

Cup victory 60 years ago was great moment in club's history

TOMORROW'S FA Trophy clash falls on the 60th anniversary of Blues winning the Amateur Cup.

Their single goal victory over Hayes in the final at Highbury in 1931 still ranks as one of the greatest moments in the history of the club.

In the pre-television age it not only merited a full spread in the Bucks Free Press, but also in the national newspapers on the Sunday and Monday.

Yet as the season began, the main sporting talk was of the Australian batsman Don Bradman who had put the England Cricket team to sword as Australia regained the Ashes.

In Football, the first World Cup had happened in the Summer of 1930 and though Uruguay won the trophy it passed virtually unnoticed – England didn't enter.

At Loakes Park, Wycombe began the Isthmian League campaign on the last Saturday in August. A hat-trick from Brown helped them to a six-goal victory over Clapton.

They continued in good form, losing only twice more in their first nine matches, but made an early exit from the FA Cup, losing to Uxbridge, who by coincidence had beaten Hayes in the previous round. (The Blues eventually reached the first round of the FA Cup in 1932.)

For Wycombe the main focus was the Amateur Cup, a competition they had never won. Exempt to the first round proper, they were drawn away to the now defunct London Caledonians at Tufnell Park.

Hopes were none too high as they'd only managed a draw in the league match and they'd recently conceded five at Clapton.

The supporters needn't have worried,

By PHILIP BARKER

as Wanderers turned on the style to win against the odds on a heavy pitch, and this after their captain John Timberlake had fainted after a collision.

Two goals apiece from Brown and Vernon took them into the next round.

A record 6,000 crowd turned up at Loakes Park for the match with Walthamstow. Wanderers were rampant and charged to a 6-1 victory. Wycombe took the lead inside the first minute and were two up in ten.

"An overwhelming onslaught" the Bucks Free Press called it. "If a team is to do well in the Cup, it has not to bother itself with whether it is playing good football, its chief aim is to score goals."

Wycombe scored six more to put paid to Romford the so called "Essex Wonder team". It was the fourth successive game in all competitions they'd scored six and their tenth consecutive win. It was no wonder neutral observers were starting to consider them for the Cup.

But their fourth round tie with Metropolitan Police at Thames Ditton was the closest match so far. Although the Wanderers took the lead through Brown, the Police hit back and not even extra time could separate the sides.

The following week 10,000 turned up at Loakes Park to see the Wanderers win 2-1 with goals from Braisher and Vernon making sure of their Semi final place alongside Woking, Bishop Auckland and Hayes.

The Semi final was a battle of the 'Ws' as Wycombe took on Woking in front of 7,000 spectators at Ilford.

The Wanderers held firm in the first half when Woking had the wind behind

them and half time came without a goal.

Two goals from Britnell and one from Brown settled the issue after the break and Wycombe had reached the final for the first time. Their opponents were Hayes of the Athenian League.

The Middlesex team had fought their way from the Qualifying Rounds (Chesham were to repeat this feat in 1968), had never been drawn at home and had travelled some 1500 miles in the process.

The big match was staged at Arsenal's Highbury ground. Special trains were arranged from High Wycombe and Hayes to take the supporters to North London.

The Wycombe fans wore lapel badges designed like miniature chairs.

The Bucks Free Press correspondent "Touchliner" reported the Wanderers to be "as keen as razors" and anticipated the best Amateur Cup Final in years.

In the event the game was decided by a single goal and that from a penalty, Alf Britnell was the hero following up to score after the first kick was charged down.

But that didn't matter to the Townsfolk who turned out in their thousands to welcome the players back.

The Wanderers paid for their Cup success in League form with the inevitable fixture congestion they finished with a mixed bag of results including memorably a defeat away and a win at home over Kingstonian on the same day.

The year 1931 was to prove the high watermark of Wycombe's success in the Amateur Cup. Though they reached the final again in 1957 losing to Bishop Auckland Wycombe have never since won a competition at National level. The nearest they came in the FA Trophy was in 1982 when they lost in the Semi Final – to Altrincham.