

COUSINS GETS THE BIG CHOP

WANDERERS legend Jason Cousins has been released alongside striker Andy Baird.

The duo join Dave Carroll, Paul Emblen and Marc Leach on their way out of Adams Park in boss Lawrie Sanchez's summer cull.

Sanchez admitted that letting skipper Cousins go, at the end of his testimonial year, was the toughest decision he has ever made.

He said: "I thought long and hard about it. He's been an excellent servant to the club but he

FOOTBALL

would have been my fifth choice centre half next year.

"It was the most difficult decision I've had to make as a manager but he's too good a player to be just the captain of the reserves. It's better that he goes and plays first team football somewhere.

"He took it on the chin and thanked us for what's happened in his time here."

Cousins, 31, who is hoping to have a farewell testimonial against Celtic, joined the Blues on a free transfer from Brentford in 1991.

Since then he has made 442 appearances for the club, helping them to Wembley Trophy Final and play-off glory. He was an integral part of their rise into the Football League and played in last season's FA Cup semi-final.

Baird's career has been blighted by injury. The 23-year-old striker has made just 68 appearances since

breaking into the first team in 1988.

Sanchez said: "I've just not seen enough of him. He's had terrible injuries since he's been here. He was my starting choice centre forward when Sean arrived and now he's fifth choice now.

"He hasn't improved to the extent we thought he would. But it's not the end for him. If he can avoid injury, he can get himself another club. He has got some attributes but next season I've got to improve the squad."