

Winner from Pinner joins the Blue brigade

UNIVERSITY graduate Ben Hodson became John Gregory's first signing from non-league football when he joined the Blues on a one year contract last week.

Striker Hodson, whose brother Matt is the club's youth team goalkeeper, won a contract after impressing in just two reserve matches.

The 21-year-old from Pinner who was also interesting Southend and Rushden and Diamonds said: "I was really surprised. I didn't even score in the two matches I played.

"I'm still in a state of shock. This is my dream come true. Even before I went to university I wanted to be a professional. I only did the university thing because my parents told me football is a precarious job and that I needed something to fall back on."

Hodson was a schoolboy at West Ham and Crystal Palace before taking his sports science degree at Loughborough

University and plundering 40 goals in three seasons for the University team. He also played for Yeading in the Icis Premier League and had a five week trial at Chelsea before Richard Hill invited him to Adams Park.

Gregory said: "He did very well in the two reserve games. He's got a lot of assets and a few rough edges to knock off. He's 6ft 2in, he's got a good touch, he's willing and he keeps the ball quite well."

Hodson who is on an appearance-related contract said: "I've got until the end of the season to prove myself. There are three good strikers at the club but I am confident in my ability and I believe I can get into the first team."

● Striker Connor Hislop, brother of Newcastle keeper Shaka, has earned himself a second Blues trial match after his performance in the reserves 0-0 draw at Reading. Unfortunately his match was cut short by a hamstring strain.

● Wanderers' Boxing Day derby at home to Watford is all ticket on police advice. The kick-off has also been brought forward to 1.30pm. Tickets are now on sale. Watford have been allocated 1,969 tickets.

● The Blues have bowed to fan pressure and decided to issue vouchers at their next two home matches. Vouchers will be issued to supporters attending the Bristol Rovers and Walsall games and providing they are redeemed as a pair, they will give the holder priority should the Blues get an attractive FA Cup tie.

● Midfielder John Cornforth has been overlooked by Wales manager Bobby Gould for the match against Belgium.

Cornforth, 29, who is back to the form that won him two caps had fancied his chances of getting back into the set-up after a sparkling start to the season.

He said: "I think I'm playing well but it's obviously the manager's prerogative who he

picks. If I could get back into the squad it would be a bonus and maybe if I was playing for Chelsea I would be in."

But he has not given up hope.

He said: "I was in Bobby Gould's first squad and then I did my knee ligaments. There'll be a few more games and hopefully something might happen, but I'm 29 and I'm not going to be sitting here with my finger on the teletext button waiting to see if I'm in."

He is just happy to be back in form, after a year in which he lost form, suffered an achilles injury and lost a court case against Brian McCord who won damages after Cornforth broke his leg in a tackle playing for Swansea.

Cornforth said: "I had a terrible year and that week in court was the worst of my life. People who know me know I couldn't attack a wet paper bag.

"I'm enjoying it again. I think I've turned a few Wycombe fans around after last season."