

Fans take increased costs in their stride

WYCOMBE Wanderers may have raised season ticket and admission charges by around 60 per cent since 1991, but the club's supporters appear willing to meet such financial demands head-on.

While the cost of watching Blues has seemingly soared during the past two years, the club's fortunes have ascended just as sharply with promotion to the Football League.

Wycombe's charges for 1993/94 appear unremarkable alongside those of four other Third Division clubs, Bury, Gillingham, Hereford and Colchester.

Wanderers' season ticket mailing list now stands at 5,500, compared to 3,000 at this time last year. The club, which is basking in promotion and FA Trophy glory, as well as keeping hold of Martin O'Neill, has released next term's prices two weeks earlier than it did last year.

"Since we announced that Martin O'Neill is staying, we've been inundated with requests for season tickets. The response has been quite phenomenal and it looks like the whole town wants to be part of our first season in the Third Division," said Blues chairman Ivor Beeks this week.

Wanderers director Alan Parry has reiterated the major adjustments Wycombe will undergo in the close season — changes which rely on fans putting their hands in pockets to ensure bottoms on seats next season.

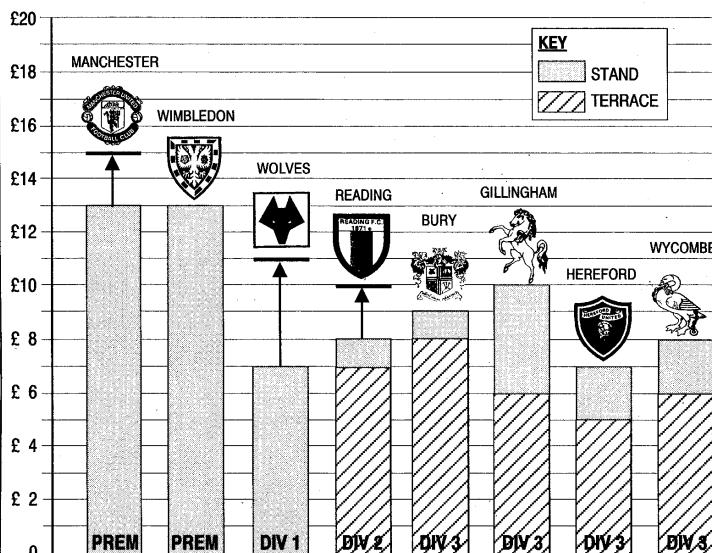
"Despite Wanderers' record-breaking season, the next few months will be a difficult time for the club financially as they adjust to the demands of professional football," said Parry.

"Several players will be offered full-time contracts and with the need to take on extra staff in other areas, the overall wage bill is set to increase dramatically."

Mark Austin, Wanderers' sales and marketing manager, said police charges are

set to increase sharply to accompany Blues' new League status. And he added that the onus is also on Wycombe's other departments, promotions and banqueting, to make more money next season.

The club is firmly putting the emphasis on attracting more families to Adams Park. True Blues and Family Blues season tickets have been established for two adults accompanied by one to four juniors, with prices ranging from £264 to £444.



THE Bucks Free Press looked at admission and season ticket charges expected to be set by three other Third Division clubs and several higher up the Football League ladder next season.

Adult match-day prices to stand, and to sit, are illus-

trated above to indicate where Wycombe's charges are in relation to others.

The black arrows mark clubs' top seat prices.

Wanderers' charges appear average compared to those of Hereford, Gillingham and Bury. Similarly, Wy-

combe's adult stand season ticket is £136, compared to Hereford's £139, and looks almost a snip compared to Gillingham's £155.

First Division Wolverhampton Wanderers, meanwhile, are set to have 10,000 £7 seats by Christmas.

Stand season tickets are £136 (£120 concessions) and terrace tickets are £102 (£60 con), a rise of around 30 per cent. But reductions are available if they are bought before June 25. Ground admission is £6 (3.50 concession) to stand and £8 to sit.

Hereford United's adult stand season ticket is £139, while Colchester United's admission charges will match those at Adams Park.

Blues fan Neil Peters, 23, is considering buying a Wanderers season ticket for the first time. "I want to get one because they save you money in the long run," he said. "At first I was a bit surprised at the charges, because I thought it was a bit of a big increase. But if they are the same as other clubs in that division we can't complain."

But Andy Dickinson, 22, said: "I think it will put a few of the pseudos off going. It's a bit of a barrier going over a fiver to get in, then they will be talking of not much change from a tenner. It will put some people off going, especially if Wycombe are not successful initially."