

# ★ STARS ★ in the ★ ★ STAND

## BILL ODDIE

**O**DDIE is the name, and he uses the front of his shirt to tell you he's a Goody. And though it may sound odd that a laddie born at Rochdale and brought up from the age of seven in Birmingham should choose Chelsea as his footballing Goodies, that's the way it is—and Bill Oddie, writer-actor in the BBC TV comedy series "The Goodies" is in his usual West Stand seat this afternoon to prove it.

He sees football in terms of Goodies, too . . . and Baddies. "I'm no lover of the physical stuff that was taking over the game. I come to be entertained, to enjoy the superb skills of players like Peter Osgood, Charlie Cooke, Alan Hudson—especially him this season. I haven't paid to see the stars chopped down, and the refs' revolution didn't come a day too soon."

Bill's boyhood football education took place at the West Bromwich Albion "academy" around the time they won the F.A. Cup in 1954 and onwards. From 1960-63 he was at Cambridge University studying English (he got a degree) and playing rugby (fly-half). He didn't know it, but that was when he started to become a Goody . . . because Cambridge was where he first teamed up with Tim Brooke-Taylor, Graeme Garden (fellow script-writer of "The Goodies") and John Cleese. Together they put on revues and other light shows at Cambridge, and it's been that way ever since. In 1963 they presented "Cambridge Circus" on the London stage, with U.S.A. the next stop.

On his return Bill based himself in London for work reasons and decided to put Chelsea "on approval". It was 1965 and he says: "The whole team was exciting to watch, with Bobby Tambling and Barry Bridges in tremendous form up front. I decided this was the football for me. I've been a season-ticket holder ever since. That was so nearly a great side. Then, sadly, it got broken up, and we went through a couple of very dull years that, I must admit, nearly put me off."



Bill, who enjoys playing in the occasional charity game ("illicit football" he calls it, lightly) says his ideal match every week would be Chelsea against Manchester United. "We nearly always have great games with them. The play flows and so does the entertainment. That's really what it's all about, if only more managers and coaches would try to see things from the spectators' view. It saddens me, though, that a lot of fans seem to get more of a kick out of the bad, sometimes rough, play than out of the game's great skills."

As a "communicator" himself, Bill Oddie reckons clubs could do much more to keep their customers informed. "Half-time is wasted for a start. We are still in the Victorian age when we put up half-time scores on a board half-way through the second half. They could be flashed to the crowd during the interval. And if a goal has been disallowed, why not find out from the referee and tell the crowd at half-time or at the finish. Similarly with news of a player who has gone off injured. The fans shouldn't have to wait for the Sunday papers to find out. This is the age of instant information, but not enough clubs realise it."

The information about "The Goodies" is that the last in their present series of 13 programmes goes on the TV screen this month, but they will be seen again in a "spot" each week in a new Englebert Humperdinck show. Bill also has another "doctor" series that he's co-written coming up on London Week-end. Somewhere, a school lost a future English master the day Bill Oddie left Cambridge and went into script-writing and acting. Their loss has been Entertainment's gain. Goody, goody!