

MEAD TAKES RESERVE JOB



The four men at the centre of Wycombe's upheaval. John Maskell (far left), Ian Rundle (second from left) will join John Delaney (second right) at Oxford City, while Keith Mead (right) takes over the Reserve team job at Loakes Park.

Maskell leaves after 19 years at Loakes Park

KEITH Mead, Wycombe Wanderers' veteran defender, has taken over as Reserve team manager, in succession to John Maskell, who has left the club after 19 years as a player and manager.

Maskell, 38, has left Loakes Park to become assistant to his old Wycombe teammate, John Delaney with Isthmian League Division One side Oxford City.

Delaney succeeded Bobby Moore as City manager last month, and to complete the virtual Wycombe takeover at the White House Ground, Ian Rundle, who helped with the reserves last season, is to become Oxford's chief scout.

The departure of Maskell after such a long and memorable stay at Wycombe will come as a shock to his many friends and supporters. But he sees this step in a different light, although he is sorry to leave Wycombe.

"I was offered the job by John Delaney, who told me it would be a joint partnership," said Maskell this week. "I will just be with the first team and this is something that obviously attracted me."

"I weighed up every situation. It is nearer home and the potential at Oxford is tremendous. Everything's right here except the playing side."

"I wish to dispell the notion that I came here for the money. Oxford are now offering realistic wages. I be-

lieve in the maxim that money does not buy success. The policy here has changed in that respect.

"It was certainly a big wrench. I left the club on very good terms. I've got a lot of time for Mike Keen and I'll miss people like Jock Sheppard and Brian Lee."

By going to Oxford City, Maskell is returning to the club for whom he first played 20 years ago. All the time he played for Wycombe, he lived near the University town.

Maskell was first choice goalkeeper for most of his 18 playing seasons with Wycombe and one of the most respected 'keepers in the whole of non-league football.

Yet he never gained an England Amateur international cap. He was un-

fortunate to coincide with the legendary John Swannell.

Best save

A big man, he was supremely agile and had a safe pair of hands. Not afraid to speak his mind, he certainly sorted out the defence in front of him and made his presence felt.

He has some fond memories, especially a tour to Yugoslavia in the 1960s and rates his best save as the one he made in the closing moments of the first match with Bournemouth in the 1974/75 FA Cup run.

"First I parried a shot from Brian Greenhalgh and it went straight to Les Parodi, who caught it well. I got up off the ground and made a diving save."

The match ended in a goalless draw. Wycombe won the replay and so went on to face Middlesbrough in those two epic encounters.

In the replay at Ayresome Park, Maskell played out of his skin to earn a standing ovation from 35,000 fans after the match.

Maskell played more than 700 first team games and became regarded as a permanent fixture and his only regret were Wycombe's failure to reach the FA Amateur Cup final.

Coach

"But I feel I've been very lucky. I was there at the right time and it was a privilege to be part of a successful club."

Towards the end of his playing days, he became a coach, passing FA Preliminary award with flying colours. When Wanderers restarted their Reserves last season, he was an obvious candidate to take over as manager.

Under his wise guidance, the club built up a side full of highly promising youngsters some of whom distinguished themselves at first team level.

One of his most talented acquisitions was Anton Vircaus, a teenage central defender from Pressed Steel. Wycombe are hoping to complete the signing of this highly promising player in the near future.

So the fruits of Maskell's labour could be felt for many years to come at Loakes Park. One day he could even return as the number one man. "That would be the ultimate," he says.

Staying on after all

IT seemed that Keith Mead's eight year stay at Loakes Park had come to end at the end of last season, when Mike Keen told him he would be no longer required as a first team player.

At the time Keen told the 35 year old defender that he would be welcome to stay in the Reserves as a player. But this was something that Mead, a proud man, could not accept.

Stepping stone

He was determined to keep playing at as high a level as possible. Indeed, he had already arranged to play elsewhere, when Mike Keen approached him about taking over as Reserve team manager.

"The job appealed to me," says Mead. "I regard it as an honour to have been considered

and look forward to working with Mike Keen."

"I do feel I've got the respect of the players and get on well with the committee. My job will be to improve these promising youngsters and help prepare them for first team football. There's a hell of a difference in standard between the reserves and first team. I hope I can help bridge the gap."

"I was looking forward to getting into some sort of management and perhaps this job could be a stepping stone to the future."

In his prime, Mead was a highly talented central defender who played for England amateurs. Even in later years at a slower pace, he has still proved a solid and reliable influence on the defence.

His experience over the past 20 years will be invaluable and being a great clubman he was the obvious choice to succeed Maskell.

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