



Meet the fan with a record none can beat and few (how few, we wonder?) can equal:

HE'S BEEN WATCHING CHELSEA EVER SINCE WE BEGAN!

HOW many people here today saw Chelsea's first home match on September 11, 1905? How many, we wonder, in addition to 80-year-old Ted Rice, a West Stand season-ticket holder? Mr. Rice, who has supported us for 67 years, vividly recalls standing on the terracing as a 13-year-old for that historic opening Second Division match against Hull City which Chelsea won 5-1. He recites the side who played as if it were yesterday.

Says Mr. Rice: "I paid 6d. to get in. There was no pushing or jostling at the turnstiles then. Crowds everywhere were well-behaved. They sang and chanted, but there was no violence.

"I have so many happy recollections of Chelsea, have seen so many memorable games—for instance, that unforgettable match against Moscow Dynamo in 1945 when the biggest crowd ever seen at Stamford Bridge crammed into every corner of the ground. They were on the hoardings, over the greyhound track, on top of the stands, everywhere. Someone even fell through the roof into the stand below."

Another match which Mr. Rice has good reason to remember was an F.A. Cup encounter against Swindon in 1911. "That was the most gripping match I ever saw. Chelsea won 3-1 and it was so thrilling that I collapsed with excitement and had to be carried to a canteen, where I was revived with a cup of hot tea.

"Just behind that for tension was the

game with Sheffield Wednesday which Chelsea had to win to become League Champions for the first time in 1955. We won 3-0 while Portsmouth, who were also in the running, drew at Cardiff. Amid tremendous after-match scenes Ted Drake, the manager, and captain Roy Bentley addressed the cheering crowd over the loudspeakers."

Of all the distinguished players who have served Chelsea, Mr. Rice picks out Jimmy Windridge, George Hilsdon, Andy Wilson and Hughie Gallacher as his favourites. But he says: "Many of today's stars would have been just as popular in those days. The club has never had a better goalkeeper than Peter Bonetti, and Ron Harris is one of the most consistent and dependable men ever to wear the Chelsea shirt."

Mr. Rice has not only given Chelsea tremendous support. In his position, before retirement, at the Ministry of Labour, he was able to assist us on several occasions just after the last war.

He remembers: "Bobby Smith had to register for National Service one Saturday and manager Billy Birrell, whom I got to know very well, feared that Bobby would miss the match in the afternoon. Fortunately, I was able to speed things through in the morning and he scored a hat-trick in the afternoon.

"Another time Billy Birrell invited me to spend several days at Chelsea when he was organising a youth policy. I sorted out applications from all over the country and helped arrange the first trials. That was