

**BAKER'S
BLUES**
WITH IAN BAKER

Ticket prices put fans off

The men who matter at Wycombe Wanderers Football Club are set to finalise ticket prices for the 2007-08 season shortly. I have already given my two pennies worth to the club on this issue: ticket prices are far too high.

The on-the-day price of £16 for adults is putting the casual supporter off attending matches and therefore stopping potential future loyal support.

It costs more to buy a season ticket at Wycombe than the cheapest season ticket at Real Madrid. It also costs less on a match day to buy a ticket to an Italian Serie A game or German Bundesliga match than it does to a Wycombe game.

But why are the prices so high at Wycombe? It is probably due to the amount of debt that the club find themselves in and the wage levels. It seems for years that the club have failed to live within their means, i.e. a simple mathematical equation: sponsorship + prize/TV money + gate receipts = running costs + salaries.

Attendances are on the wane and it is clear that they will go down again if the club find themselves in League 2 next season and nothing is done to address the ticket price problems.

My argument to the club is surely that it is better having 7500 supporters in paying £10 for a ticket than 5000 supporters in paying £15? It is not as if Wycombe suffer from the supply versus demand dilemma.

It is encouraging to see Wycombe take a stand on safe standing. The campaign to keep safe standing in English football has gained strength and an Early Day Motion requesting that small areas of safe standing are included within UK football grounds has been signed by 125 MPs including Wycombe's Paul Goodman.

As a "friendly community based football club" it is time Wycombe Wanderers also made a stand on ticket prices to ensure football is accessible to all that want to see it. Ian Baker is on the Board of Wycombe Wanderers Supporters Trust. For further details about the Trust and how to join please see www.wvst.org.


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HIG WEEK 08

Boss tells players to start winning ugly

'Results outweigh performances now'

WANDERERS boss Paul Lambert has told his team that results are more important than performances now.

The Blues have just 14 league games remaining and recent setbacks have seen them slip back from the automatic promotion places.

He said: "Results are going to outweigh the performances at this moment in time."

And Lambert expects tomorrow's trip to Bury to be an occasion for forgetting about pretty football and simply grinding out a result.

He said: "I'm not sure if the playing surface will be that great but it's a game we have to go and try to win. The weather plays havoc with pitches at this time of year, but it doesn't matter, it's the same for both sets of players."

"I wouldn't have thought it would be an open game or a particularly great game of football. We'll have to go and win ugly."

"We've had reports on them and they've done fine since we played them. It's going to be a tough game."

But it is their home form, says Lambert, that could be decisive in the race for promotion.

Although they have not lost a home league match since September, they have drawn seven of 11 games on their own turf since then - including the last four - and Lambert

wants a better return than that in the remaining seven games at Adams Park.

He said: "We need to win our home games. We've had a few draws and it would be nice to turn them into wins, but the performances have been good so I'm not worried."

● Blues will cope without Kevin Betsy, insists manager Paul Lambert.

Bristol City swooped for the wide man at the end of January and although it left Lambert with little time to bring in a replacement, the manager has full confidence in the players still at the club.

He said: "Kevin's probably different to the type of player that we've had here before. He could run with the ball and take it up the pitch a few yards."

"But the lads that have been here throughout the season have been absolutely terrific and on Saturday they will give it everything they've got."

"It would've been nice to add one or two more players during the window. We couldn't do it but the squad we've got here is great."

Hat-trick ball: Jermaine Easter, left, is congratulated by Stefan Oakes after scoring a treble against Bury in August

Picture by ANITA ROSS-MARSHALL 06 2513 15



Lambert gets time to achieve success

WANDERERS have told Paul Lambert that he is still their man even if he does not lead Blues to promotion this season.

Managing director Steve Hayes is delighted with the progress Wycombe have made under the Scot and says he and his backroom staff will get another shot at it next season if they miss out in May.

The Blues are nine points short of automatic promotion and have not won a home match since before Christmas.

But Hayes is delighted with the progress of the man he hired to replace John Gorman and has taken him aside to tell him that his job is for keeps.

In his first year in English management, Lambert took the club to their first ever League Cup semi-final with away wins at Premiership duo Fulham and Charlton on the way before they

Wanderers by Dave Peters

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were finally beaten over two legs by Premiership champions Chelsea and even though it has been a distraction to their league form, the Blues are still holding onto a play-off place with a five point cushion.

Hayes said: "Paul Lambert has done us proud and he has still got almost one third of the season left to make it a fantastic season."

"I wouldn't have turned that cup run down for anything."

He said: "I'm very pleased with what the manager and his backroom staff are doing."

"Missing out on promotion would be disappointing but it would not be a catastrophe as long as we can all pull in the same direction and get ourselves out of

this league the following year.

"We wanted a manager who would be with us for a few years and that's why we picked a young manager."



Long-term view: Paul Lambert

New signings ready to start

WANDERERS boss Paul Lambert says he would have no qualms about throwing new signings Fola Onibuje or Scott McGleish into the starting team.

Both strikers were unused substitutes as Blues drew 0-0 with Notts County last week but the Wycombe boss says they have made an impact since coming to the club.

He said: "I've been impressed with them. Fola did fine in the Reserves on Tuesday and Scott [who played an hour of that game] is a clever player who will give us something a little bit different. He's got good experience as well."

"It wouldn't phase me throwing them in."

McGleish scored six times in his last four games for Northampton but hasn't hit the net in two substitute appearance for Blues.

Oakes disappointed to have missed out on Pipe dream



Hot Pipe: Transfer target David Pipe, right, challenges Blues' Chris Palmer

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MIDFIELDER Stefan Oakes has thanked stand-in keeper Jamie Young for saving him from the night from hell and keeping Wanderers on track for promotion.

The Aussie keeper produced a stunning stop to deny Oakes' mate Notts County midfielder David Pipe a winning goal during Saturday's 0-0 draw at Adams Park in last week's seventh-versus-eighth clash.

The former Notts County man describes Pipe as one of his best buddies in the game and even had him staying round his house after the game.

Oakes said: "A 0-0 draw was probably the best result from that

point of view.

"We had agreed that he would stop around mine and that we would go out after the game no matter what the score was but if he had scored and they had won 1-0 I wouldn't have been too happy."

Oakes and Pipe became friends when they were at Notts County together and they were almost teammates again.

Wanderers had a six-figure bid turned down for Pipe during the January transfer window and Oakes says his pal would have been the idea replacement for Kevin Betsy.

He said: "I was hoping he would join us but unfortunately it didn't

happen. He would have been a very good addition. He can play right midfield, right back and centre back and I think he's a very good player."

But Oakes insists Wanderers can still win automatic promotion without Pipe coming in.

He said: "We need to win nine out of the last 14 to have a chance of going straight up. The play-offs are not the aim. Automatic promotion has been our aim all the time and it is still the aim."

"We don't want the play-offs. We had that last year and look what happened. We know we need to win two or three games on the trot to get up there."