ROLF NIVEN reviews a titantic 12 months in local sport

WHAT A YEAR FOR BLUES!



The departure of top marksman Declan Link to the United States was one of many major incidents in an action packed year at Loakes Park.

Gola football . . . Hitachi success . . . Link's bombshell . . . FA Cup glory . . . bonus flare-up — it's all happened at Loakes Park

SANTA may not be piling any Christmas bonus money in the stockings of Wycombe players but who would argue that the boys in Blues have earned their corn during one of the most momentous years in the club's history.

Promotion to the Gola League, Hitachi Cup success, FA Cup glory . . . it's all happened at Loakes Park.

A year that started so badly blossomed, so much so that the ugly subject of money — or the lack of it — reared its ugly head.

But even the controversy over FA Cup bonuses money has kept the Blues in the public eye.

The departure of striker Declan Link, a gifted goal scorer who lit up many of the duller days at Loakes Park, was the saddest point of the year.

But most of the time Wycombe have been riding on a crest of a wave.

Here is a blow by blow account of 1985 . . . read on and savour, Blues fans!

Wycombe began 1985 with a hangover. Their New Year's Day defeat at Windsor and Eton in the Isthmian League prompted manager Paul Bence to warn of "major changes".

Goalkeeper Gary Lester was certainly not flavour of the month in February. His needless second half blunder ended Blues' FA Trophy dream as they crashed 2-1 at Wealdstone in the second round.

Wycombe's remarkable 18-match unbeaten run in the Isthmian League finally ground to a halt at Tooting and Mitcham. The run, which began in February and included an eight match winning sequence, ended on April 18 when they lost 3-2.

But it left Wanderers sitting pretty in third place and chairman Brian Lee announced the club would move into the Gola League if the chance arose.

May will go down as one of the proudest months in Blues' history. After several scares and shock defeats, they clinched promotion to the Gola by finishing third in the Isthmian Premier Division.

They made certain of promotion by defeating Croydon in their final League match of the season.



Blues had plenty to celebrate during 1985 . . . this time it's their Hitachi Cup victory over Farnborough in May.

The joyous scenes continued when Paul Bence's side lifted the Hitachi Cup for the first time in the club's history.

After defeats in the two previous finals, Wanderers landed the Cup by winning 3-1 at Farnborough Town and doing just enough at home in the second leg.

Two weeks later they were given the official thumbs up to start a new life in the Gola.

Reserve manager Alan Ackrell left Loakes Park in June when the club announced they were disbanding his side in favour of a squad system.

Boss Bence completed a truple coup in July when he enticed three players — Neal Stanley, Des McMahon and Sean Price — from his old club Wokingham.

Wycombe started the new season in exactly the same way as they had finished the last — winning silverware.

They ended 64 glorious years in the Isthmian League by defeating champions Sutton United 3-1 in the Dylon Charity Shield.

Wanderers' first tentative steps in the Gola League confirmed their worst fears about the physical side of non-league's top flight.

They were bundled to a 1-0 defeat by Runcorn at Loakes Park in their first match.

But two days later they outlasted bruising Barnet to seal their first victory in the competition. Blues relied on a penalty save from keeper Gary Lester against Barnet.

Lester continued to sparkle in the opening weeks of the season.

In October Wanderers could hardly believe their ears when the FA Cup fourth qualifying round brought them face to face with last season's conquerors, Burton Albion!

They recovered from the shock of such an incredible coincidence to exact sweet revenge over Burton with a 1-0 win at Loakes Park.

Wycombe covered themselves in FA Cup glory in November. But it was a month also soured by controversy and crowd trouble.

The club recaptured some of the old Blues spirit to shock Fourth Division Colchester in the first round of the FA Cup at Loakes Park.

They did so on merit with goals from Mark West and Simon Read. But ugly crowd scenes marred a perfect day.

The result was even more commendable because just two weeks earlier leading scorer Declan Link dropped a bombshell by announcing he was leaving Loakes Park to start a new life in the United States.

Manager Bence then hit the headlines — locally and nationally when he slated Wealdstone after the West London club had beaten Blues 2-0 in a bruising League clash.

FA Cup fever continued this month when Blues marched into the third round for only the second time in their history with a 2-0 victory over Southern League side Chelmsford City.

Simon Read maintained his record of a goal in every round while Des McMahon produced a 30-yard stunner to book Wycombe's place with the professional giants in the next round.

Despite the efforts of the club to segregate fans, violence reared its ugly head ad Wycombe and Chelmsford hooligans clashed outside the ground.

The satisfied smiles on the faces of Wycombe players quickly turned to dismay when the draw produced a daunting trek to Third Division high fliers York City.

Days later controversy raged again at the club. A bitter outburst by captain Anton Vircavs, about players not receiving a cash bonus for their cup efforts, was highlighted by the national press.

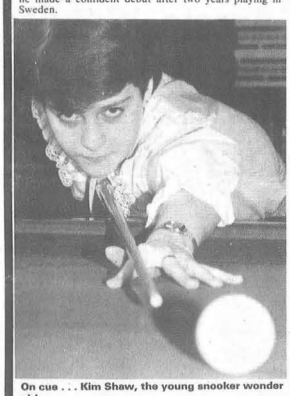
"We make the amateurs of Corinthian Casuals look like millionaires," said the central defender.

Vircavs spoke to the Bucks Free Press of his fear of being branded a money-grabber following his outburst.

"People may now see me as a money grabber but that is not the case," said Vircavs. "I just want the players to feel appreciated."

Blues' FA Cup triumph over Chelmsford was the perfect baptism for Declan Link's successor Joe Blochel.

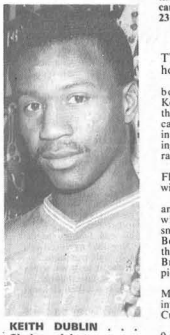
With only 29 minutes of first team football behind him, he made a confident debut after two years playing in Sweden.



On cue . . . Kim Shaw, the young snooker wonder girl.



BARRY SHEENE . . . two wheels to four.



KEITH DUBLIN . . . Chelsea debut.



ADRIAN GRIFFIN . . . National titles.

All the big success stories and traumatic moments of 1985

January

BUCKS Ladies Hockey team captured the Southern County championship for the first time in 15 years when they overwhelmed all opposition at Bisham Abbey.

They recorded successive victories over Oxon, Berks, Sussex, Hampshire, Surrey and Middlesex to qualify for the National finals.

While freezing weather forced the postponement of most local sport, Wycombe's international athlete Elise Lyon was warmed by an offer to run in the sun on a four year scholarship to the University of Southern California.

Kiwi squash supremo Stuart Davenport ended a two year association with the Wycombe Hills club to start a new life in Leicester — blaming boredom for his decision to move.

Nineteen-year-old David Lloyd created history at Oasis Squash Club, Marlow, when he became the first home-grown player to carry off the British Under 23 title.

February

TWO great daredevils hogged the headlines.

British Formula 2 powerboat champion Steve Kerton cheated death for the second time in his career when his craft disintegrated at 110mph during a world championship race.

The 32-year-old from Flackwell Heath escaped with only severe bruising.

And Barry Sheene, another sport star familiar with close calls, was snapped up by Hughes of Beaconsfield to drive for them in the Trimoco RAC British Saloon Car championship.

High Wycombe and Marlow rugby clubs were involved in Britvic Bucks Cup upsets.

Wycombe were shocked 9-6 by powerful Bletchley while Marlow overturned Chiltern 16-12 to reach the final.

It was another hectic month for Elise Lyon.

She gained her full GB vest when called up to the senior team for an international against Italy.

And the Scottish international also finished third behind Zola Budd over 1500 metres at the National Indoor Championship.

Adrian Griffin's fencing opponents got the point when the 17-year-old High Wycombe lad upset the form book to carry off the British National Under 18 foil title.

Ray Stevens was not so lucky.

He had to settle for a silver in the Scottish Judo Open after almost defeating Olympic champion Peter Seisenbacher.

March

NINETEEN-year-old Keith Dublin made his parents the proudest in High Wycombe when he stepped out on his First Division debut for London giants Chelsea against Southampton.

Another nineteen-year-old topped the year's golfing news.

Freddy George of Beaconsfield proved he is still a hot prospect for the future when he won the prestigious Berkhamsted Trophy.

Den's Simon Douglas earned himself the High Wycombe men's table tennis singles title with a brilliant win over Mark Curtis.

The future of Bucks hockey looked' in secure hands when the county's under 15 and under 19 sides won their respective Southern Counties championships for the first time.

It was not a good month for Hithercroft striker Robert Johnston.

He swallowed his tongue in a Sunday football match and had to be saved by quick-thinking referee Mike Shea.

Pat Morrisey was another unhappy individual.

He lashed out angrily at Chesham United officials after he was dismissed in a shock triple sacking.

Marlow's dreams of lifting the Britvic Bucks Cup for the first time in six years fell flat when they were squashed 17-4 by Bletchley in the final.

Wycombe's Hour Glass pair Ken Hussey and Roy Buckle were beaten in the semi-finals of the British Bar billiards pairs open.

April

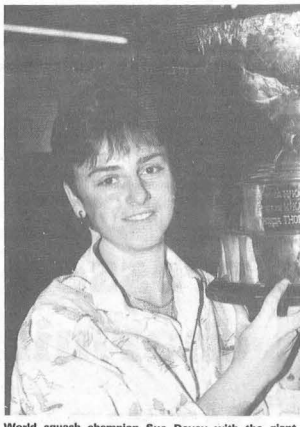
MARLOW-based Sue Devoy completed a grand slam of European squash titles when she retained her British Open crown with a commanding 3-1 success over England's Martine Le Moignan.

Fencing sensation Adrian Griffin continued his remarkable season when he fought his way to victory in the Public Schools Foil championships at Crystal Palace.

At the other end of the age scale, veteran scrum-half Ian Whitelock made his 500th appearance for High Wycombe rugby club.

The season ended on a frustrating note for the Bucks Badminton side.

They were pipped for promotion by Essex 3rd in the Inter-County championship — despite just one defeat all season.



World squash champion Sue Devoy with the giant trophy she captured in September.

May

BURNHAM and Holmer Green were two of the main soccer success stories.

Newly-crowned London Spartan League champions Burnham completed a marvellous double when they landed the Spartan League Cup with a 3-1 win over Redhill.

Holmer Green dominated the first ever Verco Chiltonian League championship winning both the senior and reserve leagues.

And the Holmer Green Under 16 team swept up almost every available trophy.

Holmer did miss out on one major honour when the first team was beaten 2-0 by Chesham United Reserves in the Wycombe Senior Cup Final.

Seventeen-year-old Andrew Clark of High Wycombe Cycling Club scored the biggest win of his young career in the Unigate Junior Grand Prix at Bournemouth while Eddie Adkins captured the Wilkinson Sword award for a record sixth time.

Amersham's David kay leapt into the news with victories in the Berks and Bucks ASA springboard and highboard diving events.

High Wycombe missed out on a hat-trick of Bucks Rugby Sevens titles when Steve Gamester missed a vital penalty in the last minute of their final against Uxbridge.

Wycombe teenager Michel Lewis confirmed himself as the hottest prospect around when he won the British short course triathlon with embarrassing ease.

June

WYCOMBE Phoenix girl Margaret Southerden glided to an incredible 400 metres hurdles victory in the Scottish championships — and then revealed she was three months pregnant!

The high-flying 29-year-old produced her best time of the season to win the title at Meadowbank.

Ray Stevens showed himself to be a true master when he won the British Judo Masters with a thrilling display.

Prestwood amateur Adrian Donkersley thrashed his way into golfing history when he shot an amazing sequence of 6,5,4,3,2,1 — the first time such a feat had been recorded in Britain.

Former Wycombe Wanderers manager Mike Keen was lured out of exile when Marlow chose the ex-professional to take over the Vauxhall-Opel League Division 2 club.

After previously having their promotion claims turned down, Burnham turned their back on the Isthmian League and joined the Southern League by amalgamating with Hillingdon.

Bucks CC rewrote the English Estates record books by amassing the highest ever score — 306-2 in their crushing first round defeat at Staffordshire.

Peter Gee broke his Bucks 10,000 jinx when he won the county title at the third attempt.

July

It was a topsy-turvy time for Marlow's outstanding rower Steve Redgrave.

He responded to a disappointing display in Amsterdam by storming to success in the coveted Diamond Sculls at Henley Regatta.

Redgrave was then beaten out of sight by the world's best in the Lucerne Regatta, Switzerland.

But he clinched his place in the British squad by easily winning the National single sculls at Nottingham.

No problems for Gavin Tamer.

He made certain the Bucks tennis singles crown stayed in Wycombe when he overturned Craig Howarth in a thrilling final.

Ray Stevens had to content himself with a silver medal at the Austrian Open.

But veteran cyclist Eddie Adkins was delighted with his surprise third place at the National 50 mile time trial championships.

The Bucks County cricket side were battered to defeat by the raw power of Test greats Ian Botham and Joel Garner as mighty Somerset swept them out of the Nat West Trophy.

Wycombe's talented middle distance and cross country star Elise Lyon flew out to the United States to begin her four year athletics scholarship in Southern California.

August

BUCKS' dismal county cricket season ended in utter disaster when they failed to qualify for the Nat West Trophy for the first time in three years following a 73 run defeat by Berkshire.

Equity and Law strolled to a hat-trick of Bucks Free Press Cup wins when they thrashed Glory Mill in the final.

Underdogs Bucks surprised even themselves when they bounced back into the top tier of mens county tennis by clinching promotion to Division 1 of the Prudential championship.

Remarkable 16-year-old Kim Shaw continued her amazing rise through the womens amateur ranks when she won the South Coast Snooker Classic.

Penn & Tylers Green's dreams of a second successive Mid Bucks League and Cup double were shattered when they lost to Downley in the Cup final.

September

TWO world titles were being chased by a local sportsman and woman.

But Marlow-based Sue Devoy was the only success.

"Now I've won everything," sighed the 21-year-old Kiwi after landing the one major prize that had eluded her — the world trophy.

A back injury wrecked Steve Redgrave's hopes in the world rowing championships.

The pain was so great Redgrave even failed to make the final.

Wycombe West Indians carried off the Clive Lloyd Cup for the first time in their history when they squeezed home against Birmingham West Indians in the final.

But a six-wicket drubbing by Harrow spelt the end of Beaconsfield's plans of a third successive Thames Valley League championship.

Prestwood clinched the Mid Bucks League title when they beat Hazlemere in a nail-biting play-off.

Berks, Bucks and Oxon trounced Essex 9½-2½ to lift the South East Counties Golf award for the sixth time in seven years.

Wycombe A retained the Inter-Area bar billiards cup with a two-leg win against Wallingford A.

Handy Cross running track came in for a verbal pasting by Wycombe Phoenix Harriers who blamed the District Council for allowing the circuit to deteriorate to a dangerous level.

October

RAY Stevens' own ambition cost him the chance of a world judo title in Seoul, South Korea.

The brilliant 21-year-old from Wycombe lost in the first round after attempting to throw an opponent while well ahead on points.

Local quartet Jacky Andrews, Rachel Thomas, Eleanor Forster and Kate O'Connor smashed National schools records four times as they won the English junior schools' freestyle and medley relays in sensational style.

Steve Kerton proved he is not slowing down by winning the Paris Six Hour Endurance race at the third attempt.

Wycombe Hills dominated the Newnham Cup on their own squash courts.



Mum-to-be Margaret Southerden, who won the Scottish National 400 metres hurdles despite being three months pregnant!

November

CUE wizard John Burrows created history when he toppled the British number one to become the first-ever player to retain the National Bar Billiards Association title.

But there was major upheaval in Bucks rugby when captain Steve Gamester hit out at the 'disorganised administration' of the county following the team's embarrassing whitewash in the Thorn EMI County Championship.

Gamester threatened to resign unless changes were made in selection policy to prevent a repetition of a dismal season which saw Bucks left holding the wooden spoon.

Darren Wright leapt to the forefront of BMX freestyling when he won the UK National Under 16 title.

The Bucks junior squash team returned to the top bracket when they were promoted to Division 1 of the county championship.

Young Louise Cooke received her England call-up for next year's under 15 basketball internationals.

December

VIC Tipping resigned as Bucks rugby coach and chairman of selectors following criticism from players and officials.

Bucks schools repeated last season's hockey success when they won the under 19 and under 16 Southern County titles.

Beaconsfield schoolgirls Catherine Bain and Samantha Tyson were selected for the British Junior Elite gymnastics squad.

Marlow Hockey Club continued their best start to a season for years when they notched their 10th successive victory to lead the McEwans Lager Regional League.