

Wanderers' fans get to know sumptuous new stadium

By ANDREW CHATFIELD

IT WILL take Wanderers' fans a while to settle into the club's brand new home at Adams Park but Thursday's glorious house-warming party must have helped.

An hour before the Blues and Forest were due to christen the perfect turf, it was hard to believe the same club that slogged up and down the Loakes Park slope for 95 years really belonged in these pristine surroundings.

Adams Park felt intimidatingly new. One expected to see Please Don't Touch signs on the Continental-style glass dug-outs and the gleaming electronic clock.

The press box and offices smelled like a furniture showroom and some of the windows still had builder's tape stuck across them.

As for the pitch, it is a crime to play football on it. Subbuteo, may be, but not the real thing.

There was still an air of unreality about it when club chairman Ivor Beeks finally welcomed the crowd,

adding with an almost audible sigh of relief: "I have been wanting to say that on this ground for almost three years."

Brian Clough clearly sensed the importance of the occasion and applauded the chairman with warmth before they exchanged gifts.

As the evening wore on it became clear that some things, at least, are just like the old days.

A much-improved sound system still plays hits by Leo Sayer, Cliff and Abba, and — a key test — it is still impossible to reach the front of the tea queue before the end of the half-time break.

The presence of a star-studded Forest side and the ebullient determination of the Wanderers' players made it a night to remember for football as well.

If many fans had been lured by the promise of seeing Forest's World Cup Stars, they must have left with

memories of other players.

Des Walker, it is true, played with the assurance and remarkable pace which made him shine out in England's World Cup campaign.

Despite conceding the corner which gave Wanderers their surprise early lead, Walker rarely looked uncomfortable shadowing Mark West in the first half and was one of the few defenders able to cope with Simon Stapleton, who played with sizzling confidence.

Steve Hodge was less impressive. His hard graft in midfield was overshadowed by the failure of the front men, particularly Nigel Clough, to capitalise on his service and by several of his own wild misses from potential scoring positions.

The third expected star, Stuart Pearce, will sadly have to endure for some time the jeers of opposing fans regarding THAT penalty in the shoot-out against West Germany.

Wycombe's faithful did not have the chance, however, because Pearce was absent through injury. But two penalties scored in a pre-season tour of Sweden suggest the star has not allowed the Italian nightmare to affect his game.

Forest's most watchable player was the eel-like Franz Carr, whose many crosses from the by-line deserved better finishing. Perhaps fed-up with the lack of success, he broke into the area himself in the 40th minute and duly scored Forest's only goal with a cracking thump into the far corner of Granville's net.

Defender Steve Chettle also took the limelight from his better-known teammates with a performance of great power and composure.

But the occasion and the result made it Wycombe Wanderers' night.

As the crowd left, the drink cans and stains of spilled coffee on the terraces and the odd skid mark on the pitch rather spoiled the gleaming perfection. But it was beginning to feel more like home.