



Real pro: Alan Mayes pictured in his playing days

Ex-player scores with new career

FORMER Chelsea and Swindon Town player Alan Mayes found the high-profile life of professional football a hard act to follow when he left the game.

But the 41-year-old, of Talbot Avenue, High Wycombe, has done equally well in the new business role he chose. Last month he was promoted to corporate sales manager at the Sportsworld Group, in Abingdon, and fulfilled an ambition to have a job in management by his forties.

It was not an easy transition. Alan prepared for the day he would have to stop playing professionally – he retired seven years ago through injury – with a number of courses leading to a Chartered Institute of Marketing Certificate in sales. He is now doing the diploma.

"I knew I didn't want to be a full-time manager," said

Alan. "I wanted to pursue a career in business, but had to work my way up the ladder, including a spell at Wycombe Wanderers as assistant commercial manager. I had the qualifications, but not the experience."

At Sportsworld, Alan runs three divisions: UK hospitality, travel and Showorld. The company is the official hospitality agent for the Wimbledon Championships, the Scottish Open and recently won the contract for the 1996 European Football Championship to be hosted by England.

He is excited by the challenge ahead and has no qualms about the role corporate hospitality plays in sport.

"It is not just a day out for the boys. Companies spend a lot of time finding out about their clients' interests," said Alan. "Hospitality as a

potential tool can work extremely effectively because it allows you to target certain clients. It is one of the most effective marketing tools there is, if used correctly."

Costs run from £95 per person for theatre tickets to include private room, drinks, canapes and programmes, to more than £1,000 per person for centre court tickets at Wimbledon.

But Alan believes corporate hospitality has an added advantage – of supporting the sport at grass-roots level. He cites the new stand at Twickenham as a prime example of how corporate hospitality helped towards the cost.

And Alan has not forgotten his own roots – he is still an ardent football fan and follows the progress of his past clubs. But he admits: "I still have a soft spot for Spurs, where I used to go as a child."