

THEY'LL SURVIVE - GANE

How they stood on January 18, 1986 GOLA LEAGUE

GOLA LEAGUE										
Bath	26	3	4	8	11	32	34	26		
Northwich	27	3	3	11	10	32	35	26		
Cheltenham	23	4	2	10	7	35	39	24		
Wycombe	22	4	2	7	9	29	39	21		
Dagenham	23	4	2	6	12	28	41	20		
Dartford	25	5	1	6	13	34	39	19		
Maidstone	26	3	0	13	10	34	43	19		
Barrow	24	2	2	6	14	22	49	16		
Nuneaton Bor	26	3	2	3	18	30	52	15		

This time two seasons ago, Wycombe Wanderers were sixth from the bottom of the Gola League with games in hand over all of their fellow strugglers. But still they went down. Now Blues find themselves in a similar position in the GM Vauxhall Conference and the big question is can they avoid a repetition of those miserable few months in 1986 and survive? Alan Gane, who like Jim Kelman took charge in January, had the dubious distinction of becoming the first Wycombe manager in history to have a side relegated. Rolf Niven talked to the former record-breaking Blues boss to find out why he believes this team will stay up.

ALAN GANE IS convinced that Wanderers have got what it takes to survive in the GM Vauxhall Conference this term.

Two terms ago Gane was in a similar position to Kelman having just taken over the reigns from Paul Bence.

But as Gane points out there were many factors leading to his side's eventual downfall with their infamous FA Trophy saga against little Leek Town blamed as the catalyst.

"The Trophy run really did us in the end. We hammered Dartford something like 6-0 in the snow in the previous round and when we met Leek in similar conditions we were very confident of getting past them first time. Looking back we should never have played it in those conditions," he recalled.

It took Wanderers three more attempts before they finally disposed of the plucky minnows but the damage was done.

"We finally beat them on the Thursday and then had to meet Kettering the following Monday which was no way to prepare. The players were tired from playing so many matches in a short space of time and when we lost at Kettering in the quarter-finals the chins hit the floor. On top of that our fixtures built up," he added.

"When I took over we had just had a tremendous unbeaten run but during all our cup matches we went past the deadline for signing players so when things went against us I couldn't strengthen the side.

Gane, now trying to coax Staines out of the Vauxhall-Opel Division One, believes Wycombe are in a stronger position now than two seasons ago and are better equipped to cope with a relegation battle.

"Most of the present squad have had either Conference or Football League experience - we hardly had any two seasons ago - and generally they are a better team.

How they stand now GM VAUXHALL CONFERENCE

GM VAUXHALL CONFERENCE										
Boston	25	8	6	11	35	40	30			
Altrincham	26	8	5	13	31	38	29			
Fisher	26	7	8	11	30	36	29			
Wycombe	27	6	7	14	31	62	25			
Welling	22	7	2	13	30	42	23			
Bath City	24	5	5	14	25	43	20			
Wealdstone	26	2	12	12	21	46	18			
Dagenham	28	4	6	18	30	64	18			
Northwich	20	2	7	11	17	34	13			

"I have not seen Wycombe this season but I have watched several Conference games and there does not seem anything to be frightened about. There are lots of ordinary sides around.

"In the Gola League, Barrow were the only really poor side with the rest of much of a muckness. But there are about five clubs below Wanderers at the moment who don't seem capable of going past them. I know some have got games in hand but as we found out in the Gola League it is often difficult trying to make up fixtures.

"We thought we would stay up right until the end and when you look back we were incredibly unlucky. We lost 1-0 at home to Altrincham because of the most bizarre own goal and I can remember the Kettering keeper pulling off an incredible save against us to deny us a win and those were our final two matches."

Gane admits he was better prepared than Kelman when he took charge.

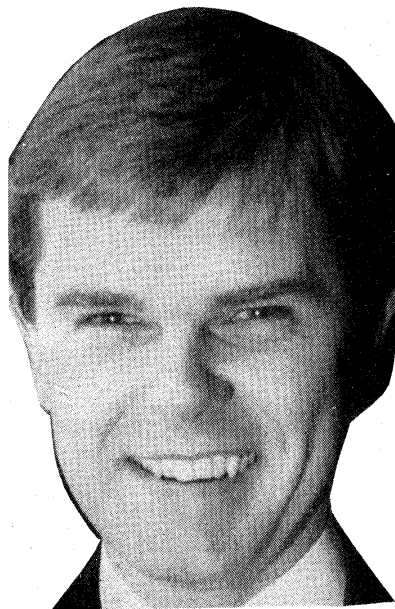
"I had been assistant for 18 months prior so I didn't find it difficult taking over. I wish Jim every success. I believe Peter Suddaby was onto a loser right from the moment he took over because of the atmosphere there and you cannot blame him for the way things have gone. There is no doubt the spirit has been lacking - that alone can get you points. The arrival of a new manager usually bucks sides up - it is maintaining that feeling that is the problem.

"Wycombe have several games coming up against sides lower in the Conference. If they win two or three of those they will probably survive."

And Alan Gane's final verdict?

"I think they will stay up. I certainly hope so."

"The Trophy run did us two seasons ago - we should never have played that first match against Leek."



Alan Gane who suffered the disappointment of relegation two years ago



Jim Kelman... can he keep Blues up this season?