards go with being a soccer star in the seventies.