

Wasps to stay in Wycombe

WASPS have taken up the option of staying in Wycombe for another season after they failed to reach an agreement with the Blues over a new five-year deal.

The two clubs announced the groundshare deal – believed to be worth around £300,000 – on Tuesday, just a day before Wasps had to tell the RFU and Premier Rugby Ltd where they have to play their rugby next season.

Wasps director of rugby Warren Gatland said: “We’re all incredibly happy. The ground situation comes down to a financial decision. We’ve agreed to a one year deal and now it’s a matter of sorting out the financing.

“As a ground and as a club,

JOE SLADE

GROUNDSHARE

it’s incredible. The support is something that we’ve tapped into. There’s a big rugby community out there, a lot of strong traditional clubs and that is something that is really good for us.

“I think that, overwhelmingly, the feedback from players, supporters and sponsors, has been fantastically positive.”

England and Wasps flanker Joe Worsley added: “We’re all very happy with the decision. Wycombe has that vibe about it. Our success rate has been pretty good, the pitch is very good and the setting is very nice as long as you can get in there.

“A lot of our fans historically come from this part of the world so it makes sense. Hopefully, they can allow more people to come and watch because we need a bigger ground.”

Wasps had the option of a five-year deal, returning to Loftus Road to groundshare with QPR or to extend their existing two-year contract by 12 months.

But a longer term deal has been hindered by problems over compensation to QPR.

QPR chief executive David Davies is insistent that Wasps are contracted to return next year, though Wasps chief executive Alistair McLean is equally insistent that Wasps are not liable to pay any compensation for remaining in Wycombe for another season.

McLean said: “We’ve got an agreement with Loftus Road for us to exercise our option to stay for our third year.”

Wasps are also concerned about the ground’s 10,000 capacity, with Gatland saying: “There’s no point in staying at Wycombe with a 10,000 capacity. We need to look at whether or not we can increase the capacity and whether the council is prepared to support us.

“Can we increase the capacity of the ground? 10,000 is not enough for one of the best teams in the country.”

The deal is good for Wanderers, with the money from the deal coming at a time when the Chairboys have major financial headaches.

Chairman Ivor Beeks said: “I am delighted that Wasps are to

continue playing rugby at Causeway Stadium. It’s good for Wycombe Wanderers, it’s good for High Wycombe and I believe it’s good for Wasps.

“We have developed a great relationship with Wasps over the past two years and I’m sure that this will continue right through next season and hopefully beyond.”

Meanwhile, finance director Rod Tomlin revealed that Wanderers would have looked at a groundshare deal with another sports club, if Wasps had returned to Loftus Road.

He said: “We considered it but we always believed that we would probably reach an agreement with Wasps for 2004/05 so we hadn’t gone as far as identifying any other clubs to groundshare with.”