

HE'S THE BOSS

Sanchez takes hot seat and makes his point

NEW Wycombe Wanderers boss Lawrie Sanchez insists he is not trying to recreate the Crazy Gang at Adams Park – but it took him just 24 hours to register his first big shock.

The former star of Wimbledon's Crazy Gang was appointed Blues boss on Friday and celebrated his arrival by drawing 1-1 with Kevin Keegan's £10 million leaders Fulham to earn Wanderers their first point of 1999.

Sanchez spent 14 years with

FOOTBALL
By Dave Peters

Wimbledon as a player and coach, scoring the goal which created the biggest FA Cup Final shock in history when Wimbledon beat Liverpool.

The 39-year-old former Northern Ireland international has signed a two-and-a-half year contract at Adams Park, which includes a bonus if he keeps Wycombe up.

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Looking forward: Lawrie Sanchez is the future at Wycombe Wanderers

Ref: 99-385F25

He's not mad to take on Wanderers, just a little crazy

● Continued from back page

Wimbledon released him from his coaching duties for free.

Sanchez said: "I'm not trying to create Wimbledon mark two here. The fact that I come from Wimbledon means I will carry luggage with me and hopefully some of that is good luggage.

"But I'm not going to say to everybody that they've got to burn each other's clothes or bring a ghetto blaster into the changing room because you can't transplant pieces of a club and add it to another club.

"I will perhaps do things here that might be part of the Crazy Gang thing but I'm not deliberately trying to create it."

But Sanchez, who hopes to announce his assistant this week, after Gary Micklewhite decided not to stay on at Adams Park, wasted no time in introducing his own unorthodox methods.

He had the players in for Saturday morning training and it worked a treat as by tea-time he had transformed Blues from no-hopers without a point in 1999 to a team which bridged a £9.5 million price difference with Fulham.

He said: "People keep telling me I'm brave to swap a Worthington Cup semi-final with Wimbledon for a relegation battle with Wycombe. We're in relegation trouble but we'll give it a good crack, I guarantee that.

"I feel I can turn it around otherwise I wouldn't be here. I'd rather work our butts off in the 14 weeks that are left this season than spend all 52 weeks next year trying to get back to where we are now."

But he warned fans not to expect pretty football.

He said: "This is a time for tin hats and everything that goes with that. We'll have to scrap, scrape and

scratch and do everything within the rules to get results."

And the new boss is not bothered that he was not Wycombe's first choice, after Micky Adams turned it down, John Ward ruled himself out and Wrexham refused permission to speak to Brian Flynn.

He said: "All you remember from Saturday Night Fever is that John Travolta was the star, what you don't know is that Richard Gere turned it down."

Sanchez was interviewed twice before becoming the unanimous choice of the board.

This week he will return to Wimbledon to try and bring in two loan signings with a striker his main priority.

Blues director Alan Parry said: "We had a couple of setbacks along the way, there's no point denying that, but the man that we've chosen has always been on our shortlist.

"We started out wanting an experienced man because of our league position but then in the middle of that along came this candidate and everyone was very impressed. He made us sit up and take notice.

"He has an aura about him and a track record as a player and a coach that is impeccable. I've spoken to a lot of people and they all rate him as a potential outstanding manager.

"It's one hell of a job and I'm sure the bookmakers will give him very little prospect of achieving it, but they didn't give Wimbledon much chance of beating Liverpool in the Cup Final."

Parry said: "He's played at the highest level, he managed Sligo where he did everything including painting the lines, he's got the highest coaching awards, he went on the management course which is run by the PFA. In theory he's got a tick in every column."



Meet the press: Lawrie Sanchez with Ivor Beeks and Alan Parry at Friday's press conference announcing his appointment Ref: 99-377F16

Sanchez in the right place at the right time yet again

LAWRIE Sanchez has a habit of being in the right place at the right time to batter the bookmakers.

He scored Wimbledon's FA Cup winner against Liverpool in the

1988 final and also scored the goal which took unfancied Wimbledon into the top flight.

Now the man with a BA honours degree in management studies is hoping to beat the odds again by keeping Blues up without the help of a cheque book.

The 39-year-old former Northern Ireland international said: "To save the club from relegation this year is as big a challenge as it was for Wimbledon to beat Liverpool in the Cup final but I would say it's equally

obtainable if people believe it.

"I've been in the right place at the right time a few times in my career and I feel at the moment that I'm the right person and in the right place to start my managerial career."

Sanchez was born in Lambeth and began playing with Reading before joining Wimbledon's Crazy Gang.

He then moved into player management with Sligo Rovers, steering the Irishmen out of relegation

danger and to a famous European Cup Winners Cup defeat against Belgian giants Brugges.

He was then headhunted by former club Wimbledon and returned to lead their reserves to the Combination League title before being promoted to first team coach alongside Joe Kinnear.

But he wanted to be top dog and applied for the Wycombe job.

Two interviews later, on Friday, February 5, he became Wanderers' new manager.

HOW THEY STAND

Team	PW	DL	FAWD	LFA	Ps
Fulham	28 11	2 1	27 8 7 3	4	1413 59
Preston	29 7	4 3	30 16 9 4	2	2313 56
Walsall	29 9	4 3	24 16 7 2	4	1616 54
Bourm'th	27 10	3 0	30 7 4 4	6	1720 49
Gillingham	28 11	3 2	31 11 1 9	2	1415 48
Stoke	28 8	3 3	21 11 7 0	7	1617 48
Man City	29 7	5 2	21 9 5 6	4	1514 47
Chest'field	29 11	1 3	25 10 2 5	7	816 45
Millwall	30 5	7 3	21 16 6 3	6	1319 43
Wigan	27 6	3 3	18 7 5 4	6	2020 40
Reading	28 6	6 4	21 19 4 3	5	1219 39
Luton	27 6	3 3	16 12 4 5	6	2124 38
Blackpool	29 5	6 3	18 14 4 5	6	1319 38
York City	30 4	7 4	20 19 5 1	9	1830 35
Bristol R	27 5	6 3	23 18 2 6	5	1614 33
Burnley	30 5	5 5	14 16 3 4	8	2133 33
Oldham	29 5	2 7	16 19 4 4	4	71420 33
Colchester	29 4	5 5	13 20 3 6	6	1823 32
Wrexham	28 6	3 6	15 19 2 4	7	1224 31
North'pton	28 2	8 2	12 12 3 3	10	1221 26
Notts Co	26 4	3 6	17 18 2 4	7	1020 25
Lincoln	28 5	3 6	18 20 1 3	10	927 24
Wycombe	29 5	3 8	19 17 0 6	7	721 24
Macc'field	28 2	4 7	9 16 2 5	8	1121 21

... but Gorman was never an option

CHAIRMAN Ivor Beeks was delighted to hook Lawrie Sanchez as Wanderers' manager at the end of a 28-day search which reeled in 50 applications and rumours that England number two John Gorman had applied for the job.

Beeks denied Gorman had contacted Wanderers when it became apparent that Glenn Hoddle would lose the England hotseat, and

preferred to thank Wimbledon for allowing Sanchez to leave his coaching position without asking for compensation.

He said: "Wimbledon have done us a big favour and we're delighted to get Lawrie.

"It's taken longer than expected to find a manager, but we had to wait to get the right person. I always think that if you've played

with the best under some of the best, then some of that has to rub off. He's got those qualities."

Keith Blagbrough, secretary of the official supporters club welcomed the appointment and said: "It's similar to when John Gregory was appointed. Like Sanchez he was coaching at a Premiership club when Wycombe offered him a chance and look at him now."

Crazy gang leader Jones insists Wanderers have made good choice



Nice to see you: Wycombe's new manager acknowledges the Adams Park crowd last Saturday

Ref: 99-385AF34

Mr Sensible is Blues' Mr Right

VINNIE Jones this week reassured the Wycombe board that they picked the sensible member of Wimbledon's Crazy Gang when they asked Lawrie Sanchez to lead Wanderers into the next millennium.

And Jones added that Sanchez would have no problems operating without any money at Adams Park, joking that his old team-mate had never opened his wallet in his life!

Jones, who was part of the Crazy Gang that joined Sanchez in the pub for a couple of pre-match pints on the eve of their FA Cup final victory against Liverpool, believes Sanchez is cut out for the job.

He said: "He was always the sensible one at Wimbledon. He's very level headed and is right for management. The managers always asked him for his opinion.

"He's used to having his back

REPORT By Dave Peters

against the wall and he'll work on team spirit. He'll get rid of the players that aren't what he wants and get characters he wants. He'll give it his best shot and if the lads do what he wants he'll be a success."

Sanchez will certainly be thick-skinned enough after 14 years of mickey taking at Wimbledon.

Jones said: "My favourite memory of him was when he bought an £800 jacket from Harrods. I slashed him all the way down his back with a knife. It cut the jacket and the next day he made me cough up."

Jones had intended it only as a prank not expecting the knife, which was still in its wrapping, to rip the jacket.

The hardman continued: "In Spain once he was rooming with

Dave Beasant and we put everything on his room bill. He wasn't very good at getting his money out.

"He had a bar in Reading. We played Reading reserves once and went back to his place afterwards for some drinks and something to eat, and two days later he came in with the bill."

Sanchez, who was nicknamed The Mexican by his team-mates, insists he is not trying to turn Wycombe into the Crazy Gang.

He said: "I'm not trying to create Wimbledon mark two. The fact that I come from Wimbledon means I will carry some luggage with me and hopefully some of that's good luggage."

"But I'm not going to say to everybody that they've got to burn each others clothes or bring a ghetto blaster into the changing room because you can't transplant pieces of one club and add it to

another club.

"I will perhaps do things here that might be part of the Crazy Gang thing but I'm not deliberately trying to create it."

But Sanchez wasted no time introducing his own unorthodox methods.

He had the players in for Saturday morning training on his second day and it worked as by tea-time he had transformed Blues from no-hopers without a point in 1999 to a team which drew 1-1 with Kevin Keegan's Fulham.

Sanchez said: "The reason I did it was because I'd only seen the players for an hour on Friday morning. I don't know whether I'll do it every week."

"Saturday morning looseners can be quite nice. There's a lot of tension for a big game and you're hanging around waiting to get started so it sometimes works."