

Prices rise as Blues prepare to welcome Man City

IT will cost more to watch Wanderers next season after the board agreed to impose price rises for the sixth year running.

Fans will now have to pay an average of £1 a match more to watch Neil Smillie's Blues do battle in Division Two next season.

But there has been a freeze on some junior and students tickets and there are savings to be had on season tickets.

The cheapest adult seat will now be £10 if it is bought in advance or £11 on matchday. The Valley Terrace has also gone up by a pound for adults.

The price hike comes just a fortnight after Smillie was told that he has got no money to buy new players this summer.

Blues Financial director Graham Peart said: "I wish we didn't have to do it but we do. Wage inflation in football is running at 30 to 35 per cent and I don't see it abating. Players salaries are driving our costs up."

He said the increases were necessary if the club is going to compete with clubs like Manchester City and Stoke who have been relegated

to the second division.

He said: "Manchester City have 54 professionals. They are in a different world to us and yet they're in the same world as us."

Manchester City averaged almost 30,000 last season and regularly took more than 6,000 away with them but Wanderers will not be giving their fans any special treatment next season in a bid to get a full house.

Blues have no plans to rip out the seats in the away end and turn it back into a terrace or to give over home parts of the ground to away fans after a previous flirtation with that brought howls of complaint from home fans.

But although many Man City fans will be locked out and it is debatable whether Wanderers fans will make up the shortfall, Blues will still be printing money at that match.

Sales and marketing manager Mark Austin has been inundated with people wanting to sponsor the game and the various packages will be auctioned off to the highest bidder, with existing sponsors getting priority.

● Neil Smillie says he will not be held to ransom

by out-of-contract midfielder Steve Brown.

Brown is stalling on signing Blues' offer of a two year contract while his agent touts his name around other clubs for the best deal.

Notts County have already shown interest in him and Smillie accepts that Brown wants to secure the best terms for himself, because at 31 this could be his last contract.

Smillie said: "We want Steve to stay and I hope he will but if it gets to a point where he is asking too much then we won't be able to keep him."

David Carroll, the only other first team player who is out of contract is meeting Smillie to discuss a new deal today.

Carroll said: "I hope something can be sorted out."

● Secretary John Reardon has moved quickly to quash rumours circulating for a second successive summer that Oxford United will be ground-sharing Adams Park next season.

He said: "I haven't heard anything."

● Blues have yet to announce their prices for next season's reserve matches.