

New plan is just gr-eight

Blues want seventh and eighth teams to be involved in play-offs

WANDERERS have joined calls for a shake-up of the play-off system to give smaller clubs like them a better chance of promotion.

The Blues will vote in favour of radical plans to include the seventh and eight placed teams in play-offs next season when the Football League chairmen meet at Leicester on April 24.

Wanderers chairman Ivor Beeks sees the proposals to add two more teams as a realistic route to Division One.

He said: "As a club we're all for it and we'll be voting for it. It could be a godsend to middle of the road clubs like us and good for football because it will extend the season for a number of clubs."

DAVE PETERS

WANDERERS

Three successive four-goal defeats, the loss of star players and this week's admission that the main priority next season is to break even, have left fans short on optimism for next year, but a revamp of the play-offs would change that.

Beeks said: "I don't see any reason why we can't finish eighth next season. The manager believes we can do it and I believe we can."

Boss Lawrie Sanchez is desperate for the revamp.

He will start next season with a budget lower than the one he inherited when he

joined the club four years ago. And 12 goals against in three games – and the prospect of no signings in the summer – has forced him to lower his sights.

He said: "I don't think we can ever be an automatic team in this division. But if they bring the play-off position down to eighth we can have a real tilt at that."

"Changing the play-offs would be beneficial for everybody. If the eighth place was up for grabs, lots of teams would be in with a chance."

He says fans might not like to hear that Wanderers are now looking at the back door but insisted they must face facts.

He said: "Resources-wise we are closer to the third division

than the first and we've got to make sure that we don't ever get relegated."

"We've got to maintain our second division position and then build on it and getting the play-off places down to eighth would give us a better chance."

"The aspiration is yes, we are looking to get out of this division, but the reality is we don't want to be relegated from it. The facts of life are that from now on clubs will have to break even."

"We've lost top players Andy Rammell, Paul McCarthy, Sean Devine and Martin Taylor because we couldn't afford to keep them."

"Fans have every right to have a go at me for losing three

games on the spin with 12 goals against – but the aspirations need to be realistic."

"I'm positive. I'm bullish about next season. But the bottom line next year is that we've got to make sure we're in this division."

"Some will say change the manager but you had an experienced manager who has taken teams up, you've had a completely inexperienced manager in Neil Smillie."

"You had John Gregory who two years ago was being touted as the next England manager and you've had me whose taken this club to a semi-final and avoided relegation and we've all hit a glass ceiling."

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