

They're over the moon again now

AFTER being as sick as parrots for most of the season Blues players were finally over the moon at last as second division football was guaranteed for another year.

Here's how the players and staff reacted:

JOHN GREGORY: "It is with a slight tinge of embarrassment that we are celebrating staying up. But when you think how far behind we were and how many things have been against us I think it's quite an achievement and the players deserve applause."

BRIAN PARKIN: "If you looked at it before Christmas you would have said we needed snookers to get out of the position we were in, but we've put a good run together and we're safe with a game to go. We'll have a few beers but we'll save the real celebration for when we win the league next year."

DAVE CARROLL: "Judging by the way we've finished this season I think we've got to fancy our chances a bit next year."

TERRY EVANS: "The pressure at the top is nothing like the pressure at the bottom. We've been looking over our shoulder all season."

CHAIRMAN IVOR BEEKS: "I knew something was up because our crowd were singing but I wanted to see it with my own eyes on the television before I believed it. In their boardroom a huge cheer went up when the Shrewsbury score came through and the Stockport people wondered what was going on."

PAUL McCARTHY: "I always thought we would stay up. It's nice to be safe with a game still to go but we won't be taking the Bristol City game easily. The fans will be expecting something from us and we owe Bristol one after the way they beat us earlier."

MARK AUSTIN (WW Sales and Marketing manager): "Just by staying up we will receive around £100,000 more from the Football League than we would have done if we'd gone down."

RICHARD HILL "It's a big relief and the pressure is off until August. None of us really wanted to leave it until the last game and we haven't."

Staying up, prices go up too

WATCHING Wanderers will cost you around £1 more a game next season.

The full list of new prices will be shown in tomorrow's Bristol City programme.

But fans will be able to get around the increases by buying in advance. There will be a discount of £1 on tickets bought before matchdays as well as discounts for season ticket holders.

Financial director Graham Peart said: "We've got to run it as a business and pay our way. The cost of staying up is now coming out. We've kept the increases to an absolute minimum but we cannot lose money next year. We've done it this year for the third year running."

As revealed in last week's BFP the Blues are still paying for John Gregory's spending.

Wanderers had to send Birmingham City another £10,000 this week

on top of the £50,000 they paid the Midlanders for John Cornforth. It was a topping-up clause for him helping the Blues stay up.

Ironically Cornforth, whose form has dipped since his achilles injury, has not started the last five matches.

Gregory said: "We've not seen the best of him but he's not a mistake. He needs a good pre-season to get fit and then we'll see he can play."

Wanderers also face a topping fee on Michael Simpson. His £50,000 fee rises to £75,000 when he completes 30 games and a further £95,000 will go when Paul Read completes 75 games.

But there have been bonuses. This week Amersham and Wycombe College extended its stand sponsorship until the year 2000, switching allegiance from the away end to the Main Stand. Staying up also gives the Blues £100,000 more from the Football League than they would have got in the third division.