



The entire team are probably due a visit to A.A. after the amount of bubbly they've consumed in the past few weeks. Skipper Keith Barrett, the player of the year, celebrates after the league title is secured in April.

WYCOMBE WANDERERS AGAIN AS S WIPED AWAY

WYCOMBE Wanderers are a proud club once more.

It needed something special to erase the pain and frustration suffered 12 months ago when Blues were relegated for the first time in their history.

And Alan Gane has provided it.

In record-breaking style he and assistant John Reardon have guided Wycombe back amongst non-league's elite and rekindled dreams of a place in the Football League.

It was Gane's burning desire to rebuild a successful side out of last seasons shambles. Not even he, though, could have wished for such a glorious resurrection.

Vauxhall-Opel League championship, promotion to the GM Conference, Berks and Bucks Senior County success, President's Cup glory and record-breaking feats... it's almost too much to take in for Wycombe fans.

Early exits from the FA Cup, FA Trophy, AC Delco and GMAC cups were the only black spots on a stunning season but as the manager himself admits they were a blessing in disguise.

Ironically it was success in cup competitions last year that eventually caused the club's downfall in the Gola League.

This time though, Wanderers were left free to concentrate on the important task of winning back their place in non-league's top drawer.

It was never going to be easy with Yeovil just as desperate and committed to winning promotion.

But Wycombe's success boiled down to sheer consistency. They won matches they should have while the other leading contenders dropped silly points along the way.

It became apparent that Blues were mounting a serious promotion assault last August when Alan Gane beat off a clutch on non-league clubs for the signature of ex-Enfield stars Noel Ashford and Keith Barrett at a cost reputed to be around £8,000 for the pair.

That in itself was a welcome surprise to many fans because the club had been heavily criticised the previous season for not spending money on quality players. Here, now, was the proof that the new board of directors was thinking big.

Rocked

The season started well with a 3-1 win over Croydon. And it was to get better.

Eight consecutive victories later the talk at Loakes Park was once again of winning promotion.

The team's hopes of breaking the club record for the best start to the season set 15 years earlier, ended with a 2-1 defeat by Farnborough.

Skipper Kevin Collins then rocked Wanderers by announcing he was returning to Australia the following month.

An undesired 2-1 defeat at Yeovil in front of a massive 3,169 crowd saw Blues surrender leadership of the Premier Division.

ROLF NIVEN'S review of the season

Goalkeeper Gary Lester reached a real landmark when he made his 400th appearance for the club in a midweek defeat by Harrow Borough.

That match also marked the appearance of colourful ex-Manchester City star Barry Silkman in a blaze of publicity.

Silkman was outstanding in a 3-0 triumph at Slough and he was simply superb in a 4-0 hammering of Tooting and Mitcham.

But the former professional suddenly became virtually invisible in the shameful 5-1 FA Cup defeat by title VS Rugby — undoubtedly the blackest day of the season.

Reports that he was being paid £150 per game were dismissed by the manager. Five weeks after arriving at Wycombe, the eternal wanderer was on his way.

There was another blow for Blues when central defender David Burgess was ruled out for at least three months with Achilles trouble.

Hopes of a revenge over arch enemies Yeovil were shattered when they were hammered 4-1 by the Hush men in the first round of the GMAC Cup.

Former golden boy Declan Link was back in the headlines in November when it was revealed he would be returning to Britain around Christmas.

Departures

Hopes of a month of change at Wycombe.

Gane snapped up Wokingham's highly rated right-back Kirk Corbin and college-keeper Steve Curry. He also won the race for Woking's exciting winger Mark Dawber, valued at around £23,000.

Inevitably, though, there had to be departures. Reserve keeper Trevor Bunting went to Slough where he has become a real hero while Kevin Connolly also moved on.



New era dawns as Gane gets it right

Meanwhile Yeovil completed the treble over Wanderers when they sent them crashing out of the AC Delco Cup.

Top marksman Mark West hit back at his critics in dramatic style against Kingstonian when he scored twice in the last six minutes to secure a sensational 3-2 win.

It was Wanderers 12th consecutive League success but it was marred by the undesired ending off of Noel Ashford for abuse.

Chairman Brian Lee was so incensed by the decision that he refused to allow the referee in the boardroom afterwards.

The cup catastrophes continued at Leatherhead where Blues slipped out of the Trophy, losing 1-0 in a replay.

Gane was forced to lecture his troops against the damaging effect of suspension when Mark West became the second player in a week to be sent off.

Link returned from the States, and after a few weeks of 'thinking about his future' was welcomed back into the fold.

Sadly it meant there was no place for hard-working Byron Walton who had done little wrong since joining in the summer.

Jinx

They were feeling the strain down at Yeovil where manager Gerry Goo felt following a supposed hate campaign by fans already aware that the title was slipping away.

Wycombe continued to march on.

They steamrollered poor Windsor and Eton 11-1 in an amazing Berks and Bucks Senior cup match, with Andy Graham scoring four.

And although the Yeovil jinx struck again in February when they beat Blues 1-0 in front of a 2,473 St Valentine's Day crowd, Gane's brigade still held a 12 point lead.

There was a massive police presence at Loakes Park for the derby clash with Slough, but thankfully there was not the slightest hint of trouble during the 0-0 draw.

Noel Ashford took time from his club commitments to score the winner for England against Wales in a non-league international.

A run of 10 games without defeat kept Wycombe ahead in the championship race.

Then on a never to be forgotten night at Bognor Regis they clinched the title with a nerve-ringing 2-1 win.

A bizarre own goal by Bognor's Billy Gill in the dying seconds gave Gane's men the three points needed to put them back in the Conference. They made it mathematically certain the following Saturday with a 2-1 win over Hitchin.

From then on it was success after success.

They carried off the Berks and Bucks Senior Cup with a 3-2 win over holders Aylesbury United after extra-time at Wolverton.

Noel Ashford, who wins the 'MIDWEEK' vote as player of the season, hit a classy winner to complete Wanderers' revenge over the team that beat them in the previous county cup final.

By flattening Dulwich Hamlet 4-1 in their final League match they shattered the 15-year-old club record of most League wins in a season — and most goals netted in one League campaign.

The final curtain came down at Loakes Park in fitting style when they clinched the President's Cup with a 3-2 aggregate triumph over Conference runners-up Barnet who were given a sneak preview of what Wycombe could be capable of next term.

Everyone at the club deserves praise for their efforts particularly to the backroom staff who often go unnoticed.

Wycombe Wanderers are alive again and it is up to the Board of directors, the management and the players to keep it that way.

If plans to build a spanking new ground eventually succeed then the town may yet have a team in the Football League.

Roll on next season.

VAUXHALL-OPEL PREMIER

FINAL TABLE
P W D L F A Pts
WYCOMBE 42 32 5 5 103 32/101

Yeovil T	42	28	8	6	71	27	82
Slough T	42	23	8	11	70	44	77
Hendon	42	22	12	12	87	84	73
Bognor	42	20	12	12	85	70	70
Harrow	42	20	12	12	89	44	70
Croydon	42	18	12	14	51	48	64
Barking	42	18	14	12	76	62	62
Flora	42	17	14	14	66	72	62
Bishop	42	15	12	12	62	57	60
Bromley	42	15	12	15	63	72	58
Kipps	42	16	11	17	58	50	57
Windsor	42	13	14	14	47	57	54
St Albans	42	14	9	19	61	70	51
Chesham	42	13	12	20	55	68	48
Wym T	42	14	11	22	47	61	48
Hoyes	42	12	12	18	45	68	48
Dulwich	42	12	10	20	62	71	46
Tring	42	12	9	21	42	53	45
Hitchin	42	13	5	24	56	89	44

Worthing 42 8 9 25 58 107 33
Witley 42 4 6 32 36 112 18

Alan Gane has proved he has real manager's quality by guiding Blues back to the Conference.

Who did what

Appearances in order of League, cups, others, total:
Noel Ashford 38-9-5-52, Keith Barrett 39-11-7-57, Jamie Bates 1-0-0-1, Richard Blue 6-1-4-11, Graham Breaginton 31-6-4-41, Dave Burgess 7-3-8-19, Rick Collier 1-0-0-1, Kevin Collins 13-1-3-17, Kevin Connolly 4-2-5-11, Kirk Corbin 18-6-3-27, Mark Dawber 18-2-8-28, Kevin Day 28-7-10-46, Kevin Durham 32-9-4-47, Simon Day 2-0-2-4, Andy Graham 32-11-8-51, Paul Hackett 8-0-0-1, Carl Hodson 2-0-0-2, Gary Lester 40-11-5-56, Declan Link 18-3-6-25, George Link 8-2-4-14, Steve Moore 3-6-7-16, Graham Pearson 3-0-5-8, Neil Price 17-11-6-52, Anthony Price 28-10-8-46, Jason Seazole 35-11-5-48, Barry Silkman 6-1-0-7, Rob Simpson 1-0-5-6, Neil Stanley 13-1-7-21, Bryan Walton 18-6-6-21, Mark West 38-11-5-58, Maximum Total: 42-11-25-78.

Cup Inclusions: FA Cup: F. A. Trophy, B & B, GMAC & AC Delco. Appearances include those as substitutes.
Other appearances: Mark Bolton 2, Trevor Bunting 6, Dave Coles 2, Steve Curry 6, Cleveford Ford 2, Paul Griffiths 2, Mark Harter 2, Richard Holday 1, Dave Holl 2 (1 goal), Andrew Kingsley 3 (2 goals), David Mait 1, Leroy Mestree 2, Ian Mitchell 1, Steve Norman 7, Alan Parry 1, Richard Price 5, Simon Reed 1, Chris Seagraves 3, Dave Shaw 2 (2 goals), Kevin Sherry 1, Paul Walker 2, Stuart West 4, Mike Worley 1.

LEADING SCORERS
In order of League, cups, others, total: Mark West 38-11-5-58, 21-6-6-33, Andy Graham



Gary Lester... over 400 appearances.

What was said

Alan Gane, August 86:

"Our target has got to be to win the League and get back to the Gola League. But I am cautiously optimistic, nothing more."

Alan Gane, August 86:

"It is a ludicrous idea that this League will be a two horse race between ourselves and Yeovil."

Alan Gane on Barry Silkman's arrival:

"It would be great if we could keep him — he is a class player with plenty to offer the game yet."

Alan Gane five weeks later:

"Unfortunately Barry can only play one way and that isn't good enough for me. I am not

prepared to rebuild the team around him."

FA Cup exit:

"We probably would have lost if we'd been the only team out there."

Alan Gane after fourth defeat by Yeovil:

"They seem to have a jinx over us. I'm just sorry for the fans because we never do well when there is a big home crowd."

Keith Barrett, April 87:

"Presuming we do get promoted we will need to add 2-3 or experienced players if we are going to survive."

Alan Gane, after clinching title:

"We were better than the rest all through the season."



Four defeats out of four by Yeovil was difficult for Wycombe to swallow... but who finished up with the title?

It has been smiles almost all the way for Wycombe this season.