

Crowd safety is THE priority

FURTHER to a letter you published in the Bucks Free Press on Friday, October 14, entitled 'Crowd safety precedes profit', we at Wycombe Wanderers could not agree more.

However, the contents of the letter from Mr M Lawson, incorrectly implied otherwise. He stated, in view of the quoted remarks by Mr Austin, I think supporters are entitled to be reassured by the club that the safety of supporters attending games remains a priority. His remarks referred to the Swansea all-ticket match.

Firstly, as a father of three young children, safety of supporters at Adams Park is not only a priority, but the priority, as far as I and the club are concerned.

Mr Lawson was wrong to presume matches may revert to pay-on-the-day so the club does not incur similar losses in the future. He obviously missed the recent article in the BFP or Midweek where an official of the club clearly stated losses in the interest of safety are always worth it. A decision as to whether matches are all-ticket or not is made between Inspector Roger Doe of the Thames Valley Police and Wycombe Wanderers' safety officer, Frank Knowles.

Secondly, the BFP did actually get one quote accurate when they stated I referred to the police presence on Saturday, October 1, 1994, as a sledgehammer to crack a nut. As the match was all-ticket, the police knew seven days before the Swansea match that only 50 tickets had been sold at the Vetch Field for the Amersham & Wycombe College Stand at Adams Park that holds nearly 2,200 away supporters. Surely more than 120 police were not required to look after about 135 Swansea fans?

Inspector Roger Doe, has publicly stated he would rather over-police any event in the interests of safety, rather than under-police it. Surely the fact that he has this attitude should give Mr Lawson reassurance.

The police as far as we know, propose to make the Birmingham City (March 18), Oxford City (April 15) and Cardiff City (November 19) all-ticket.

With regards to Mr Lawson's reference to the marauding hordes of drunken Welshmen who visited Adams Park last season, where were they on Saturday, October 1, 1994?

The police knew in advance they would not be coming in any intimidating numbers. Also Swansea's recent home league attendances had dropped below 3,000 and even their club said it did not expect more than 200 to make the journey to Adams Park.

When Swansea came last year, they had never been to Wembley, they were 3-1 up from the first leg and likely to succeed. The volume of support was never going to be

season.

We are sure the vast majority of our fans would agree that Adams Park is a safe place to bring families, or they would not come. In a recent supporters survey which had 927 replies, only 5.4 per cent stated the chance of hooliganism could put them off coming to Adams Park. Is there a safer ground in the Football League with a better safety record than Adams Park?

As the Sales and Marketing Manager, I aim to do as much as I can to promote safety, because in my opinion it is our excellent safety record that encourages so many families to come. Why would the club jeopardise its future for extra cash now? It just doesn't make any sense.

Surely the thousands of families who do visit Adams Park each season prove that the priority at Wycombe Wanderers (other than winning matches) is the safety, enjoyment and comfort of our highly valued fans.

M J Austin
Sales and Marketing
Manager
Wycombe Wanderers
Football Club Ltd
Adams Park
Hillbottom Road
Sands
High Wycombe

Do Wanderers really care?

FURTHER to your article regarding the Wycombe Wanderers' fans who were cleared of public order offences.

You highlight that their children were left stranded at the match. Two of these children were my nephews and I was extremely concerned to hear the children's tearful account the following day of what had taken place.

The boys, like their father and grandfather, are regular and loyal Wycombe Wanderers' supporters. The boys had contributed to the cost of their tickets using their savings from birthday money and pocket money. The day should have been a family day out that was full of happy memories. It turned out to be a day which my nephews and family have found deeply shocking.

I wrote to the chairman of Wycombe Wanderers with my concerns about how the match had been organised and what had happened to my nephews and brother-in-law. He passed my letter on to Mr Goldsworthy, the club secretary, who in turn said that he had passed my letter on to the police and would contact me when he had received a reply.

I was very disappointed by this letter. I felt that it would not jeopardise the legal implications of the situation to at least express sympathy or concern for the children. Or even to reassure me that the club management take the safety of the fans seriously.

Three months passed and I heard nothing. I wrote again and this time my letter was totally ignored. I therefore conclude that Wycombe Wanderers Football Club do not care about their fans, they are not interested in promoting the club as a place for families and they clearly are uninterested about the safety of their fans, or the quality of how the games are managed and