

Now the Blues are safe, we look back on how the boss did it

St John's guide to survival

MANAGER John Gregory celebrated keeping the Blues up – and then blasted the side he inherited from Alan Smith.

He said: "It was a team that was totally dispirited and without any morale. There were too many people who thought work began at 3pm and finished at 4.45pm on Saturday afternoons. For some football was something that interfered with their social lives.

"I had to change all that. I had to tell them that everytime they put food into their mouths to think whether they should be eating that.

"My brief was to keep this club up and I don't think we would have been able to do that with the players I inherited. I've taken the best bits from it and added a few others. But we've got a very long way to go yet if we've got aspirations of promotion."

When he was appointed manager in October fans said John Who? Now it is Saint John – after he and assistant Richard Hill completed the great escape by changing the style from hoofball to football.

When he arrived Wanderers were second from bottom with ten points from 14 matches. But under him

REPORT

By Dave Peters

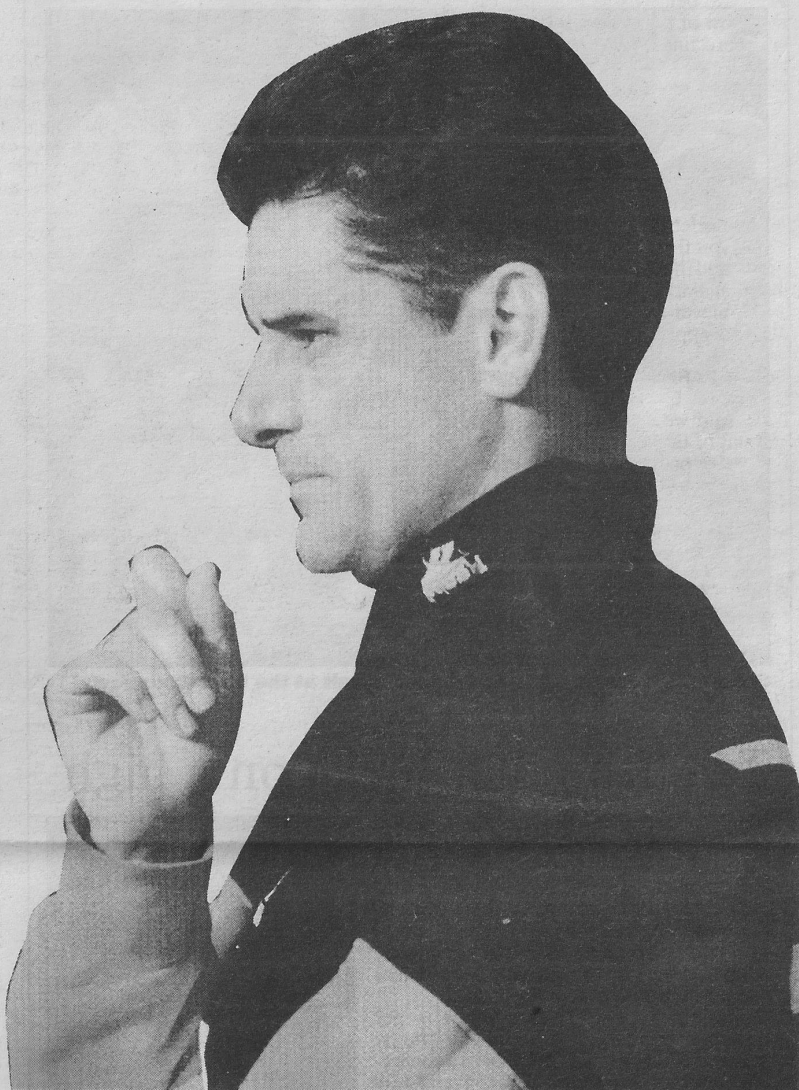
they have taken 42 points. They have averaged 2.2 points at home, are unbeaten at Adams Park in 1997 and have only conceded two goals at home this year, even though it took him four games to get his first win.

Gregory made changes. He introduced a five man defence, instilled a fines system, and bought six players. But his first move failed as Aston Villa's prolific reserve striker Neil Davis failed to score in three months' loan.

Gregory said: "When I was interviewed I said the first thing I'd do was get Davis. I was convinced he'd score."

But Gregory, who sacked the club's scouts in his first week, persevered, scouring the country with Hill for players.

He said: "We went to Sheffield once. We saw Wednesday's reserves in the first half and then Sheffield United's reserves in the second. We saw 44 players and didn't sign anyone. It was freezing. We had a McDonalds and drove home. But I love it. I love coming into work and next season I'm going for



Man of the moment: John Gregory guided Blues to safety

Picture: Brian Southam