

Dave Peters speaks to former Blues favourite
Simon Garner, recently released from prison

Garns' worst nightmare

FORMER Wanderers hero Simon Garner is trying to put his life back together after a month in jail, which he has described as the worst experience of his life.

Garner served one month of a four-and-a-half month sentence and says he believes he would have cracked up if he had to do any longer. He was jailed for contempt of court in relation to his divorce case.

The former Wanderer, who left the club towards the end of last season, says he still suffers nightmares from his jail term and admits he is finding it difficult getting back into the swing of normal life.

He was originally given nine months but that was immediately cut in half because the case was a civil matter.

He said: "Being sent to prison is the biggest shock I've ever had. It was the worst time of my life. I still get nightmares about it now. It was awful and it really makes you appreciate life on the outside."

Garns spent one day in tough Preston jail being moved to Kirkham Open Prison.

He said: "I don't think I could have survived another night in Preston. You're locked up for 23 hours each day there. I really don't know how people get through it. I did one day and I thought I was going to crack up. Unless you have been inside you cannot describe how bad it is. It is the worst experience I know."

He was then transferred to Kirkham, nicknamed the Market Garden by locals, but he says anyone who thinks life in there is easy is wrong.

He said: "It was better than Preston but it was still very hard. I set my heart on getting out on appeal. I don't think I could have handled four months there, or still being inside over Christmas."

"I worked in the laundry from 8am until 4.30pm each day and we were locked up at 8.45 each night. Most of the time in between was spent queuing for the phone. We all had phonecards and there were 12 phone boxes between 700 prisoners. It was a two hour queue to phone anyone."

"When I came out of prison I said I would never complain about things like sitting in a traffic jam again and I won't. What is there to complain about? You're sitting down, you're in the warm and you've got the radio or the cassette right by you."



Better days: Garner was a Wycombe favourite less than a year ago, but by the end of last year he was in prison

"I used to get so uptight in situations like that but being in prison makes you look at things a lot differently."

Garner, famous for his love of cigarettes and beer said: "There was no beer at all inside. You could get fags but it was very expensive, £2.90 for a packet when you're only getting £7.50 a week is a lot of money so I had to cut down a lot."

"Even now I'm out I'm finding it very hard to get back into the swing of things. I'm still getting over the fact that I've come out of prison and that's not very easy. It's still a shock to me."

Garner, who is still Blackburn Rovers all-time top scorer, outscoring Alan Shearer, is now hoping to resurrect his football career. He played one game for the prison team and scored six goals.

He said: "They asked me to play and I enjoyed it but they closed

down for their winter break after that."

"I would love to play again. I'm looking to play part time for someone. I'm available and I could still do a job for someone. I kept myself fit inside and even lost weight."

Last Sunday Garner took advantage of his freedom to visit Adams Park and watch Wanderers FA Cup tie against Bradford.

He said: "It was great to go back down. There were a lot of people very pleased to see me."

While inside he was buoyed by letters of support from Blues and Blackburn fans but he was disappointed he missed the opportunity to see Wanderers live on television in the previous round against Barnet. On the night Wycombe were on, the set wasn't working properly and he had to make do with just the sound instead.