

Stallard signs for his boyhood hero



Great start: New boy Mark Stallard made an impressive debut

MARK Stallard used to worship John Gregory from the terraces, now he wants to score the goals to save his hero from relegation.

The £100,000 capture from Bradford scored one and made Steve Brown's goal in a dream debut against Bristol Rovers last Saturday and then revealed his admiration for the boss.

Stallard said: "I'm a big Derby fan and as a kid I used to stand on the terraces and watch John Gregory when he was our skipper in the old First Division. He was a great player and I used to rave about him.

"Maybe it had a bit of an influence on me coming here. I was very impressed by him and what he had to say. I think the club has a tremendous future and if we can avoid relegation we've got an exciting season ahead of us next year."

But Stallard's dream start in a Wanderers shirt was almost ko'd by the Football League's fax machine which didn't have any paper when the Blues tried to register his signing on Friday.

The mistake was only realised ten minutes before the lunchtime registration deadline after frantic phone calls from Adams Park.

Gregory said: "It was a real sweat but we just sneaked it in time. We faxed the Football League at 11.35 am and phoned them 15 minutes later to check

REPORT By Dave Peters

everything was OK but it turned out they didn't have any fax paper in their machine. I was tearing my hair out."

The fax drama was the last thing Gregory needed after what he described as the longest two days of his life.

Preston, where Stallard was on loan, were also interested in the striker and Gregory didn't expect to win the battle for the 22-year-old former Derby player's signature.

Preston boss Gary Peters and Gregory agreed they would both bid £100,000 and let Stallard decide.

Gregory said: "I didn't expect to get him. I met Mark on Wednesday and he went up to speak to Preston the next day. The first I knew I'd got him was when Gary Peters phoned me at 9.30am on Friday and said 'congratulations you've got him'. I was so elated because I didn't anticipate him coming. Preston get double our crowds and I thought they would offer him a fantastic salary to go there."

Stallard has signed a two-and-a-half year contract and his fee will be topped up if Wanderers avoid the drop.

Gregory said: "I see him as an investment. I'd like to think that I will sell him for £500,000 after he's scored about 50 goals for this club. He scored nine goals in 18 starts for Bradford and there aren't many strikers available with a one goal in every two games average."

Stallard said: "It's a good move for me. I scored some goals for Bradford which got us into the play offs last year. It is a different challenge now. I want to score the goals to keep us up."

He was frozen out by Bradford's foreign buys and loaned to Preston where he harmed Wanderers' survival hopes, scoring in struggling North End's win over Bury.

Stallard said: "I hope I don't regret that goal at the end of the season."

Stallard made the first of his 27 Derby appearances as a 16-year-old before moving to Bradford for £110,000.

HOW THEY STAND

	HOME					AWAY					
Team	P	W	D	L	F A W D	P	W	D	L	F A W D	
Brentford	34	7	10	0	25 14	9	3	5	25	17	61
Luton	33	11	3	3	32 11	5	6	5	24	26	57
Millwall	35	12	2	4	26 17	4	7	6	20	25	57
Crewe	33	13	1	2	33 10	5	1	11	13	28	56
Bury	33	11	5	0	27 6	4	5	8	20	28	55
Burnley	36	12	2	5	40 21	3	7	7	7	15	54
Walsall	34	10	6	2	28 14	5	2	9	14	21	53
Stockport	32	9	5	3	23 12	5	5	5	5	22	52
Watford	33	7	2	18	10	5	9	3	18	16	52
Bristol C	34	10	4	3	35 13	4	5	8	17	26	51
Chesterfield	37	6	3	17	13	6	4	7	12	15	49
Wrexham	31	7	6	1	24 17	4	9	4	9	12	48
B'n'mouth	37	7	6	6	19 16	5	4	9	9	15	46
Blackpool	34	7	6	3	28 17	4	6	8	14	20	45
Preston	36	10	4	4	25 17	3	2	13	13	30	45
Gillingham	34	9	3	5	28 20	3	5	9	9	14	44
Shrewsbury	37	7	6	5	23 23	3	6	10	22	35	42
Plymouth	35	6	8	4	17 17	4	4	9	9	21	42
York	35	7	4	7	23 24	4	4	9	9	15	41
Bristol R	35	9	4	4	27 18	1	7	10	9	21	41
Wycombe	35	9	3	6	19 13	1	5	11	15	15	32
Peterboro	36	5	7	6	32 28	3	5	10	10	15	36
Notts Co	35	3	7	7	15 18	2	4	12	9	27	26
Rotherham	34	4	6	7	13 17	0	6	11	12	31	24

RESULTS AND FIXTURES

NATIONWIDE DIVISION TWO

Saturday, March 8: Burnley 5, Peterborough 0; Gillingham 3, Watford 1; Luton 0, Millwall 2; Notts Co 0, Crewe 1; Plymouth 1, Rotherham 0; Preston 1, Brentford 0; Stockport 2, Bury 1; Walsall 2, Shrewsbury 2; Wycombe 2, Bristol Rovers 0; York 1, Blackpool 0.

Tuesday, March 11: Bournemouth 3, Chesterfield 0; Gillingham v Walsall - P.

SOUTH EAST COUNTIES LEAGUE

Saturday, March 8: Bristol City 2, Crystal Palace 4; Bristol Rovers 1, Brentford 2; Colchester 0, Bournemouth 0; Luton 2, Wycombe 1; Oxford 3, Swindon 2; Reading 3, Brighton 5; Southampton 1, Barnet 0.

BERKS AND BUCKS SENIOR CUP

Tuesday, March 11: Quarter-final: Slough Town 2, Wycombe Wanderers 3.

FORTHCOMING FIXTURES

Saturday, March 15: Nationwide Division Two: Blackpool v Preston; Brentford v Burnley; Bury v Gillingham; Chesterfield v Wycombe; Crewe v Luton; Millwall v Bournemouth; Peterborough v Stockport; Rotherham v Notts Co; Shrewsbury v Plymouth; Watford v Walsall; Wrexham v York.
Wednesday, March 19: Woking v Wycombe.