

MEET OUR NEW FULL-BACK

# JOE KIRKUP

**T**HERE have been few swifter transfers than that which brought Joe Kirkup, 25-year-old full-back, to Chelsea, a fortnight ago. Less than 24 hours after West Ham announced that they were prepared to release him, Joe signed for us, but the pace of events did not end there. Within another 24 hours Kirkup was making his Chelsea debut here against Manchester United and, three days later, was in our Fairs Cup line-up in Munich. The fact that he was not Cup-tied with West Ham this season also made him eligible – by one day – for today's match (he signed 15 days ago, and the minimum required is 14).

Reflecting on all that has been packed into the past fortnight, Joe says: "I've hardly got my breath back yet. After having only three reserve games in seven weeks, I found myself in against Manchester United. You can't go in deeper than that when you're a bit short of match practice, and I was glad we had a couple of early goals to play with because I was struggling for pace in the last 15 minutes.

"When Chelsea came for me I didn't need asking twice. Yet only the night before I was wondering where my next club would be. Staying in London football is great. I already knew most of the lads here – when I won my three Under-23 caps in season 1961-62 Peter Bonetti and Marvin Hinton were in the side, too – and coming to Chelsea also means that my wife Jill and I do not need to move home from Abridge, Essex. I can get to Stamford Bridge by car in 90 minutes."

Kirkup, born at Sunderland, won school-boy honours for Northumberland at wing-



half. Newcastle were interested in him, but a West Ham scout spotted him, and having relatives at Dagenham swayed Joe's decision to join the Upton Park groundstaff.

England Youth honours followed, and Joe made his League debut away to Manchester City in December 1958. In first-team competitions for West Ham he played more than 200 games, and at Wembley last May gained a European Cup-Winners' Cup medal against T.S.V. Munchen 1860, the team we meet here on Tuesday. "I'm confident that, in normal conditions, we shall pull it off", is his forecast. "We all but beat them on a dicey snow-covered pitch over there last week."

Most of all, Joe Kirkup relishes the prospect of an F.A. Cup-winner's medal. He was in West Ham's first-team "pool" of 16 players but not in the actual 11 who won the Cup two years ago. In welcoming him to Stamford Bridge, we share his sentiments about that F.A. Cup medal, and hope we can go a stage nearer its fulfilment this afternoon.