

Assistant boss asked to carry on playing

ASSISTANT manager Keith Ryan has been given the chance to extend his playing career by another season.

The 34-year-old, who is now in his 15th season with Wanderers, has been offered a new deal by Blues boss John Gorman and is now mulling it over.

Ryan has been a vital factor in Blues' recent surge up the league table and Gorman, the former England assistant manager, is desperate for him to keep his boots on.

Gorman said: "I want him to stay on. People questioned whether he could still get up and down the pitch but he answers that every week.

"He is our unsung hero.

"I don't think people appreciate just how good he is.

"He epitomises everything we want and he carries it onto the pitch.

"Sometimes the fans don't see what he does and sometimes at home they expect their players to be pretty. But every engine needs a cog and he is big part of the engine of our team. Without him we would be ineffective.

"We have talked about him staying on but it is going to be Keith's decision."

Ryan has been an ever-present in the league since Gorman took over and, despite his senior status, he has not been substituted once in those 17 games.

But Ryan, who was part of the Blues team which won promotion

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into the Football League under Martin O'Neill, will delay making a decision until the summer.

And although he is keen to extend his playing career he is also hungry to do more in his role as assistant manager – an area he has had to ease back on because of his playing commitments.

He said: "There are a lot of things to consider. I want to be as helpful to the football club as I can and if people think I can best do that on the pitch that's great by me. I enjoy playing as much as ever and I enjoy it even more when we are winning."

And Ryan is not the only Wanderer, Gorman wants to hold on to.

He said: "We've got a lot of contracts to sort out and if I have my way very few of them will be moving. I have had initial talks with some of them and I think they are happy to stay.

"There won't be any big exodus at the end of the season.

"I want to keep what we have got. We have got a good basis here and if we can add a few more as well I will be happy."

Last season Wanderers had a mass exodus of players leave the club under previous boss Tony Adams with skipper Michael Simpson and midfielder Darren Currie, who is now on the verge of the Premiership, allowed to leave.



Play on: Blues want Keith Ryan to continue as a player