

Bates quits the game

Blues star throws boots in the bin and calls it a day

WANDERERS star Jamie Bates has stunned boss Lawrie Sanchez by announcing his retirement just three months after signing a new one-year contract.

The 33-year-old is turning his back on the game because he says his body has had enough of football and he wants to spend more time with his family.

Manager Sanchez said: "We have tried to talk him out of it but there was no changing his mind."

"He threw his boots in the bin after the Colchester match and that was symbolic."

"He has decided he's had enough. He's been a pro for 17 years, he aches in the mornings and he has decided he wants to go now."

Sanchez is devastated at losing the player he describes as his best signing.

He recruited Bates on a free transfer from Brentford two years ago when Wycombe were staring relegation in the face and the big man was a major factor in Blues' survival. He has gone on to play 101 games for Wycombe forming a watertight partnership with Paul McCarthy.

Sanchez said: "It was the last thing I expected. I never saw it coming, it was a real shock and it is a blow to us."

Bates waited until Wanderers were safe from the drop zone before telling Sanchez he wanted out.

The defender said: "I've had a fantastic career and I wanted to go out on a high. I didn't want to be one of these players who goes on longer than they should."

"I was beginning to lose the buzz for the game a bit and I wanted to go with good memories and while my

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body is still ok."

Sanchez said: "It is a massive shame for the club. I gave him another year's contract because I expected him to be my first choice centre half with McCarthy next season."

"His performance against Liverpool at Villa Park in the semi-final was outstanding and he could still be the best defender in this division."

Bates' shock decision to bin his boots has now given Sanchez a problem he did not think he had, but the boss won't be rushed into any hasty decisions.

He said: "It's not an area I'm going to rush to fill. If someone in that position, who I fancy, becomes available I will look at him but I've got Mark Rogers and Jason Cousins who can play there and young Roger Johnson as well."

Bates said: "I've had a long hard think about it and my body is saying enough is enough. I've enjoyed my time and the only reason I'm turning my back on it is to give my body a rest."

Wanderers honoured Bates by making him captain for the final match of the season against Colchester – but at the player's request no announcement was made on the day because he did not want his farewell appearance to overshadow the game and keeper Martin Taylor being presented with the Player of the Year Trophy.

Bates says he has no immediate plans for his future but says it will not involve football.

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Team player: Jamie Bates celebrates with his Blues team-mates after they earned a closing day draw with Colchester last Saturday his last match as a professional

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