

WYCOMBE Wanderers defender Andy Kerr puts the blues stunning success last season down to good hand work as much as footwork.

This is not because he's secretly confessing they hand balled any of those decider goals, because the hand work came well before the kick-offs.

Andy believes the regular Swedish massages the team received between their top matches last season played a key part in the Wanderers ascent into the Third Division from the Conference League.

Before the tongues start wagging, let's set the record straight from the start.

The hands in question were those of professional masseurs Geoff Sloan and Serena Clowes.

Geoff specialises in remedial and sports massage and Serena gave the players relaxing massages using essential oils to relieve stress before a big match or to help them unwind after a game.

The couple would think nothing of massaging the whole team, plus reserves, in an evening, to fit in with the players' tight fixture schedule. And Andy, who was Blues' captain last season, thinks they worked wonders to relieve stiff muscles and help recovery from injuries incurred on the field.

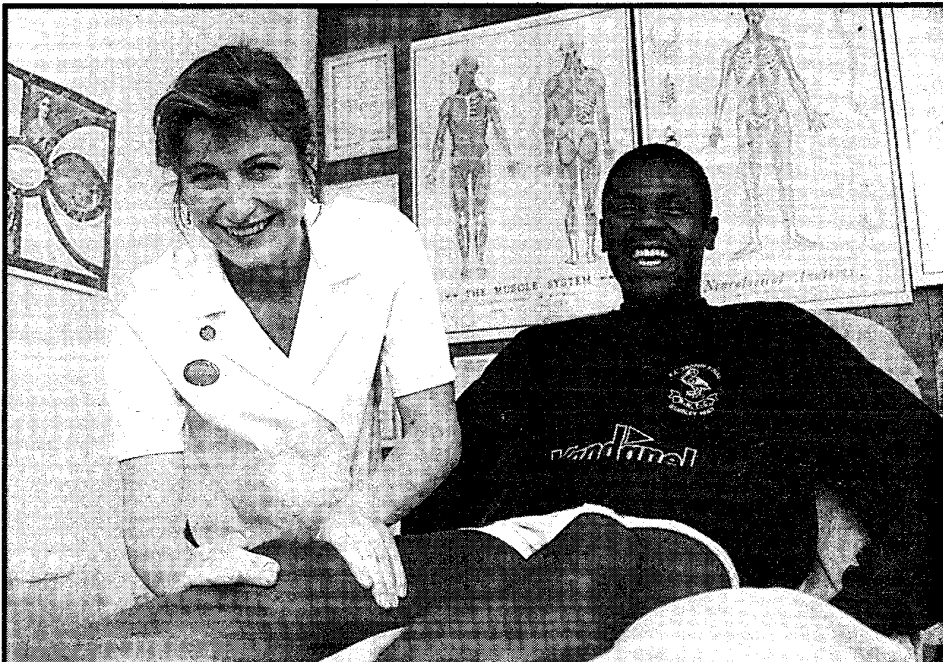
The 27-year-old centre half says: "At the end of last season, we had a lot of tough matches and the massage helped to relieve tight muscles."

Their most demanding week fell in March, when the Blues were top of the Conference league table and had to play Slough and Dagenham, then positioned second and third respectively, within the space of 72 hours.

About three days before these games, Geoff and Serena massaged the team and Wycombe Wanderers went on to win them both.

Midfielders Dave Carroll and Steve Thompson and goal keeper Paul Hyde suffered back injuries last season and, working alongside the club's physiotherapist, the masseurs also helped to set them back on the road to recovery.

Andy, of Lawsons Rise, High Wycombe, says: "It is only in the past few years that people are realising that footballers need to be as supple as they are agile, and it is because we have started seeing people like Serena and Geoff that we have found out the reasons why this is important."



Keeping in touch: Serena Clowes gives footballer Andy Kerr a rub down

Blue massage

HANDYWORK

Geoff also massaged Dave Carroll following a painful groin injury.

Geoff, 46, says of the benefits of massage: "When you are massaging, the muscles become hot and any blood clots go into the waste system of the body and are disposed of."

Even manager Martin O'Neill likes to receive regular massages because of the back strain he gets from all the driving his job entails.

If this sort of massage sounds serious business, that's because it is. Many masseurs are still working hard to dispel the sleazy image that the word massage still conjures up in many people's mind.

But Serena, 31, is quick to point

out that once inside the Wanderers' gymnasium, the team spirit ensures the job is a joke a minute for the masseurs.

She says: "It is an absolute giggle the whole night. I work with people during the rest of the week who tend to be more serious, so it makes a nice change for us."

THE masseurs' humour is appreciated by the players. Says Andy: "They are always cracking jokes. When you are going through tough routines week in week out this helps to lighten the rigmarole."

Serena landed the job on recommendation from another masseuse.

That was in 1991 and Geoff joined her at the beginning of last season.

The Wanderers are not his only brush with top sportsmen. Ex-New Zealand rugby player Dean Morgan has also received treatment from him for an ankle sprain.

The couple have set up a business, Health at Home, and will either travel to people's homes, or, if their clients would prefer to escape the the telephone calls and screaming kids, they can come to Serena and Geoff's home in Kesters Road, Chesham.

You can now expect to pay up to £35 or more for a massage in the London area, but Geoff points out that often the people who can benefit most from a massage are those least able to afford it, like the elderly. For this reason, the couple have pegged their price at £20. It is a little more if they come to your home. They can be contacted on (0494) 793339.