

# ★ STARS ★ in the ★ ★ STAND



## CHARLIE DRAKE

**I**F Charlie (“Hello, my Chelsea darlings”) Drake still supported the team he shouted for as a kid, he would have been following Millwall in their battle towards the First Division instead of cheering Chelsea in the League Cup Final at Wembley. He was born at Elephant & Castle, and spent his boyhood Saturday afternoons at The Den.

He is a comparatively recent Chelsea convert. Clad in blue sweater, red slacks and grey jacket, he broke off from the TV script he was writing in his secluded top-floor flat just off Leicester Square and explained what brought him to Stamford Bridge:-

“It’s all down to my friend Joe Baker. He’s a senior member of Ind Coope’s sales force in London—ex-army, bowler hat and umbrella type from Earls Court Road—and he has two season-tickets here. He’s been a fan for about 40 years, and one day he said to me ‘Why don’t you come and see Chelsea?’

“I must say it’s a very nice seat there in the front row of the East Stand. No, there’s no trouble with autograph hunters—I naturally sign a few, but it’s the team they come to see, not me, and they accept me as one of themselves—as a Chelsea fan.”

Charlie had a long haul to reach the top as one of the world’s leading family comedians. “First, there were 15 years on various variety stages. TV gave me a shove forward, but I was on the box nearly

seven years before I got a series—and then that first one was a disaster!”

As a star in his own profession, Charlie fully appreciates the star’s role in football. “I know the team is the thing, but it’s the top names who switch the rest on, win games, pull the crowds. You’ve got to go along with someone like Osgood, a man of uncommon talent. Arrogance goes with genius. He’s got to prove himself every week—the fans expect it—and the pressure on a player like him is extra.

“Chelsea really turned the South on two seasons ago when they won the F.A. Cup, and followed up with that big European success last year. They’ve botched things up a bit this past month, but with so much talent on tap I’m sure we’ll be able to make a big noise about ’em again next season.

“Webb’s enthusiasm is simply enormous, and Houseman impresses me no end. He doesn’t cut the figure of someone like Osgood, but he has his own kind of class and, what’s more, he’s the last man in the game to get dirty.”

Charlie Drake is not without on-the-field experience himself. He played for the R.A.F. in India, and there was also one game for a Showbiz team when he was in a summer show at Blackpool. Or rather part of one game. “I was doing a Stanley Matthews at outside-right, and suddenly this left-back sent me crashing to the ground with a great sliding tackle. I thought he’d broken both my ankles. As I picked myself up, I said to myself ‘One more of those, Charlie, and you won’t be top of the bill tonight—you’ll be in hospital. And I walked off.’”