

CHURCH

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VIEW

Blues boys' dedication makes final fair game

IT should surprise no-one that I choose to comment on Wycombe's big day out to Wembley tomorrow. While High Wycombe itself may not then be a ghost town it's a certainty that it will be more than a little short of shoppers.

Many women who have not seen a live soccer match for years will be warming a national stadium seat alongside their fanatical hobbies.

For that matter, many of the husbands will be hitting the Wembley trail, to vociferously support the Blues, even though they have not been regular supporters at Adams Park.

That is the magnetism of a cup final, anywhere. It is not peculiar to Wycombe.

As I write, I'm told there is every chance of the Wanderers v Kidderminster confrontation easily beating the record attendance for a Trophy final, even though it must fall far short of the 90,000 crowd which saw the game between Wycombe and Bishop Auckland back in 1957.

They say "better luck next time". Well, this is in a sense the next time. Talking of luck, the unluckiest man in the Wycombe squad on that 1957 Wembley day was my old friend and former colleague Jim Moring.

A Wanderers official asked me some days ago what were my memories of the '57 games? I replied that what always comes immediately to mind was my meeting Jim walking up the steps between the twin towers.

If ever a lad had mixed feelings it was he. The poor chap was out of the side nursing a broken wrist, when he would have been an automatic choice.

He had been in the beaten side in the 1954-55 semi-final, again against the Bishops, and had been itching to get revenge.

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One of the Blues all-time greats, he later captained the side until 1961. And, thinking of Jim, I reflect that he typified the kind of player who traditionally wears the light-and-dark-blue shirt.

No ill-tempered or rough-house player is ever welcome. I expect that Wanderers sportsmanship to be evident tomorrow and that, win or lose, the team will get a rousing welcome back from the supporters.

In 1957, crowds of cheering townsfolk lined the streets as the losing team travelled in an open coach to the Red Lion Hotel in the High Street.

And then Wycombe had the consolation of retaining in that season their title as Isthmian League champions, defeating in the last match Corinthian-Casuals, the team they had earlier ousted from the Amateur Cup tournament.

Many a time in their history of well over a century – certainly in that part of it that comes within my memory – the Wanderers have earned wide recognition for trying to play the game as most of us like to see it played in true sporting fashion with as much football skill as their talents will allow. And there has been a great deal of talent on exhibition.

Just think back to the praise they earned in only going down by a single goal in that memorable FA Cup replay against Jack Charlton's first division Middlesbrough.

The then manager of Wycombe, Brian Lee, was proud of his side and, with chairman Ivor Beeks, will be looking for that commitment again tomorrow. So will present manager Martin O'Neill, who spent much of his playing career with "Cloughie".

Wanderers have done us proud

MANY of our readers will be making the journey to Wembley tomorrow to follow the fortunes of Wycombe Wanderers in the FA Trophy Final.

And we imagine most of those who are not, will eagerly search out the result of the match at some time on Saturday evening.

The final has caught the imagination of the town and the surrounding area. Wherever you travel you will spot the distinctive blue favours decorating houses, shops, cars and even dustcarts.

Surely there could not be a better time for this town to have a pleasant distraction. The recession is biting ever-deeper and jobs are being axed at an alarming rate.

Just this week, stalwart firms CompAir BroomWade and Amersham International announced more job losses.

So it makes a change to be able to bring you front page news of something far more palatable – a glorious Wembley final.

All the signs are that it will be a marvellous day for High Wycombe. The team is fit and relaxed, the tickets have sold like the proverbial hot cakes, and even the bookmakers are predicting a Blues' victory.

Only one small cloud smears the clear blue horizon – the petty-mindedness of pop star Michael Jackson.

The man who earns more in an hour than the Wanderers will earn from tomorrow's gate receipts, has refused to allow the club to record a version of a song he owns.

His major reason is that a parody of the song will damage the standing of the original. Presumably he is worried that the tidal wave of cash that flows into his brimming reservoir of earnings will be lessened by a financial drop or two.

We trust Blues fans will remember his attitude next time he releases an album or announces a tour.

Tomorrow the town will bask in the reflected glory of a Wembley appearance. Among those who will be preening themselves in the spotlight will be members of Wycombe District Council.

We trust too that they remember the warm glow of recognition the next time the club approaches the council for help – as it did in vain when applying for permission to build a training pitch.

But we must pay tribute to the achievements of the club, particularly chairman Ivor Beeks and manager Martin O'Neill.

There can be no denying that Mr Beeks has had a massively beneficial effect on Wycombe Wanderers. Under his chairmanship the club has moved to a ground that is the envy of others and has been approved by royalty. Attendances have doubled, and the club has won the respect of its peers.

Martin O'Neill's short time in charge of the team has produced a creditable league position, a good FA Cup run and now a place at Wembley.

We hope that everyone at the club and all of the supporters has a day out to remember. Whatever the result, everyone at the club can be sure that we are all proud of them.