

Cost of League living bites Blues

REPORT
By Claire Nash

WYCOMBE Wanderers' ticket price increases will pay for big-money signings and ground redevelopment, said the club this week.

The cost of living in Division Two is going to become more expensive both on and off the pitch for the Football League's youngest outfit.

It is the club's fans, however, who are being asked to put their money where their faith and support is. Ticket sales are the club's primary money-spinner.

It will cost £10 and £12 for a seat at Adams Park next season, a rise of £1 and £3 respectively on last season's figure of £9. A junior family stand ticket is £5. The new terrace charge is £7 and £4.50 concessions, which matches last year's 50p increase.

The club explained that the rise in the cost of watching Wycombe is the major part of efforts to offset higher costs and is designed to pave the way for a promotion challenge to Division One.

It is a crunch time which chairman Ivor Beeks expected and believed would have been more difficult to tackle had Wycombe won promotion this year.

"It is a time to take stock as we did when we were in the Diadora League years ago. We really are in a different market now. We spent a lot of money on players this year. We cannot carry on without the income being there," said Beeks.

He added: "I think promotion this year would have made it more difficult because of higher wages, paying for a better squad, and needing to make the stadium all-seater within three years.

"But we would have grasped promotion with both hands. It would have been difficult, but it would have been, and is, a challenge which we relish."

Wanderers' marketing manager Mark Austin said: "We need more money to compete in Division Two. People want to see players of a higher capability here."

He defended the seat price hike. "We genuinely believe that the stand will sell out on season tickets this year. Everybody wants to sit down. If demand is so great then prices rise."

As well as starting work on the new all-seater stand, Wycombe will spend more money on policing which is set to increase by nearly 50 per cent, said Beeks. The club will also develop their YTS scheme, replace £90,000 lost on their own lottery after the Government introduced the National Lottery, and refurbish six toilet blocks in the stadium.

Second Division means price rises

FANS of Wycombe Wanderers Football Club will no doubt be dismayed to hear it will cost even more to watch their favourite team.

The BFP today reveals how loyal supporters will have to pay up to £12 to watch Blues push for promotion from the Second Division, next season. This is at least 25 per cent more than the last season.

Some will argue higher prices deter new fans from coming to watch football at Adams Park, especially if the club is hoping to increase home attendances.

Others will question why they should pay so much to watch a lower division club when they can fork out a little extra to see the Premiership big guns in action.

But that would be missing the point.

Blues will always have to increase ticket prices if they are going to survive, and, indeed, thrive in professional football.

The side has effectively said goodbye to its non-league days, when Saturday afternoons meant playing host to teams like Slough and Yeovil.

This season Birmingham, Oxford and even West Ham have visited Adams Park.

If the club wants to carry on enjoying this success, it will have to pay for the best players.

And if fans want comfortable surroundings to watch the game, then they will have to accept price rises.

Blues believe the ticket prices will not affect their ability to get sell-out games.

We sincerely hope they are right - we also hope the club will carefully monitor the views of their fans, to ensure they are not in danger of pricing their most loyal supporters out of the game.

Garland is set to sign for Wanderers on cost-saving free

MARTIN O'Neill is confident of signing Peter Garland on a free transfer from Charlton today.

The Blues boss said yesterday: "I have spoken to Peter and hope to tie that up by the end of the week."

O'Neill lost out when he could not extend the

midfield dynamo's month on loan towards the end of the season. But he's made a saving now. Charlton co-boss Steve Gritt was asking £35,000 for Garland last month.

The Wycombe manager, meanwhile, is keeping a low profile as a clutch of juicy managerial vacancies at some of the country's biggest clubs,

including Crystal Palace and Manchester City continue to dominate newspaper headlines.

But Blues chairman Ivor Beeks said that if official, or unofficial, approaches had been made at the time of going to press, O'Neill's gentleman's agreement 'contract' has a clause that would allow him to go if he wants to.