

Up we go! Up we go! Up we go!



Up, up and hoorah: Jason Cousins (centre) celebrates promotion with Wanderers teammates (from left): Andy Kerr, Simon Hutchinson, Dave Carroll, Matt Crossley, Mark West, Keith Ryan, Paul Hyde

PLAYERS and fans rejoiced as Wycombe Wanderers were crowned champions and promoted to the Football League on Saturday – even though they lost.

The Blues gained entry to the league for the first time in their history, thanks to the defeat of rivals Slough.

Wanderers lost 2-0 to Altrincham at Adams Park but Slough's 5-1 thrashing by Yeovil meant the Berkshire club could not overhaul Wycombe's lead at the top of the GM Vauxhall Conference.

The final whistle, and the news of Slough's demise, prompted mass celebrations.

Meanwhile, the club has been

besieged with inquiries for FA Trophy Final tickets. They are on sale from Thursday from the club, WH Smith in High Wycombe and Beaconsfield, Wycombe Tourist Information Centre, Stokenchurch Bookshop and Crocks and Crystal in Bourne End.

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The players knew they now stood on the brink of making their long-hoped for dream reality.

Winger Steve Guppy, who scored a marvellous solo goal and set up Wycombe's fifth for Simon Hutchinson, said: "It was such a disappointment last year — now we are going to win the league and are going to Wembley as well and hopefully win the Trophy.

"It's been a really great season. The support has been unbelievable."

Forward Keith Scott said after

WHAT THEY SAID
Report by
NICK GOODMAN and
MICHELLE DAVIES

Blues had demolished Runcorn in front of a 6,220 crowd: "The crowd were superb, as usual. They have been superb all season."

He added: "I am just overjoyed, just overwhelmed. I cannot wait for next season."

Defender Jason Cousins said: "It was brilliant. Superb. The crowd got totally behind us. It was a really good win for everyone involved with the club."

Runcorn manager John Carroll commented on Wycombe: "They played well tonight. They are a quality side. It's a one off — Wembley is another day."

He added: "They deserved it. I thought we lost it in the first half — we gave them two goals."

Keith Ryan said: "It is absolutely brilliant. It has been a great season and I am pleased to be involved at the end."

"It has been coming for a few weeks and I always felt we'd do it."

Skipper Andy Kerr said: "What can I say? I'm euphoric, ecstatic, I feel great. It's brilliant."

Steve Thompson said: "It's just totally unbelievable."

Simon Hutchinson said: "I'm ecstatic. It is great to have been playing tonight. It's absolutely great. I am really looking forward to next season."

Wanderers defender Glyn Creaser missed out on key promotion matches because of injury.

But he said after Saturday's 2-0 defeat against Altrincham: "I am not gutted at all. I am delighted. I am not disappointed not to be playing."

"I have had plenty of time to set my mind right. I have played sufficient games to justify a medal."

He remarked on the excellent Adams Park facilities: "Since we have been down here the club has been given a new lease of life."

Goal blitz signals party-time

WHAT THEY SAID

Report by **NICK GOODMAN** and
MICHELLE DAVIES

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Creaser takes positive stand

WHAT THEY SAID

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So what does the future hold for Creaser in terms of team selection: "I have got to work hard for that regular spot. I have got to be picked and be consistent."

He added: "I certainly want to be part of it — whatever capacity it maybe."

Tim Langford said: "It will be the first time everyone is looking forward to pre-season." He added: "The opportunity to play in the Football League is exciting and I think everyone is looking forward to it."

Weary players revel in their success

THEY had just rewritten the club's 109-year history by securing promotion to the Football League, but Wanderers players seemed a little stunned by the magnitude of their achievement.

The mood in the Adams Park changing rooms on Saturday was initially one of subdued contemplation rather than raucous celebration.

Goalkeeper Paul Hyde said: "It has not sunk in. It was a poor performance today but we have proved worthy winners throughout the season."

Hyde said the players would now enjoy the rest of the season until the last game against Macclesfield on May 1: "Then we will all go crazy."

Stalwart defender Matt Crossley said the team had had a really hard week and it showed in their performance.

WHAT THEY SAID Report by NICK GOODMAN and MICHELLE DAVIES

"Our celebrations were more for Thursday night even though we definitely had not won the league," he said.

Simon Hutchinson said: "I think that after all the games we done in the last week it really showed today and after winning on Thursday it was really difficult to raise our game."

"We always thought we would do well and we were always confident that we could do it."

"We have had so many games at the end and we have had a lot of injuries which hasn't helped but we've done it now."

Dave Carroll agreed that four games in one week had worn everyone out: "I think it's taken its toll because

we lost today. But we've won the league and that's the main thing."

Skipper Andy Kerr said: "It has not quite sunk in yet but at the same time we are disappointed with today's performance."

Simon Stapleton was ecstatic despite his frustration at being sidelined by injury.

"It was a shame that I was not out there but I am delighted. After coming so close last year I think it was instilled in everyone that we would make sure that we did it this year."

"It has just always been out of reach but we know it has been coming."

Wycombe Wanderers director Alan Parry, looking ahead to next season, said: "If we approach it with ambition and adventure I see no reason why we shouldn't be successful again. We have got a great thing going."

On the fantastic support the Blues

have received this season, Parry said: "Although I initially thought some supporters were a bit slow to show their passion, I really think that has changed. In the Slough game here they gave us what was needed - a lift. We have got a really enthusiastic crowd which is now so important."

He added that national media coverage of Wycombe can only increase. "Our profile has never been higher - and rightly so. The facilities we have got here, the crowd, and the standard of football we play."

"That profile will only get higher as we plan to push for more achievements," said Parry, who believes Wycombe can really make an impact in the Third Division.

Wanderers chairman Ivor Beeks said: "It's been won in a remarkable, excellent style of play, with exciting, exhilarating football."

Football fervour lifts town's Blues

Wycombe Wanderers are going up to the Third Division. Fans and shoppers told SAM THOM this is great for the town after the team's 5-1 victory over Runcorn

EVERYONE wishes Wycombe Wanderers the best of luck, and Thursday's performance shows just what class the boys in blue have.

But what is on people's minds as the FA Trophy looms within reach on May 9 and promotion looks a certainty?

Thoughts about the team range from benefits for area, to the footballers' shapely legs. Many shoppers forecast promotion will have knock-on effects for High Wycombe. One of those is Blues fan and trade union officer Dave Morris.

"It's good for the town because I feel Wycombe Wanderers have put High Wycombe on the map - it's now known as the best non-League team in the country," said Dave, 50, of Marlow Road, High Wycombe.

"I work with people from all around the country, and the number who say to me about the team is incredible. Promotion is an ambition the club has had and the team is better than most Third Division teams at the moment. I think it will be good for the supporters, too - it will give them something more to shout for."

He added the motorway and the population density in the area will play in favour of the Wanderers in drawing bigger crowds to see bigger teams.

Yorkshireman and Leeds United fan Steve Juhasz, 33, of London Road, High Wycombe, agrees with Dave and said promotion will give fans something to really cheer for.

"I've been here about a year and follow the team a little. If the fans are true followers, they will really put themselves behind the team and give them something to play for," he said. "The team needs the backing of the whole community for the coming season, when all this is over, to keep everything going."

There was unanimous agreement on the question of what honour fans would rather see the Blues bring home: promotion to the Third Division over the FA Trophy.

The reason for this is that Wanderers have already brought home the FA Trophy in 1991, and generally people feel the standard of players is easily high enough to take on Third Division teams.

Apprentice printer Michael Smithyes has been behind the Blues for five years now and reckons promotion was on the cards and well within grasp.

"Wycombe Wanderers are a classy

team. Look at all the players they have now. Steve Guppy is a very good player and runs rings around the other defenders," said Michael, 18, of Cressex, High Wycombe.

He went to Wembley in 1991 when he said the atmosphere was tremendous, but now, with promotion to the Football League, he reckons the Trophy final against Runcorn will be fantastic.

"It was amazing there and it was a brilliant match. I'm going this year - I won't miss it."

Following the town team is a family thing for many people in the area, like unemployed 19-year-old Mickayla Strand, of Philip Drive, High Wycombe.

Males in her family scrutinise the team's matches and have followed their progress through the league and this has rubbed off on Mickayla.

"My brother and father follow the team avidly, so I basically have to join them when they come home," she said.

"They could win the cup, but it depends, really. Their performance recently hasn't been that good."

"But if they do win, then it will be good for the team and the town. High Wycombe needs a bit of a morale boost."

Football fever also rubs off on Mickayla's Amersham and Wycombe College art student friend Johanne Morris, 18, of Downley, High Wycombe.

"The man I drive to college with is a real fan, so I pick a lot of it up there," said Johanne, adding she can also hear the roars and cheers from fans at home matches at Adams Park.

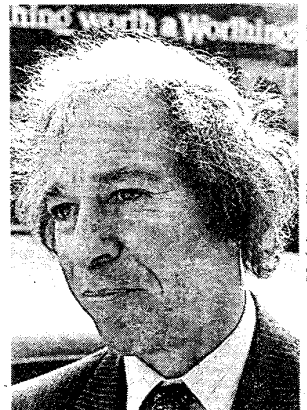
"Wycombe Wanderers have come a long way since my mum and dad used to go, and I think they deserve to go up into the Third Division."

Johanne follows the Blues' progress, but her motives are a little suspect: "I like the footballers' legs, definitely. The matches bring the lads out," she joked.

Any success for Wycombe Wanderers will go down well with pensioner Queenie Jones's family, many members being at Thursday night's big game.

Queenie, of New Road Gardens, High Wycombe, said all her family follow the matches and will be rooting for a victory at Wembley on May 9.

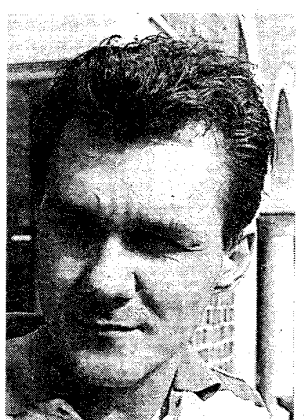
"The team deserves some success, I think. My husband and I used to follow Wycombe Wanderers regularly in the 1960s and it's about time they went up into the Third Division," she said.



Dave Morris: Wanderers put Wycombe on map



Johanne Morris: Likes the look of footballers' legs



Steve Juhasz: Community support must follow

A tribute to Wycombe



over the barriers around the pitch at Adams Park to congratulate the players

Boys in blue do us all proud

WYCOMBE Wanderers have finally realised their 109-year dream of playing in the Football League.

After a spectacular season in the GM Vauxhall Conference League, the club is sitting pretty at the top of the table and can't be caught.

The Blues were within a hair's breath of going up when they beat Runcorn 5-1 in front of thousands of delirious fans at Adams Park last Thursday.

The promotion was confirmed on Saturday - even though they lost 2-0 at home to Altrincham - when rivals Slough lost a game.

It means the club, who made their name as non-league minnows capable of beating big name opponents in cup ties, now have the chance to rub shoulders with professional teams like Rochdale and old enemies Colchester.

With far more potential than many of the teams Wanderers will be up against, Wycombe are already tipped as one of the front-runners for promotion next season.

Wimbledon, now established in the Premier League, quickly rose from non-league obscurity to the heady heights of entertaining the likes of Liverpool and Manchester United every other week.

After Amateur Cup Final appearances, Wycombe again made the

**Stephen Deal
charts
Wycombe
Wanderers'
journey to the
big time**



headlines on their controversial Loakes Park pitch in the 1970s.

High-flying First Division side, Middlesbrough, managed by Jack Charlton, were one of the teams who found it difficult on the famous sloping pitch.

A 0-0 FA Cup draw meant the non-league heroes faced a daunting trip to Ayresome Park, where they were expected to be heavily beaten by their opponents. As it was, only a last minute goal defeated the Blues.

In the 1980s, Wycombe won promotion to the non-league's top flight, only to be quickly relegated again. Even in the then Berger Ist-mian League, Blues were the best supported team.

The arrival of manager Martin O'Neill in 1990 was shortly followed by a move to Adams Park, a multi-purpose stadium, built with the aim of promotion to the Football League. In his first full season,

**Blues players leave the pitch
saluting the support of their
fans**



O'Neill took his team to the FA Trophy final at Wembley, where an amazing 25,000 Wycombe fans witnessed a 2-1 victory over Kidderminster.

The following season brought heartbreak for the club, though, pipped to promotion by the full-time set-up at Colchester on goal difference, after both teams had amassed a record Conference points tally of 94.

The fans begged the team's popular manager to stay, and helped O'Neill turn down an offer from Bristol Rovers.

The decision has paid dividends for the club. And who says the success story stops there?



Wycombe's Steve Guppy is congratulated by a fan after clinching promotion Picture: PHILIP BROWN

Slough's slip gives title to Wycombe

WYCOMBE Wanderers clinched their coveted place in the Barclays Third Division on Saturday, despite having their celebrations spoiled by Altrincham, and got back to winning ways at Gateshead yesterday.

Needing one point to be confirmed as GM Vauxhall Conference champions, Wycombe attracted a 6,284 crowd to Adams Park, but goals by Paul France and Ian Tunnicliffe gave Altrincham a 2-0 victory.

However, Slough Town, before Saturday the only team capable of catching the leaders, conceded the title to Wycombe by losing 5-1 at Yeovil. The champions, who missed promotion on goal difference last

year, completed their hectic weekend when a Steve Thompson goal gave them a 1-0 win at the International Stadium.

Wycombe, who will play in the Football League for the first time in their 109-year history, still have four Conference games to play. Tomorrow they visit Northwich in the first leg of the Drinkwise Cup final.

Martin O'Neill, the Wycombe manager, said: "The lads have done Wycombe proud all season and their level of consistency has paid off with the title. It has been a great three years for me and I am so pleased for everyone at the club."

Peter Ernest

Yesterday's results

COCA-COLA CUP

Final

Arsenal (1) 2 Sheff W (1) 1
Merson 18, Harkes 9 74,007
Morrow 68

At Wembley

FA PREMIER LEAGUE

Aston Villa ... (0) 3 Man City (1) 1
Saunders 47, Quinn 34 33,108
Parker 67 (pen),
Houghton 89

GM VAUXHALL CONFERENCE

Gateshead (0) 0 Wycombe (0) 1
Thompson 59 815

GM VAUXHALL CONFERENCE

	HOME					AWAY					
	P	W	D	L	F A	P	W	D	L	F A	Pts
Wycombe	39	13	5	2	46 15	9	6	4	34	19	77
*Dagenham	40	10	5	5	47 27	9	5	6	26	17	66
Slough	40	12	3	5	37 25	6	8	6	21	26	65
Yeovil	39	12	5	3	40 20	5	6	8	15	23	62
Bromsgrove	39	8	7	5	34 22	8	6	5	26	22	61
Stafford	38	6	6	6	18 19	11	4	5	32	21	61
Woking	40	8	2	10	28 32	8	6	6	28	28	56
Northwich	40	5	5	10	23 28	11	2	7	41	21	55
Stalybridge	39	7	9	3	24 24	6	7	7	22	27	55
Telford	39	9	5	6	29 21	5	5	9	23	30	52
Kidderminster	40	8	5	7	21 27	4	11	5	32	29	52
Bath	38	8	6	4	26 21	5	6	9	21	22	51
Kettering	39	10	5	5	35 26	3	7	9	23	34	51
Gateshead	39	8	6	6	23 18	5	3	11	24	34	48
Altrincham	38	6	6	7	17 22	6	6	7	21	24	48
Merthyr	38	3	8	7	21 33	10	1	9	25	40	48
Farnboro	39	8	4	7	32 31	4	5	11	33	50	45
Welling U	40	7	6	7	32 36	4	5	11	23	35	44
Runcorn	38	8	3	9	31 33	3	6	9	19	39	42
Macclesfield	38	6	8	5	21 19	4	3	12	16	30	41
Witton	35	4	8	6	27 29	4	8	5	26	25	40
Boston U	39	4	6	9	20 29	4	7	9	26	36	37

*Dagenham 1pt deducted

DIADORA—Premier

	P	W	D	L	F A	P	W	D	L	F A	P
Chesham	38	16	2	0	57 17	12	5	3	39	15	91
St Albans	39	14	4	1	47 18	12	4	4	50	29	86
Enfield	39	12	1	6	47 24	11	5	4	45	23	75
Carshalton	39	9	6	4	32 25	12	3	5	59	26	72
Sutton Utd	35	11	5	4	38 22	5	6	4	22	23	59
Stevenage	39	10	2	9	33 26	7	5	6	25	30	58
Grays	38	11	5	2	32 16	5	5	10	23	41	58
Aylesbury	39	8	3	7	31 27	10	1	10	36	44	58
Hayes	38	6	8	5	36 28	9	4	6	25	28	57
Hendon	38	6	11	3	23 18	6	5	7	26	30	52
Harrow	38	6	7	6	30 31	7	6	6	22	25	52
Basingstoke	38	7	9	4	27 17	5	6	7	19	23	51
Dulwich	39	6	5	9	24 33	6	8	5	26	25	49
Kingstonian	39	7	4	7	29 24	6	5	10	25	31	48
Marlow	39	4	5	9	30 35	8	4	9	39	34	45
Wokingham	38	7	8	5	35 30	4	2	12	21	44	43
Bromley	38	6	3	10	24 32	5	7	7	23	34	43
Yeading	40	5	4	11	29 33	5	7	8	27	32	41
Staines	40	7	4	9	30 29	3	7	10	26	45	41
Wivenhoe	38	9	2	9	27 33	2	3	13	12	42	38
Windsor & E	39	2	3	14	23 45	5	3	12	14	40	27
Bognor	38	2	4	13	23 56	2	4	13	15	43	20

Wycombe move into different league

BY WALTER GAMMIE

WYCOMBE Wanderers won promotion to the Football League on Saturday, but hardly in the grand manner, losing 2-0 to Altrincham before a crowd of 6,284 at Adams Park, whose main joy was the news of Slough Town's chase coming to a shuddering halt, 5-1 at Yeovil.

A flight to Gateshead yesterday for their fifth match in eight days was hardly the way to clear hangovers, but Wycombe gave a truer reflection of the way they have dominated this season's GM Vauxhall Conference with a 1-0 win.

Wycombe could sign off their life in non-League football with an unprecedented flourish: this week, they play the first leg of the Drinkwise Cup final at Northwich Victoria, and on May 9 they will meet Runcorn in the FA Trophy final at Wembley.

Martin O'Neill, the Wycombe manager, said:

"When I came here three years ago, the chairman asked me to help Wycombe into the Football League and that has been done. Wimbledon have been the flag-bearers. People look at them and think they have got a chance of repeating their feats. We have that chance. We have a super ground and a super team and are in good shape at the bank."

Brave away wins over promotion play-off contenders in the third division by bottom-placed Torquay — 1-0 at Shrewsbury — and Halifax Town — 2-0 at Bury — kept alive their chances of escaping the drop into the Conference and ensured that Northampton and Gillingham remain embroiled in the argument.

Southport clinched the HFS Loans League with a 4-0 win at Emley and joined Dover in having qualified, subject to their grounds meeting approval, for the Conference.