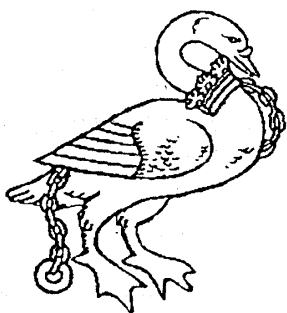


Everything's cool in the world of Beeks



IVOR BEEKS wipes the sweat from his brow, sighs – and smiles.

With the formalities of enduring a club blazer and tie under an unrelenting sun for the club's 1996/97 photocall over, the Wycombe Wanderers chairman takes time out in the shade.

Everything's cool. The 54-year-old, who has successfully juggled running his own construction company and a hotel business alongside his responsibilities at Adams Park for the past ten years, is relaxed and upbeat as he enthuses about the forthcoming term.

While well aware that everything is by no means perfect in deepest Sands, the home of the Blues empire, he has no doubt and has indeed never doubted that he has the right people in place for the club's success story to regain high-octane momentum after a plodding year.

Using his business head, the chairman's relief is tangible that Wycombe did not continue rising up through the Football League like a runaway express train last season.

"It takes time to bed in and settle down. We need to get the balance right. We simply couldn't have afforded to go up as quickly as we were," Beeks

CLAIRE NASH finds Blues chairman Ivor Beeks in confident mood

says. Although the new stand is vital for the club to progress, he cites the strength of Alan Smith's squad as his top priority.

He knows that if the results fail to come, so will the punters. But it is the latter that he is asking questions of.

"It is the team which dominates but it cannot unless we get income from the stand. To support the team is to watch the games."

Using his hardworking servant's head, Beeks' irritation and impatience at supporters dissatisfaction with a mid-table finish in Division Two simmers below the surface.

"Finishing halfway down the league is not a bad season. Teams like Brighton would be itching to be in our shoes. A bad season would be if we were fighting relegation."

But using his romantic fan's head, Beeks firmly believes in the 'there's always next year' dictum, optimism which lasts as long as the close-season and is either drained or bolstered depending on how the team fares.

"I want us to win as much as the next person. We've had so many good times. But I don't think the fans know how to take the mediocre times. You always need to look ahead to the next year or the next game and keep working until you get it right."

This you do not doubt. Obviously to remain in his current position is a result of expert business nouse, hard work and ambition, coupled with keeping an unchanged band of directors around him which ensures continuity.

Beeks generally is everything you expect a chairman to be, ever positive, more so in the face of flak, and unfailingly polite. However, the capacity to glare at you as if you are the devil's daughter is there if challenged about how the club and board conduct their affairs.

Although everything's cool, fans will be hoping the chairman will not be perfecting a cold stare this season.



Beeks: Upbeat

Fans need to play their part

THE battle for Division Two supremacy this season could be as much fought off the pitch as on it.

With sides like Millwall, Gillingham and Preston all joining the fray, crowds will almost certainly play an important part in the process of pushing teams to the top of the division.

Blues boss Alan Smith said: "The three teams that have come down are going to be strong. And we have sides like Preston who average gates of 15,000. Burnley will be a force, as will Gillingham."

Wycombe will no doubt be out to avenge their FA Cup defeat at the hands of Gillingham last season, who as a Division Three side were averaging gates of 7,000. But one of the clashes which seems to be attracting the greatest anticipation among the squad is the trip to south-east London to face Millwall at the New Den.

Much has been said about Millwall's supporters, but as Blues captain Terry Evans recently commented, their tactics can sometimes give the side three points at home on a Saturday afternoon.

With Wycombe's new stand nearing completion it makes an impressive sight, but the fans need to fill it.

Smith said: "The biggest thing is the support. With a lot of teams attracting ten to 12,000 on average, we have to try and build that up."

"We are capable of getting those crowds if we can build up a good run," he added.