

Gregory's the Blues choice



Man with the answers? John Gregory joins Ivor Beeks and Alan Parry at Adams Park on Tuesday following his appointment

PLANS to appoint John Gregory as manager of Wycombe Wanderers began before Alan Smith was sacked, the Bucks Free Press can reveal.

Blues director and Sky commentator Alan Parry sounded the new boss out over a chance meeting in a Newcastle hotel just hours before Smith's departure was announced.

It happened as Aston Villa coach Gregory was preparing his team for a match at Newcastle United, which Parry was commentating on, one Monday evening.

Gregory said: "The reason I became Wycombe Wanderers manager is down to Alan Parry. He walked into the Gosforth Hotel in Newcastle on the morning of our game, just as we were about to do some training.

"He was wearing his Wycombe club blazer and tie and I said to him 'what happened to your lot last Saturday' because they had

REPORT By Dave Peters

lost 6-3 at Peterborough. He said to me: 'watch this space'.

"I spoke to him again that afternoon and they had dismissed their management team. He asked me if I was interested and it went from there."

Gregory who played more than 600 games in a career with Villa, QPR Derby, Brighton and Northampton and was capped six times by England, was the unanimous decision of the board. He beat 64 other applicants to the post, edging out caretaker boss Neil Smillie, former West Ham manager Billy Bonds and Cyrille Regis.

They were impressed that Gregory saw Wanderers play three times before his interview, catching their wins against Rotherham and Notts County and the 3-0 defeat at

Bristol City.

The board were excited by the desire he showed in his two interviews and were not put off by his disastrous introduction to management six years ago at Portsmouth, where he was sacked after 12 months.

Gregory said: "I went to Portsmouth thinking I could be the best manager in the country but I failed miserably there and told myself that I needed to educate myself, to serve my apprenticeship and learn everything about management and that's what I've done for the last six years under Brian Little at Leicester and Aston Villa. I have hung onto Brian Little's shirt tails for too long and I feel that the time is right to step away."

Villa felt such a debt of gratitude to Gregory that they released him without a compensation claim, even though he had two-and-a-half years left on his contract.

Villa boss Little was so upset to

see him go that he even wore a black armband during Gregory's last coaching session on Tuesday morning.

Gregory said: "Brian was walking around with his armband on and his head down, he was hamming it up a bit. We had some great times together and some tremendous successes."

After European campaigns and Wembley visits Gregory is now set to lower his sights and concentrate on getting Wycombe up the table.

He said: "Our season starts on Saturday - what's gone on before is forgotten. We are starting with a deficit and we've got to make that up. We're 14 points off the play offs and five points behind a safety position."

He has made an instant impression at the club. After meeting everyone from the players to the cleaners the first thing he did was to ban players walking round barefoot.

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Laying down the law: The new Wanderers manager John Gregory

Picture by VIRGINIA COOPER

Boss bans swearing and bare feet

NEW manager John Gregory took over the hot seat at Wycombe Wanderers this week – and promptly banned swearing and walking barefoot.

Mr Gregory said he will fine anyone he finds walking without footwear, warning the players: "Feet are the tools of your trade and if you haven't got them, you cannot play. So get them covered up at all times and look after them."

He also vowed to impose

other fines for lateness and swearing in public. The money will go to children's charities.

Mr Gregory, 42, joined the Blues on Tuesday from Aston Villa where he was assistant manager and first team coach. Last season he helped Villa win the Coca-Cola Cup, qualify for Europe and finish fourth in the Premiership.

Wycombe believe he will follow Martin O'Neill and become one of the game's top bosses.

Blues director Alan Parry said: "He's widely regarded as

one of the country's best young coaches and I think we're fortunate to have acquired a manager with such an outstanding pedigree."

Mr Gregory, who had an unsuccessful venture into management at Portsmouth, when he was sacked after 12 months, said: "I've spent the last six years learning my trade with Brian Little at Leicester and at Villa. I've served my apprenticeship and it's time to step out on my own."

● Full story: Sport

Villa in mourning as Gregory packs his bags for Adams Park



VILLA Park maestro John Gregory is ready to sing the Blues

Blues get new boss

NEW Blues manager John Gregory has called on the whole town to get behind his team.

The former Aston Villa first team coach promised a fresh start at Adams Park when he was announced as the new Wycombe Wanderers boss on Tuesday.

The 42-year-old replaces Alan Smith, sacked last month after the team slumped to the division two relegation zone.

Gregory told the Leader: "As far as I'm concerned, the season starts this Saturday.

"Obviously there have been problems. I would like everyone to forget that and start again.

"We want the fans to come out and really support us by turning up in numbers and making their

by Paul Ryan

support vocal."

Club director Alan Parry said: "There's a buzz about the place again, like the way it was when Martin O'Neil arrived.

"They're very different men but they both have a quality about them.

"He has enthusiasm and confidence about him."

Club chairman Ivor Beeks said: "He's had six years coaching at the very highest level.

"Of course, only time will tell how things turn out, but there's a buoyant mood around."

Gregory brings six years of coaching experience with Brian Little at Leicester and Villa Park.

As a player, Gregory appeared at the highest level for Villa, Queens Park Rangers and England under Bobby Robson.

There was optimism too from the fans.

Independent supporters club chairman Bob Officer said: "I think

the fans will be patient and just wait to see what he can do.

"I hope he will do well.

"We can all pull together now, we have got a new manager to get behind, let's see what we can do know. This guy is coming in with a clean slate. It can only benefit the club."

And was a message of support from Villa Park where Gregory left a lucrative post as first team coach. Little wore a black armband on the morning Gregory left.

Little said: "It's bad news and it's good news. It's good news for John and bad news for us.

"I'm pleased for him. I have worked for six years with John and somewhere along the line I thought there would be three managers amongst us, including Allan Evans, my other assistant.

"I have told John that he has my blessing. All the players were choked because John is a bit of a character but, if that is what he wants to do, then I wish him well."

Blues' new boss down to business

HAVE you noticed a figure in a baseball cap and tracksuit lurking at the back of the main stand at Wycombe Wanderers recently?

It could well have been Blues' new manager John Gregory, who revealed this week that he has been checking out the team's performances.

"It's certainly cost me a few bob," he joked.

The club itself checked out more than 60 applicants before deciding on their man.

And after the big announcement at Tuesday's press conference, it was down to work for the new manager.

His first training session with the players was the very next day.

Speaking to the *Leader* after a one and a half

by Paul Ryan

hour session, he said: "I was very pleased, it was a good session. We had a few laughs.

"It was more theory than anything.

"It was good to work with the boys, obviously they're the most important part of the job."

Gregory has already begun formulating his plans for the team.

At Aston Villa he worked with a team famous for its passing quality.

"I'm not a fan of the long ball game - I like players that have ability on the ball," he says.

"One that I already know is Dave Farrell. Of course at this level you have to mix it up a bit more.

"The most important thing for us is to put points on the board and to start climbing out of



TESTING the Adams Park surface: new manager John Gregory flanked by Blues club chairman Ivor Beeks (left) and director Alan Parry

the relegation zone."

Gregory has promised to give the players who are presently at the club the chance to prove themselves although there is some money to spend on new players.

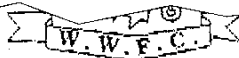
His first managerial experience at Portsmouth was by his own admission a disaster.

"I'd only just finished playing, I hadn't learnt

my trade."

He is now eager to have another try at the top job. "I've been hanging onto Brian Little's coat tails for six years."

The Blues last defeat by Stockport County left them second from bottom. But a new face has brought a new mood of optimism to the club.



Wycombe Wanderers Football Club Limited

PRESS RELEASE

TO: Steve Cohen - Editor (0494) 534015 Midweek/Bucks Free Press
FROM: W.W.F.C. (0494) 472100

Date: 22nd October 1996

GREGORY IS ANNOUNCED AS NEW MANAGER AT ADAMS PARK

Fax: 01494 52

Ringling the Blud
0891 446855

Members of:
The Football Association
The Nationwide
Football League
and The Berks & Bucks
Football Association

Football Manager:
Alan Smith

Club Secretary:
John Reardon

Get your fax right

WE were amused to see that the spirit of Alan Smith, the ill-fated former Wycombe Wanderers manager, lives on.

He may not be there in body but his name lives on... on the club's fax paper.

It's been more than two weeks now since Alan got the bullet, but Wanderers have still failed to scrub his name off.

Perhaps the club bulk-bought their last lot of fax paper and can't afford to throw it out.

Or could it be the simple explanation that no one has noticed?

Easy mistake, I suppose. But I'm sure Tony Blair won't be as slow in erasing

Relative street-cred for club's Margaret

A NEW club designed to get teenagers off the streets on Saturday nights is headed by Margaret Tarantino.

The club at the Memorial Centre, in Gerrards Cross, hopes to kick off on November 16 with a range of youth club

style activities.

Margaret's street-cred will be second to none with the youngsters if one of her relatives is THE Quentin Tarantino – the film director of hip movies like Pulp Fiction.

Perhaps she should call her group Reservoir Kids.

Major's name from Number Ten's fax paper if he gets into power next year.

●Paul Harris is unwell