



WORLD STAR: Jason Cousins' benefit season is set to receive worldwide coverage on the internet thanks to the Bucks Free Press. We are helping the Wanderers defender launch his own testimonial website which will go online in a couple of weeks. Cousins' testimonial season gets under way on Thursday with a cricket match involving Wycombe Wanderers and former test stars. For further details see page 19.

Sanchez fails with a fresh bid to coax Bates out of retirement

WANDERERS boss Lawrie Sanchez has failed with an 11th hour bid to coax Jamie Bates out of retirement.

He tried to persuade the defender to change his mind before the team reported back for pre-season training yesterday.

But Bates, who stunned the club by announcing his plans to hang up his boots three months after signing a new contract, was not for turning.

He told the BFP: "I'm flattered that the gaffer thinks so much of me to ask me back,

He wanted to give me one last chance to come back, but my mind is made up and I won't be changing it."

Sanchez is now stepping up his hunt for a new centreback after admitting defeat in his bid to persuade the former Brentford man to do a U-turn. The Blues boss wrote Bates a letter and also spoke to him on the phone but could not produce a change of heart.

He said: "I tried what I could. I thought maybe he might have changed his mind over the summer but he hasn't. I'm

disappointed. He played almost 50 games for me last season and in two-and-a-half years he has been my most consistent signing.

"I'm still shocked at his decision to retire. I didn't see it coming but I have got to accept it."

Bates even came under pressure from his wife Sharon to accept Sanchez's 'come back to work plea' but he stood firm.

He announced his decision to quit after 14 years in the game at Brentford and

Wycombe after the final match of last season against Colchester United when he symbolically threw his boots in the bin.

He decided he wanted to quit while his body was still fit.

He is now considering emigrating to Cyprus and setting up a bar.

Sanchez is now hunting a centre half who can fill Bates' boots. He already has Jason Cousins, Paul McCarthy, Mark Rogers and rookie Roger Johnson but wants one more who can perform in that role.



Jamie Bates