

- He spent £500 in a season to watch Chelsea—and he's only 16!
- Every Chelsea home match means a 400-mile return journey from Cheshire to London.

WHAT A FAN IS OUR MIKE!

WHEN it comes to girl friends, football takes first place in Mike Bracegirdle's somewhat whistle-stop young life. A Chelsea fan of some considerable devotion for at least five years, sixteen-year-old Mike only finds time for females between football seasons.

A trainee wages clerk at the Sale office, Mike reflects, "I've had lots of girl friends but lost them all through Chelsea. I try to get a girl friend when the season finishes but as soon as it starts again they have to go by the board. Anyhow, I wouldn't want a girl to come with me to the matches because it would be too expensive".

He can say that again!

Last year he estimated, including a trip to Athens, that his eagerness to watch Chelsea's footballing skills cost him in the region of £500.

With two perfectly good and ambitious teams right on his own doorstep you may well ask, "What makes a Mancunian rave over Chelsea?" Well, Mike can't really answer that one so admits "It's just one of those things".

A 'natural' for Chelsea's supporters' club, Mike is also a Stamford Bridge season-ticket holder, which enables him to watch every home game.

Last season Mike missed only four of Chelsea's games; two were evening matches, which he couldn't get to in any case, and the other two were played abroad.

Three-quarters of the matches Mike attends he does so on his own, includ-



ing the European Cup-Winners' Cup Final against Real Madrid in Athens.

Mike took an early holiday and spent two days in Greece sight-seeing and waiting for the match to be played. However, he came away from the event feeling slightly jilted, Chelsea having drawn with Real Madrid. His time and money spent, Mike flew home to watch the replay on television and see his team win.

Obviously, with such enthusiasm for the game, Mike too would have liked to become a footballer and, who knows, played for Chelsea. But he threw the opportunity away "because of Chelsea". He used to play soccer for the Altrincham and Sale schoolboys' team but, because they played on Saturday and it clashed with Chelsea, he decided to "pack it in".

Mike feels "If I had stuck at it I might have got somewhere".

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