

Bell feels the backlash

MICKEY Bell can expect a hostile reception when he returns to Adams Park with his new team Bristol City.

He has upset the fans who voted him their player of the year, by signing for Wanderers' Second Division rivals without even telling manager John Gregory he was packing his bags.

The deal was done while Gregory was on holiday and fans are amazed that Bell, who said he had 'great ambitions,' should sign for a team Wanderers beat 2-0 last season.

Bell, whose fee will be fixed by tribunal, claimed Wanderers did not want him badly enough – even though he was offered three contracts – and argued his promotion prospects are better at Bristol.

He said: "The biggest factor was that Bristol really wanted me and chased me. They're a big club and have got the resources. Wycombe finished near the bottom last season and Bristol just missed out on promotion and I would have to be

honest and say I think Bristol City have got a better chance of winning promotion."

But Gregory retorted: "He's never told me what he wants, he has just gone and signed for a different club."

Neil Peters of the Adams Family fanzine said: "I'd have understood it if he'd gone to a club in a higher division or abroad but he's lost a lot of respect over this."

Ian Lewis, of the Independent Supporters club said: "I think the whole saga has been handled disgracefully by the player and his agent and the money we'll receive is still not enough compensation. It seems strange that a player with 'great ambitions' should choose a club in the same division."

Colin Strange of the Official Supporters Club said: "We're very surprised to see him go to another second division club. But I hope our supporters will remember what he's done for us and give him a good reception when we play Bristol."

Brown: I'm your man

STEVE Brown says he is ready to step into Mickey Bell's wing-back role as the Blues offer 21-year-old Wolves left back Dennis Pearce a trial.

Midfielder Brown has played at left back before under Martin O'Neill, and won the player of the year award in that position in 1994/95.

And the Bristol-bound Bell believes Brown is the ideal replacement for him.

He said: "Steve Brown has played there before and did an excellent job. He won the player of the year award playing in that position before he moved into midfield. He's very versatile and I'm sure he would be a success at left back again."

Brown said: "If the gaffer asks me to play there again I'd be more than happy. But I don't mind where I play, I'm just happy to be putting on the quarters of Wycombe Wanderers."

When Brownie played at left back it was in the 4-4-2 system, but

he believes he would have no problems fitting into Gregory's attacking three central defenders and two wing-backs style.

He said: "I like to get forward. When I was playing there before, Terry Evans had to remind me that my first job was defending."

Gregory though is sitting tight on the situation. But he did deliver a sideswipe at Bell.

He said: "Now he is telling me who I should pick to replace him, maybe he should have gone into management."

He added: "We didn't want to lose him but it was always in the back of my mind that he might go and I have been looking for a replacement for the last six months."

One of those is Pearce. The 21-year-old speedy defender was released by Wolves last season having played a handful of games in the first team.

Before that he was at Aston Villa, and that's where Gregory knows him from.