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## RONNIE CORBETT

**R**ONNIE CORBETT regrets that he's unable to make the League Cup Final . . . and says he'll save his Chelsea cheers for the F.A. Cup Final instead! The reason we don't see him here today, or until almost the end of the season, is his own pantomime season at the Palladium. As Buttons, he tops the bill—it's his fourth time in "Cinderella" following previous years in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Birmingham—and the show runs until mid-April.

Immaculate in turquoise dressing-gown and the best-known horn-rims in the Entertainment business, Ronnie stretched his dapper figure on the settee in the theatre dressing-room, lit a cigar and talked of football and his career . . . in that order.

"Being born in Edinburgh, I followed Hearts as a lad. A cousin, Jimmy Murray, played for them and I was brought up on the skills of Tommy Walker (when he came back to Tynecastle from Chelsea), Alfie Conn, Jimmy Wardhaugh, Willie Bauld and, later, Dave Mackay.

"When I left the R.A.F., I came to London in search of a stage career. In the early days I filled in a lot of the time working in bars and cafes. Then the club and cabaret bookings began to get more frequent and the bartending less.

"The big break came about five years ago, when David Frost offered me a job on his BBC show, 'The Frost Report'. He'd seen me working in night clubs like



Winstons and Danny La Rue's. Everything's happened for me from there . . . yes, I owe a lot to David Frost.

"I started coming to Chelsea while Tommy Docherty was manager—I'd known him from his playing days. Then Dave Sexton took over, and he made me welcome, too. But I must admit Chelsea and Hearts are not my only football loves. Crystal Palace are the club nearest my home, and I like to go there, too, a few times each season."

As a Scot, Ronnie picks Charlie Cooke, not surprisingly, among his favourite Chelsea players, closely followed by Peter Houseman and Peter Osgood. "The team has certainly struck a purple patch again now, and it's remarkable that after all those years without a cup, Chelsea have won two in the last two seasons and are at Wembley again. What an achievement by Dave Sexton!"

Every day between matinee and evening performances at the Palladium, Ronnie Corbett takes a nap. He's not dreaming when he says he fancies Chelsea might be the first club to reach two Wembley Finals in one season. We'll drink to that . . . and share with him the hope that his "other" team, Crystal Palace, hold their place in the First Division.