

Adams Park pitch hard as frozen ground



Adams Park has undergone restoration over the summer.

WANDERERS' failure to produce their dazzling away form at Adams Park on a regular basis last season can be pinpointed to a pitch that was harder than frozen ground, according to chairman Andrew Howard.

Gareth Ainsworth's side lost only twice on their travels in League Two last season but they ended up on the losing side six times in front of their own fans.

The Blues boss criticised the surface at times during the campaign as he felt it was hindering his side from playing the attacking, expansive style of football that he wants Wycombe to play.

The Desso pitch, which has been down at Adams Park since 2000, is five years over its life span and was in desperate need of work.

Howard explained: "We took just under 200 tonnes of rubbish off the pitch. In doing so we stripped out the pitch, took about four inches off the top and basically we have the hardest pitch known to man."

"You calibrate a pitch on its bounce and our pitch was calibrated at 130 – frozen ground is 100. So if ever you've wondered why they never seem to get the ball down it's because the ball never came down."

"The problem for us is that our away performance was much better than our home performance. Our home performance wasn't bad, our away performance, I think you'll find, was one of the best in the league."

"It's not just about having a great squad, it's about having a really good environment to play football in."

The chairman said the much needed maintenance work was the only alternative as installing a new Desso pitch would have cost between £800,000 and £1.4m, and even a standard pitch totalled £300,000.

Wanderers voted in favour of a motion to re-introduce plastic pitches to the Football League but found themselves in the minority as the vote went against bringing artificial pitches back into professional football for the first time since 1995.

Howard added that the club were "praying for an artificial pitch" as it would be cheaper to maintain, available to lease out as many times as they wanted through the year and also that it was the preferred choice of the players.

'We'd been trying since November to sign him'

Continued from back page.

"When I drove home from Luton we did not have Alfie signed for Wycombe Wanderers, and that's how fickle the world is."

"We have worked very, very hard and we've been trying to get Alfie into the club since November. Alfie is destined for greater things."

"His management and Alfie have been massively respectful of this club and, from my point of view, that is certainly one of the agents who has done a proper job."

It would appear that even Maw-

son's old club were keen to strengthen their already strong bond with Blues by persuading the sought after youngster to sign for the Chairboys.

The club chairman said: "Mark Devlin, CEO from Brentford, phoned me, knowing that Alfie was going that morning, just to apologise and say "we did everything we could to get him to you guys". We will keep the relationship with Brentford going."

With Mawson now preparing for life in a higher division, Gareth Ainsworth will seek to get the best

out of Anthony Stewart, who he bought back to the club after his release from Crewe.

There will be more signings to come with Howard indicating that the plan is to begin the season with 18 contracted players – they currently have 16 – plus any additions to the squad via the loan market.

Wanderers signed six players on loan during the duration of last season and Howard once again expects them to busy in that area.

"From a team point of view, we've bought Anthony Stewart back and he has great prospects

going forward," he said.

"We've obviously got Mr Thompson up front and when you see Mr Thompson – he's just come out of the fitness absolutely stunningly, absolutely brilliantly."

"We've got a couple of young lads coming in as well. We're looking for a mixture of youth and experience as we've always done, but we do feel that Wycombe Wanderers is a fantastic proving ground for youth and we want youth to come forward. From that point of view, it gives us assets to sell later on and gives a good grounding to the team."

Marathon man lands in Bucks

Wycombe half marathon is no 18 of 25 for charity runner

HUNDREDS of people will descend on the Rye on Sunday morning to take part in the High Wycombe 10k and half marathon, but one man's journey to the starting line has been longer than most.

Nick Kirby is on a mission to complete 25 marathons and half marathons within a calendar year and Sunday's race will be the 18th instalment of his challenge.

The London, Manchester, Brighton and Milton Keynes marathons, among others, have been completed on his route so far and the 13.1 mile course, taking the runners through Loudwater, Wooburn Green, and Flackwell Heath, will be the next stage of his journey.

The 48-year-old, who is from Hampshire, is undertaking the marathons in order to raise money for the Cystic Fibrosis Trust after seeing the effect it has had on the 15-year-old son of one of his best friends.

Kirby has so far raised nearly £9,000 for the charity, having targeted the £10,000 mark when he undertook the challenge.

After originally being unsuccessful in the ballot for a place in the London Marathon, Kirby applied

for a charity place and in order to raise a sizable chunk of money decided to participate in a number of events.

Kirby said he found the exploits of comedian Eddie Izzard "admirable" after he completed 43 marathons in 51 days and that he felt doing something similar would help him to attract more financial support for the Trust.

Sam Carter, Regional Fundraising Manager at the Trust, said: "Nick is showing great determination in taking on these gruelling marathons, and his willingness to keep going and raise vital funds has been a great source of inspiration to all those affected by cystic fibrosis."

"The money raised will enable the Cystic Fibrosis Trust to invest in cutting-edge research and to develop better treatments. It will also provide support to those with cystic fibrosis and their families and help the Trust to drive up standards in medical care."

Kirby's hectic schedule will take in the New Forest Marathon, the Loch Ness Marathon, the Bournemouth Marathon and the Amsterdam Marathon, among others, after he completes Sunday's



Nick Kirby is running in the High Wycombe Half Marathon in aid of the Cystic Fibrosis Trust on Sunday.

event.

"Running is something I did when I was much younger, but not really to a good standard."

"I am a bit big so I'm better suited for rugby or rowing really, but not running – I do enjoy it though," he said.

"I stopped running for many years and just did the odd half

marathon. About five years ago I realised I'd become way too big and decided to do something about it, so I've been running ever since. Next stop – High Wycombe."

The High Wycombe half marathon and 10k race begin at 9.30am and if you're not signed up yet entry is £22 and £20 respectively for the events.

Chelsea swoop for Bucks student Kirby



Fran Kirby scored for England at the Women's World Cup.

FRAN KIRBY has moved to Chelsea for what former club Reading say is a British record transfer fee after impressing with England at the World Cup.

The 22-year-old, who studies coaching science at Bucks New University, was dubbed 'mini Messi' by national coach Mark Sampson after she scored the first goal of their Women's World Cup campaign in a 2-1 win against Mexico.

The Lionesses went onto capture the imagination of the whole country as they knocked out Norway and hosts Canada en route to the semi-finals, where only a last minute own goal denied them a place in the final.

Victory against Germany in the third place play-off capped a

remarkable tournament for Kirby, who had become the first player from the second tier of women's football to be selected to represent England at a major tournament.

Her displays for England coupled with her exploits for the Royals last season, when she netted 24 league goals, attracted bids from Arsenal and Manchester City, but she opted instead to join the west Londoners.

"When I joined the club aged eight, I could never have imagined where it would take me," Kirby told the club website.

"To have success with all my teammates at Reading, played for England in the World Cup and now make this move, it's all a little bit surreal to be honest."

"My journey at Reading has been something very, very special. The club have supported me in so many ways, and there are so many people that I need to thank for helping to get me where I am today."

Chelsea are currently top of the Women's Super League 1 and after signing a three-and-half year deal Kirby is available to play against Bristol Academy this weekend.

"We're delighted we've been able to get Fran on board, she is a very exciting young talent and I think she can go on to become a Chelsea great," said Blues manager Emma Hayes.

"Our aim is to win trophies here and Fran can play a major part in that for years to come."



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WANDERERS

Howard leaps to Beeks' defence at Trust meeting

ANDREW HOWARD was involved in a feisty exchange with a supporter on Tuesday night – for which he later apologised – after fielding a question about Ivor Beeks at the Wycombe Wanderers Trust fans' forum at Adams Park.

The Blues chairman was incensed when the Q&A part of the evening began with a Trust member asking for confirmation that Beeks was one of the owners of the club's training ground, launching into an impassioned defence of the man who was himself chairman of Wanderers for 26 years.

It was announced earlier in the meeting that Beeks had been selected to sit on the football club board once again by Howard, amid a backdrop of scepticism from a section of supporters who remain suspicious of a man who, alongside others, stepped in to buy the club's Booker training ground when they were in need of cash to stave off the threat of administration.

That consortium, who wished to remain anonymous at the time, purchased the training ground in April 2013 for £350,000 – funds which Trust chairman Trevor Stroud said on Tuesday night had saved the club from “oblivion”.

During Howard's response to the supporter, the Blues chairman admitted that “Ivor and a group of people bought the training ground” to stop the club going into “liquidation”, although his reasons for wanting to remain anonymous when purchasing the training ground are a subject of intrigue for some of the club's fans and were likely to be the motive behind the fan's question to Howard.

The conversation went as follows:

Trust member TM: Is he (Beeks) one of the owners of the training ground? And if so could he explain his reasons for not wanting...

Andrew Howard: What relevance is it? **TM:** I think it's quite interesting because...

AH: What relevance is it?

TM: Well, it's played a big part in the history of the football club in recent years...

AH: Ok, Ivor and a group of people bought the training ground when the club had no money. He then wasn't paid by the previous regime for 20 months, rent. The deal that was done – it's a ridiculous question. If he hadn't done it



Andrew Howard took part in a Q&A on Tuesday night.

you wouldn't have a football club, so can we have questions that are answerable or relevant or whatever. You're just out for trouble. The training ground was bought because the club was going to go into liquidation if the money from the training ground hadn't been put in.

The deal on the training ground is such that we're currently renegotiating. At the end of the day this club shouldn't own the training ground, not when it owes £2.2-2.4million. Have you got any idea what it is to run a business with that much debt?

TM: I'm not a business man, I'm a football fan.

AH: Right, well you watch the football and you let us run the football club, ok? When you don't like the football, ok, I'll listen to anything you want to say. When we produce accounts like that and we take your club from liquidation into profit in ten months then I think the team that we're working with are doing a pretty good job. It's nonsense. It's nonsense and if he hadn't done it you wouldn't have had a football club.

TM: Well, how did we get into that situation in the first place?

AH: Because you had **** management at the time that didn't do a bloody thing. What do you want me to say? Ok, your

cash flow was shocking, you had no money, you were going to run out, you were going to be in liquidation and you weren't going to be a football club. What else do you want me to say?

After Howard's riposte to the fan, chairman of the Trust Stroud intervened to try and clarify how important the money from the sale had been to the club.

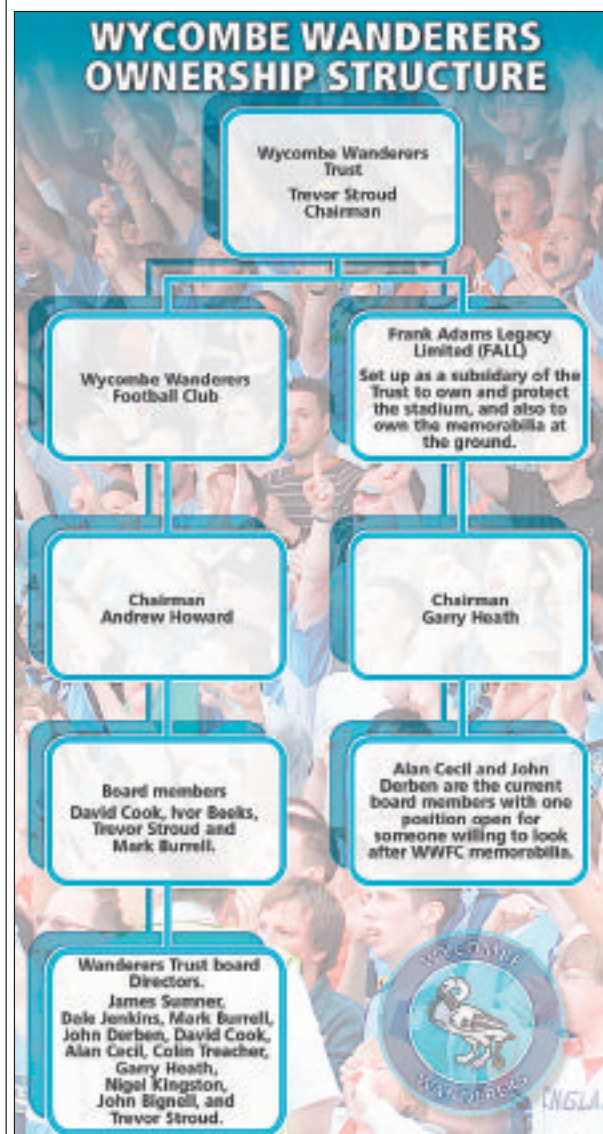
He said: “I would like to point out in terms of the training ground deal that the money came in to pay a payroll within about two and a half hours.

“So, just to put that into perspective, without that it would have been oblivion and we've faced that a number of times in the last three years.”

When the sale was confirmed it was agreed that the training ground would be leased back to the club for a period of ten years at an annual rent of £30,000, and that the club would have a five year buy-back period beginning in 2018.

The buy-back price would be the original £350,000 purchase price, which would be adjusted depending on inflation, plus £50,000 in the first year of the buy-back period – a figure which increases in £10,000 increments during each year of the buy-back period.

AFTER the changes made to the board structures of the Wycombe Wanderers Trust, the football club and the Frank Adams Legacy Limited (see back page) announced at a members' meeting on Tuesday night, below is how the current Wanderers hierarchy looks.



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by **GREG STYLES**
gregory.styles@london.newsquest.co.uk

THE absence of a pre-season friendly at Adams Park this summer was not for the want of trying, according to Andrew Howard.

The Wycombe chairman said a friendly against Championship side QPR had been lined up but fell through.

It left Wanderers fans with trips to non-league sides Wealdstone, Basinstoke Town and Aldershot Town after the team have played their first

match of pre-season on their French tour against US Avranches on Thursday.

Howard told fans at the Wycombe Wanderers Trust members' meeting: “There are two reasons why we haven't got a home friendly. One, we were struggling with the pitch in terms of making sure it was right.

“We've got Reading and Swansea here and I hope you all come and support that because that could be very exciting and they're also paying us shed loads of money to come.

“The second thing is that we poten-

tially had QPR coming, which was very exciting. Unfortunately QPR decided to go off and play somebody else in Europe.

In place of a home fixture and in order to allow Wycombe fans to get a first glimpse of their new signings, the club have provisional plans to hold an open training session in the week leading up to their final pre-season match against Aldershot on August 1.

No details have been confirmed and Howard indicated the numbers of fans allowed to attend is likely to be “restricted”.



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Beeks back on Blues board amid restructure

Former Blues chairman returns at request of current incumbent

by **GREG STYLES**
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IVOR BEEKS will once again sit on the Wycombe Wanderers Football Club board after news of his appointment was made at a fans' forum on Tuesday night.

The former Blues chairman relinquished his place on the board in August 2013 but he returns as part of a restructure by the Wycombe Wanderers Trust which will now see five people make up the football club's board.

Previously three people sat on the board, but after the resignation of David Robertson last month Trust chairman Trevor Stroud, Beeks and Trust director Mark Burrell will now join chairman Andrew Howard and David Cook in making up the new football club board.

Under the new structure, Howard was able to make two picks for prospective board members and he duly chose to bring Beeks, a man through whom the current Wycombe chairman's affiliation with the club began, back onto the board.

His selection was then ratified by the Trust board, who, moving forward, will have three to four Trust directors sitting on the board at any one time, and it has been agreed that a maximum of seven members will be able to sit on the football club board.

Robertson's resignation coupled with former chairman Don Woodward's decision to leave his position on the Trust board in May left two spaces on the Trust board – places which will be filled by two candidates who stood for election at the Trust AGM back in February.

Nigel Kingston and John Bignell both missed out on a seat on the Trust board after James Sumner, John Derben, Dale Jenkins and Burrell were chosen by members, but will now take their places on the 11-man board. Both Bignell and Kingston must stand for re-election at the next AGM in November.

There were further changes to the Frank Adams Legacy Limited (FALL) board, and they are documented in our graphic on page 127.

The meeting, which was led by



Ivor Beeks embraces Gareth Ainsworth after Blues' play-off semi-final win against Plymouth.

Stroud and Howard, was a positive and uplifting one for those present, who heard that despite anticipating a loss for the current financial year the club was now expecting to reveal a profit when the figures are released to Trust members.

According to Howard, Wycombe will become one of only five of the 72 Football League clubs that "make money".

It would represent a substantial turnaround in the Blues' financial fortunes as the news comes just four months after a loss of £447,000 was forecast for the 2014/15 financial year and £229,000 the year after – figures which were presented to Trust members in the Share Scheme document.

A small profit of around £10,000 had been predicted for the 2016/17 financial year, meaning that the club are performing better than those at the helm expected.

The fact that Wanderers expect to announce a profit takes on extra

significance given the fact that debt levels have been reduced significantly – the majority of which has gone to former owner Steve Hayes.

Off the back of Wycombe's run to the play-off final, season ticket sales are currently up in comparison to this stage last season with 1,847 currently snapped up as opposed to around 1,100 a year ago.

The figure revealed by Howard is inclusive of 245 first time buyers, with the club confident another 245 can be added to that number before the start of the season.

"From my point of view it's been an interesting year but I can stand here being very proud that I'm chairman of Wycombe Wanderers and I'm very proud of what's happened this year," said Howard.

The Blues chairman is approaching a year in the role, and he closed his speech to Trust members on Tuesday by giving them a glimpse of where he wants the club to go in the future.

He said: "If you want to, you could have the top fan-owned club in this country I think, personally. While the journey's been a bit of a change over the last few months I think that what's happening now is a platform that you could genuinely take forward.

"I hope that we can all work together. From the Trust's point of view, from SET's (Supporters Education Trust) point of view, all of you – it's your club. But don't be surprised that you are being noticed as a club, and you're being noticed because it is becoming successful.

"I do think we need a plan, I do think we need a direction and that's the reason for me that hopefully the people involved will bring a skill and will work within the environment to deliver that skill.

"I'm hoping that you'll have something that is sustainable, paying off its debts and playing good football."

Alf 'verbally agreed' to join Blues



Alfie Mawson.

WANDERERS chairman Andrew Howard revealed to supporters on Tuesday night just how close the club had come to signing fans' favourite Alfie Mawson.

Speaking at a Wycombe Wanderers Trust members' meeting, the Blues chairman admitted that the club had been attempting to sign the 21-year-old since as far back as November last year.

After arriving on an initial one-month loan deal 24 hours before the beginning of last season, Mawson went onto make 50 appearances, win Players' Players and Fans' Player of the Year and earn a nomination for the League Two Player of the Year award.

Wanderers fans had been hopeful that the former Brentford man would return to Adams Park but after a host of clubs in League One and reported interest from the Championship the defender chose to sign for Barnsley.

"I know everyone is pining for Alfie and just as a bit of light heartedness we had verbally agreed with Alfie to sign for Wycombe Wanderers when I drove over to Luton," said Howard.

Continued on page 126.

