

SPORT 6

Blues' crowd-pleaser

Wycombe Wanderers boss John Gregory came face to face with the Blues faithful last Thursday for the first time since his appointment. DAVE PETERS was there to see what happened at the manager's forum.

JOHN Gregory held his first ever manager's forum at Adams Park last week and went down a storm in front of more than 200 fans.

As he tackled questions on all aspects of Wycombe Wanderers he had the fans roaring with laughter as his wit and charisma showed through.

His upbeat mood was in stark contrast to the very tense previous manager's forum when Alan Smith occupied the hot-seat.

When asked an awkward question about the form of one of his players he brought the house down by swallowing the microphone.

Gregory was joined by Wanderers chairman Ivor Beeks.

Here, is a guide to the serious side of the evening.

Lack of goals

Despite the Blues' chronic goal shortage Gregory revealed he has encouraged his players not to take long shots at goal.

He said: "People shooting from 30 yards will drive me mental if there's an opportunity of keeping the football and keeping the pressure on the other team."

He added: "I've brought Neil Davis in on loan and he's had a very barren spell for him. Maybe I take some of the blame for that because maybe on the training ground we haven't worked hard enough on the attacking side."

Money

Beeks confirmed that there is money available for Gregory to spend but would not disclose how much.

The chairman said: "If you say how much is available that gets around to other clubs and they start pushing the price up."

Recruitment of non league players

Gregory said: "We probably haven't worked as hard as we should have done in looking at players from the lower leagues."

"Local talent, particularly in our present financial position, could be very important. I have got my contacts in the lower leagues."

Scouts

The new boss sacked all eight of the club's scouts after his first week in charge at Adams Park.

Instead the scouting will be done by Gregory, his assistant Richard Hill, youth team boss Neil Smillie and director Alan Parry.

Gregory said: "Full time scouts are a waste of time at this level."

Players living away from the area

Gregory said: "I have inherited a major problem with players travelling. I have eight or nine people travelling more than one hour each day."

But the Blues chairman ruled out a return to the old days when Wanderers actually put players up in club accommodation in the town.

Fines

The new fines system, which has brought in £175 so far, looks as though it is going to be a nice little earner for local charities.

Gregory has introduced fines for lateness,



A real entertainer: Blues chairman Ivor Beeks enjoys John Gregory's jocular style at last Thursday's forum

bare feet, swearing in public and being unshaven on match days.

Goalkeepers

Asked about the form of his two goalkeepers Gregory said: "I feel I'm getting the best out of them. Brian Parkin was probably unlucky to be left out of the side but John Cheesewright has come in and taken his chance."

"The only way Brian will get back into the side is if John gets injured or he impresses me in the reserves."

Training

Wanderers have gone back to Holmer Green Football Club for training and left the facilities, tennis courts and all, that Alan Smith introduced them to at Bisham Abbey behind.

The Blues boss said: "At Bisham we didn't have the priority with the England football and rugby teams there and we have gone back to Holmer Green. The club had tremendous success there before and as far as I'm concerned it's superb up there."

"I haven't closed the door at Bisham because I'm sure that when the winter comes we'll get some bad weather and want to use the astroturf pitch and indoor facilities."

New kit

Gregory got a loud cheer when he said: "I hate our home strip and given the opportunity I will return it to our famous quarters."

He added: "At present we are discussing a new away strip for next season."

The boss said he favours a red and navy blue quartered away strip.

Financial director Graham Peart asked the audience how many people have not bought the new home strip and comedian Gregory shot his hand up.

The club is considering a part exchange scheme where holders of the current home strip, more than 800 fans, get a discount off the next home kit.

Video nasties

Gregory revealed that he does not sit his players down to watch video replays of Blues matches.

He said: "It can be counter productive, they feel they are being treated like schoolchildren."

But he added that after one particular match he did give the video to one of his players to take home and study.

He said: "I gave it to someone to watch and said go home and look at your performance, because he needed to."

Youth team potential

Gregory admitted he does not expect to promote any of the club's youngsters to the first team this season.

He said: "It would be unfair to get someone aged 17 to play in our current position."