

The best of times, the worst of times ...

Dave Peters takes a look back at Wycombe's FA Cup history

BLUES boss Lawrie Sanchez says his cup fighters must bridge a 100-year gap in history to overcome first division glamour club Wolves in tomorrow's sellout clash.

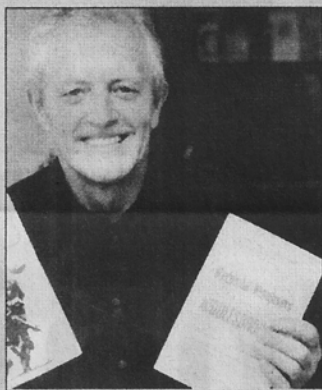
He said: "You walk into Wolves' ground. You walk into Wycombe's, you're separated by 100 years of history. Of course it would be a giant-killing if we could beat them."

"It amazes me that people expect us to beat everybody. It was the same when we knocked Grimsby out in the last round. People forgot that they are in the division above and it is the same now."

"But Wolves are four times bigger club than Grimsby. Their wage bill is four times bigger and their attendances are four times bigger."

"I'm confident that we can do it but it will be a fantastic achievement if we do."

Wycombe – in only their eighth season as a Football League club – are playing in the fourth round for the first time in their history, while Wolves have won the Cup



Magic moments: Tony Horseman recalls the Boro game

four times and finished runners-up on three more occasions.

When Paul McCarthy scored Wanderers' equaliser against Grimsby a fortnight ago he became the first Wycombe player ever to score a goal in the third round of the competition.

On five previous forays into the third round – against Middlesbrough, West Ham, York, Norwich and Bradford – Wanderers

hadn't managed a goal as they were knocked out each time.

Their best achievement came in 1975 when, as an Isthmian League club, they held first division leaders Middlesbrough to a replay and made the national media sit up and take notice.

On the slope of Loakes Park, Wanderers held Jack Charlton's Boro giants to a 0-0 draw and then held out again for 89 minutes of the replay before they were finally sunk.

At that time Wolves were the League Cup holders and flying the flag in Europe as well.

Only ten seasons ago, Wycombe were playing the likes of Maidenhead in the first qualifying round of the cup and had played nine matches before they went out to Peterborough in the second round proper.

Sanchez, though, thrives on being the underdog. He made his reputation shattering other people's and is now plotting the downfall of Wolves.

Sanchez, the player, was responsible for Wembley's greatest giant-killing when his header flew past Bruce Grobbelaar in the

1988 final to give Wimbledon the cup against Liverpool.

Wanderers have recent history on their side having dumped the Molineux men out of the two-legged Worthington Cup 4-3 on aggregate last season after losing the first leg 1-0.

But Wycombe have also suffered the ignominy of being giant-killed since becoming a League club and have some embarrassing FA Cup memories of their own hidden in the closet.

In the 1997/98 season John Gregory's side were humbled by Ryman League minnows Basingstoke Town.

Wycombe surrendered a 2-0 lead at Adams Park and then lost the replay on penalties to crash out against a team which included a double glazing salesman and a part time male model.

Sanchez's Wanderers came within a whisker of the same fate last year before fire came to their rescue in one of the FA Cup's more bizarre stories.

Wycombe were just five penalty kicks away from going out against Ryman League Oxford City when smoke was spotted coming from beneath a stand housing the Oxford fans just as their first round replay was about to go into a penalty shootout.

The referee abandoned the game and the Blues saved their blushes at the third attempt when the match was replayed.

● Before tomorrow's kick-off a presentation of the club's Giant-killer Cup, initiated by Blues press officer Alan Hutchinson when he worked for the Bucks Free Press, will be made to manager Lawrie Sanchez.

Brian Lee, the manager when Blues played Middlesbrough, will present the cup.

Hutchinson said: "It now seems fitting that Brian should hand over the cup to Lawrie as a tribute to celebrate another milestone in the club's history."



Oh, no: Martin Taylor lets one in against non-league Basingstoke