

The fat lady is singing the Blues

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VIEW FROM THE STAND

WELL Wanderers' faint hopes of a promotion play-off place have finally expired and the fat lady has sung her party piece.

Still we cannot complain, our late February and early March fixture list was always going to be the turning point of our season. Unfortunately, things turned the wrong way for us.

Picking up just four points in our last eight games, especially as five of those matches were against rival promotion candidates, just wasn't anywhere near enough to sustain our top six challenge. Only bottom-of-the-table Cambridge have a worse current form record than us, and they are as good as relegated.

However, it's been a pretty good season and we did manage to keep our league battle alive until mid-March. And at least we were struggling to catch the leading teams rather than trying to get away from the stragglers. We also came within a few minutes of knocking Fulham out of the FA Cup, and now they're in the semi-final – that could have been us again!

No doubt The Big Chief will be busy compiling a short, or not so short, list of players he does not want to retain. Paul Emblem, our hero from the great escape at Lincoln, has already been shown the door and there could be some more long term favourites being put out to grass in the summer.

I'm delighted that my fellow columnist Steve Brown has signed a one year extension to his contract. Brownie always gives everything for the cause and lifts the team and the fans whenever he's on the park.

For the rest of the season the team will only be playing for pride and there's no other fixture where Wanderers' fans' pride is more at stake than this week's clash with Colchester. Our rivalry with the "good old Essex boys" goes back to our GM Vauxhall Conference days when Colchester were seen as the non-league equivalent of Don Revie's Leeds team of the early 70s.

Their captain was the notorious Roy McDonough who collected red cards faster than Sheffield United. His philosophy always seemed to be "If it moves, kick it." I believe Roy still holds the career record for the highest total of red cards received in senior English league football.

The intense rivalry really took off in 1991/92 when Colchester pipped Wycombe for promotion to the Football League on the very last day of the season. Both sides won their final matches to finish level on points and way ahead of all the other teams but the Essex boys had a slightly superior goal difference.

Unfortunately, the outcome of the whole season could be traced back to our home match against Colchester in late September. With time running out the sides were level at 1-1 when their keeper, Scott Barrett, kicked the ball downfield. The ball landed just outside the Wycombe area and bounced over Paul Hyde's head and flew into the back of the net. At first, nobody was quite sure where it had ended up and poor old Paul Hyde couldn't believe his eyes when he turned to see it nestling in the back of his net. That flukey goal and the two extra points effectively decided the whole season.

So tomorrow we welcome back the Essex boys and girls – make sure you keep a look out for the arrival of diamond geezers driving fleets of Ford Capris with fluffy dice and girls in tight jeans and white stilettos!

Last and certainly not least, it was great to see Andy Rammell and Sean Devine team up for the first time as Blues' strike force. They might have fired a few blanks at Brentford but I bet the deadly duo will both be hitting the target very soon. Hopefully kicking off against our friends from Colchester.

HOW THEY STAND

Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pt
Reading	40	12	4	4	32	16	11	5	4	28	17	78
Brighton	40	16	3	1	38	13	5	10	5	18	25	76
Brentford	41	15	4	1	43	11	7	5	9	29	29	75
Stoke	40	13	4	3	39	12	7	6	7	22	24	70
Huddersfield	39	11	5	3	29	16	8	7	5	28	22	69
Bristol C	40	12	4	4	32	17	7	4	9	25	24	65
Cardiff	39	9	8	3	33	22	8	5	6	30	23	64
Oldham	40	12	5	3	42	24	4	8	8	27	34	61
Tranmere	40	10	8	2	35	13	5	6	9	20	36	59
QPR	40	9	9	2	31	16	6	4	10	21	28	58
Wycombe	40	11	4	5	34	24	4	7	9	17	31	56
Wigan	40	7	6	7	30	20	6	9	5	26	24	54
Port Vale	40	10	5	5	34	23	5	3	12	14	34	53
Swindon	40	9	6	5	24	19	4	6	10	18	32	51
Blackpool	41	6	9	6	31	30	6	5	9	26	34	50
Chesterfield	40	8	3	9	32	31	4	10	6	16	21	49
Colchester	40	9	5	6	32	26	4	5	11	26	42	49
Peterboro	40	9	5	6	42	23	4	4	12	15	28	48
N'thampton	40	7	3	10	23	30	5	2	13	24	41	41
B'mouth	40	8	4	8	32	28	1	9	10	19	34	40
Notts Co	40	5	7	8	23	28	5	3	12	26	35	40
Bury	40	5	8	7	23	28	5	2	13	16	38	40
Wrexham	40	5	6	9	21	30	4	3	13	25	50	36
Cambridge	40	5	7	8	22	30	0	4	16	14	50	26