

he's my guy

A series about
The Chelsea Men
by The
Chelsea Girls

By MARGARET DEMPSEY

I SUPPOSE John is a most "unlikely" Irishman, because basically he's a Londoner, born at Hampstead. But his parents came from Southern Ireland (they live here in London now), and that's how he comes to have a collection of green shirts—he's played 21 times for Eire now. Except once when we went over together, I don't ever remember him going to Dublin unless it was to play football.

We started going out when we were eighteen—I lived at Willesden and John at Kilburn. When I left school I became a draughtswoman, drawing street plans, maps and surveys, and John went into football with Fulham. The first game he took me to was Spurs against Fulham.

We still have quite a few friends from when he was at Craven Cottage. After playing all his early football there John naturally has a soft spot for Fulham, and wants to see them back in the First Division. But, of course, coming to Chelsea four seasons ago was a marvellous move. He's not the sort to shout about the club's successes, but what with two Cup medals and another Wembley Final in the past three seasons, I know he's proud to have played a part in all these things.

We've been married two years, and live at Camberley. I come to

nearly all the home matches, and used to go to a lot of the away games, too, before our daughter, Louise, was born 13 months ago. I get a bit carried away with excitement at matches, and I think it helps a player if his wife is closely interested in football. There's a lot to talk about after a game, and win or lose, it helps John to unwind.

Away from football he enjoys golf and playing pop and classical records, and he does the heavy work around the garden; he's also in this Kleen-a-Kit business with David Webb.

Besides gardening, I also like pop and classics . . . and yoga. That's very good for the mind—

I go to a class once a week and spend about 15 minutes each day at it at home. I haven't got John interested yet, but I know Dave Webb likes to have a quiet meditate before a game, so perhaps it will catch on!

For the players and fans it's probably been a very short gap between last season and this, but to me the summer seemed to drag on for ages while John was away—first on the club trip to Barbados and then playing for Eire in Brazil. When he got back Chelsea gave him an extra week off to make up for being away so long. It still meant that we could only have ten days in Portugal, but it was a lovely holiday.

