

Here we go for

Fixtures 2007/08

August		
11	Accrington Stanley	(H)
18	Dag & Red	(A)
25	Bury	(H)
September		
1	Chesterfield	(A)
9	Brentford	(H)
15	Macclesfield	(A)
22	Shrewsbury	(H)
29	Bradford	(A)
October		
2	Barnet	(A)
6	Notts County	(H)
14	Peterborough	(A)
20	Grimsby	(H)
27	Chester	(A)
November		
3	Milton Keynes Dons	(H)
7	Wrexham	(A)
17	Lincoln City	(H)
24	Darlington	(A)
December		
4	Hereford	(H)
8	Stockport	(A)
15	Morecambe	(H)
22	Macclesfield	(H)
26	Brentford	(A)
29	Shrewsbury	(A)
January		
1	Barnet	(H)
5	Mansfield	(A)
12	Rochdale	(H)
19	Rotherham	(A)
26	Chesterfield	(H)
29	Dag & Red	(H)
February		
2	Accrington Stanley	(A)
9	Mansfield	(H)
12	Bury	(A)
16	Rotherham	(H)
23	Rochdale	(A)
March		
1	Lincoln City	(A)
8	Darlington	(H)
11	Wrexham	(H)
15	Hereford	(A)
22	Morecambe	(A)
24	Stockport	(H)
29	Grimsby	(A)
April		
5	Peterborough	(H)
12	Milton Keynes Dons	(A)
19	Chester	(H)
26	Notts County	(A)
May		
3	Bradford	(H)

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Opening Day facts

- WANDERERS have been drawn at home on the opening day for five seasons running and in that time they have not lost a first day fixture winning two and drawing three.
- Only twice in the last ten years have Wanderers scored more than one goal on the opening day in a 2-1 win over Cambridge and a 5-2 defeat at Wigan.
- Blues haven't kept a first-day clean sheet since Stockport's visit five seasons ago.

Who has joined in the Summer?

Ins: Martin Bullock (Macclesfield), Gary Holt (Nottingham Forest), John Sutton (St Mirren), David McCracken (Dundee United), Scott Shearer (Bristol Rovers), Tom Williams (Swansea), Craig Woodman (Bristol City), Leon Johnson (Gillingham), Derek Duncan (Leyton Orient/ Grays), Jack Obersteller (Millwall) and Andre Boucaud (Kettering)

Martin Bullock - The first of Wanderers' summer signings and sure to be a regular. The right sided player, who has played in the Premiership for Barnsley, has always starred against Wycombe and now supporters are hoping he can turn it on for them. He laid on both Blues' goals in the 2-2 draw at Maidenhead.

Gary Holt - Tough tackling midfielder who has played at the very top in England and Scotland. Was in some of the same Scottish international squads as manager Paul Lambert.

Released by Forest in the summer, he was a victim of their failure to go up in the play-offs. He was offered a new contract in January but it was withdrawn when Forest missed out on Wembley and promotion. An unknown quantity for Blues fans. He injured his wrist on the training camp and has only managed 45 minutes of friendly action.

David McCracken - Has swapped the Scottish Premier League for England's basement.

The centre half and new club captain looks a real capture and has already made himself a candidate for the captain's armband. He was easily the fittest of all the players on the first day of training. Reports from Scotland suggest that he is brilliant for 89 minutes but prone to aberrations. He proved that in the friendly against Maidenhead when he blotted his copybook by

conceding a needless penalty with a childish shirt tug marking up at a corner and by hand-balling to give QPR their free-kick winner at Adams Park.

John Sutton (pictured) - The former St Mirren striker is another to have swapped matches against Rangers and Celtic eight times a year for games against Barnet and Dagenham.

He has top scored in the Scottish Premier League for St Mirren for the past two seasons. His was the most-hyped of all the club's summer signings but the target man has got a big job on his hands to get into the team p a s t

Jermaine Easter and Scott McGleish and to fill the boots of last season's captain, 13-goal Tommy Mooney.

He is the younger brother of Chris Sutton but he has yet to crack it in England and his pre-season performances have failed to match the hype, suggesting he may need time to adapt. He

will get to start the season though as Jermaine Easter is suspended.

Scott Shearer - Will contest the goalkeeping jersey with Jamie Young after signing from Bristol Rovers. They loaned him out to Shrewsbury last season and it looks like a toss of the coin job to decide who will play.

He's been beaten by two 30-yard free kicks already in pre-season games and often favours punching rather than catching high balls.

Said he joined the club because he was impressed by the club's goalkeeping coach John Granville - but Granville was then sacked before pre-season training started.

Tom Williams - Blues spent all summer chasing the former Swansea left winger.

And his arrival is something of a surprise as boss Paul Lambert is not renowned for his patience. It suggests that Williams must have been worth holding out for because Lambert is the type of manager who would normally drop his interest in a player like a stone if he felt the he wasn't 100 per cent committed.

Craig Woodman - The left back signed from Bristol City in the summer having been unable to hold down a place in City's promotion-winning side last term. More of a steady Eddie so far he has yet to set the world alight

in pre-season and was given a tough examination in the 2-2 draw with Maidenhead.

Leon Johnson - The centre half from Gillingham looks a real find. He was a regular at the Gills last season but was one of three first team defenders cleared out by their gaffer Ronnie Jepson.

Good in the air and good on the deck. Already been the victim of one of Jermaine Easter's pranks when he was conned into giving what he thought was a ten minute live radio interview when he signed only to later discover it was Easter on the other end of the phone. That's been his only mistake of an immaculate pre-season though.

Derek Duncan - The ex-Leyton Orient left winger has already been at the centre of a summer tug of war with Wanderers prising him from Conference side Grays after they thought they had signed him.

The Grays chairman angrily said Wycombe were welcome to him after his dramatic U-turn and says he doesn't want people like that at his club. So far though the Blues fans who have seen him in pre-season won't be sure that he was worth fighting over. One for the future.

Jack Obersteller - Released from Millwall. Played a couple of reserve games for Wycombe last season but the youngster hasn't had a sniff of the pre-season action yet.

Andre Boucaud - The ex-Trinidad international midfielder signed a year deal after impressing on trial.

The ex-Reading, Peterborough and Kettering man was the only one of the club's three trialists to be offered a deal. After dropping from international status to non-league football he should be hungry to make up for lost time.

Who has left Adams Park?

Outs: Tommy Mooney (Walsall), Fola Onibuje (released), Ikechi Anya (released), Matthew Barnes-Homer. Also out: Tommy Doherty, Scott Golbourne, Ricardo Batista (all returned after loan spells)

Tommy Mooney - Club captain and the scorer of 13 goals last season. He will be a huge act to replace. The 35 year-old failed to agree terms on a new contract. He refused to sign one when it was first offered because he wanted to see the calibre of the men brought in by Lambert but then found the deal wasn't to his liking when he was finally ready to talk terms.

Fola Onibuje - Signed on an 18-month deal last season and played one game. The 6ft 6ins former GB sprinter was brought in to pep up Blues' flagging promotion bid last season but clearly wasn't Lambert's cup of tea.

Six goals in seven reserve appearances weren't enough to change Lambert's opinion of the lampost striker and neither was Onibuje's appearance for the Nigeria U23 team.

Tommy Doherty - Last season's Player of the Year despite only being on loan from QPR. He became a cult figure last season. He was sent off twice but he was much more than a nuisance.

His vision and passing ensured that he was voted into the PFA League Two Team of the Year.

Blues were quoted £100,000 when they tried to buy him but he is currently out with an appendix problem.

Ricardo Batista - Imposing goalkeeper from Fulham. After an erratic start when he gifted Wrexham a goal on the opening day, he became one of the club's most valuable players. His dominance coming off his line to collect corners will be badly missed.

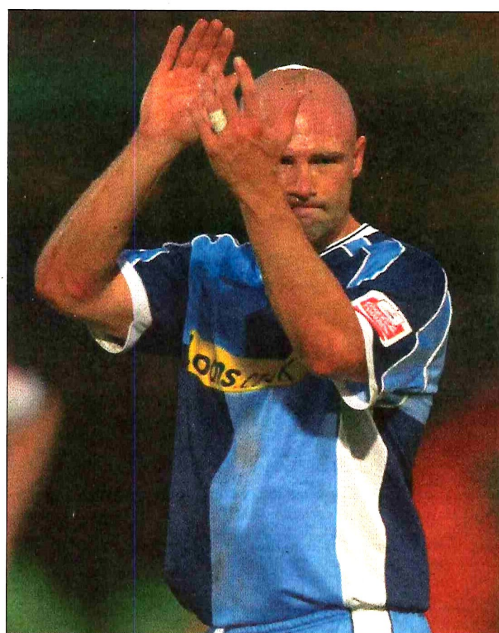
Anthony Grant - A box to box midfielder on loan from Chelsea. He was again one of the key players in Wanderers side last season. Chelsea clearly recognised how good he was because they refused him permission to play against them in last season's Carling Cup semi-final.

Scott Golbourne - Reading full back who had two very impressive loan spells at Adams Park last season.

Ikechi Anya - Promising youngster who failed to reach his potential

Matthew Barnes-Homer - Signed last year and Released without playing a game

Frank Talia - Veteran goalkeeper. Never played at all last season after injuring his knee on the club's training ground in pre-season.



Saying goodbye: Captain Tommy Mooney left in the summer

the big kick off

What about the gaffer?

PAUL Lambert is still in charge, and this season he will be very much in charge after tending to leave many of the big decisions to his coaching staff last term.

Lambert was persuaded by the club to stay on in the summer after becoming disillusioned with the way Wanderers fell away in the promotion race in the spring.

Last season, which was his first in England, the former Celtic legend and Champions League winner relied heavily on his assistants Steve Brown and Keith Ryan.

They were key in most of the transfers with Lambert readily admitting he didn't know who was who in England.

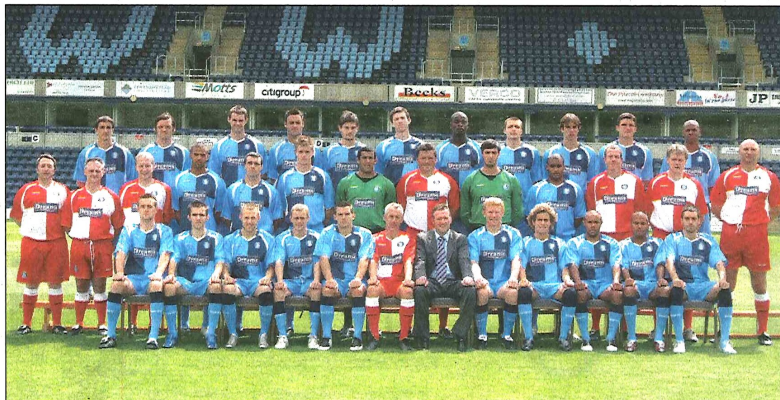
With Brown and Ryan now sacked in a cost cutting exercise, Lambert has assumed the responsibility for hiring

and firing, returning to the Scottish League he knows to lure the likes of McCracken and Sutton and his former Scotland team-mate Gary Holt.

Last season Lambert inherited a team but this time, with 11 new signings, it is his and he will be judged on it.

He should have joined Martin O'Neill and Lawrie Sanchez in Wanderers' folklore after leading Wanderers to the Carling Cup semi-final last season but his detached demeanour and the way that the team fell away in last season's promotion race – with no wins in their final 13 games – means that the jury is still out.

If he takes them up he will be loved and take his place in club folklore that he deserved for the cup run but if they fail, fans will start to question his commitment to the club as he has not relocated his family from Scotland.



Was last season a fair reflection?

NO. Wanderers blew it last term. The Cup run was a far better indicator of what they were capable of than their 12th placed finish in the league was.

Reaching the semi-finals and holding Chelsea to a draw in the first leg was an obvious distraction. It did affect the players and then the loss of key personnel through injury was too much to take.

Kevin Betsy was sold to Bristol City for £150,000 and Wanderers' chief assistant was never replaced. Lionel Ainsworth came in on loan, Anthony McParland came down from Barnsley as replacements but flopped.

Too many points were dropped by not turning draws into wins and 13 matches without a win at the end of the season were ultimately too costly.

How have they done in pre-season?

"THE lads have been excellent." That's the quote Wanderers boss Paul Lambert uses almost as a reflex response to every question about his team. The more realistic answer though is that it is hard to judge.

They began well with a 5-0 win over village team Holmer Green. A 1-1 draw in Germany with SC Verl followed

before a 1-0 home defeat against QPR.

There was certainly plenty of room for improvement in the 2-2 draw at Maidenhead and again in last week's 1-1 draw against Oxford United.

In many of the matches, Wanderers have had plenty of possession but have lacked the invention needed to cut teams open.

Anything else been going on?

IT has been another turbulent summer at Adams Park.

Initially there was doubt whether Lambert would stay on but he was persuaded after a heart to heart with MD Steve Hayes who promised him money to rebuild the team.

But the coaching staff were sacked in a cost-cutting measure. Assistant boss Steve Brown and first team coach Keith Ryan were discarded without ceremony despite their 30 years combined service to the club as players

coaches and caretaker managers.

Goalkeeping coach John Granville and youth team Scott Marshall were also removed with the club citing the same reason – finances – for the job losses.

Within weeks Steve Brown though three new coaches arrived.



Any potential problems?

HAVING 11 new players could have unsettled the ship but that doesn't seem to be the case. A week in Germany seems to have helped them gel together. But with property prices in Bucks so high and the players having to relocate their families there could be one or two stresses away from the football and it could take time for everyone to settle.

The club is heavily in debt – but with multi millionaire Steve Hayes as the MD the club still seems to be spending.

Who is the big grudge match?

NO-ONE hates Wycombe much to the annoyance of the club's fans who crave a genuine rival.

The supporters will try and whip up a rivalry with MK Dons but it is half-hearted. Last season a minority of fans boycotted the away game particularly

in objection to the club they have dubbed as the Franchise but hardly anyone would have noted the difference.

The Brentford game will have a little extra spice because their supporters travel in large numbers.

How does the squad compare to last season?

THERE is no doubt it is much stronger than last season. Lambert has now got cover in every position.

He has also gone for experience. Last season he relied heavily on loan players but this time they are all his own men.

The strike force looks potent with McGleish, Sutton and Easter all vying for places – and keeping the three of them happy could be Lambert's biggest problem.

Last season they had no defensive cover and that lack of planning embarrassed them when

they lost both their centre halves. They have learned from their mistakes.

They also have an embarrassment of riches in midfield but will need to keep Gary Holt fit if they are to match some of the more physical teams.

Any injuries or suspensions? Who might emerge?

CENTRE half Mike Williamson won't play before Christmas as he continues to recover from a cruciate injury.

Fellow centre back Will Antwi is said to be getting closer after his second serious groin injury but with McCracken, Johnson and Christon already there, there is no need to rush them back.

The club are so confident they have got it sorted this time that they were even prepared to let Leon Crooks leave.

The centre half came in during the injury crisis last season from MK Dons and Wycombe let him go back there on trial but Dons boss Paul

Ince did not take the bait.

New signing Gary Holt has also had his pre-season disrupted by a wrist injury picked up on the training camp to Germany.

He hasn't played since but although he hasn't been doing contact training he has kept up with the rest of the work.

Striker Scott McGleish missed Friday's friendly at Oxford with a toe injury.

But last season's top scorer, Welsh international Jermaine Easter is suspended for the first two matches of the season – tomorrow's match against Accrington and Tuesday's Carling Cup match at Plymouth.

ROBERT Rice could be the next one to come through.

He played in a friendly against Holmer Green and the young right sided player upstaged the new signings that everyone had come to see.

He was included on the training trip to Germany and made another good impression and could be the next one to follow last season's rising star Lewis Christon to the first team.

The club clearly rate him highly. They have touted other young pros Steven Gregory, Tom Cadmore and Alan Massey around other clubs for loan moves but haven't done that with Ricey.



So how will they do?

THEY should make the play-offs. Lambert is a year wiser in England now. He showed his acumen and managerial skills in last year's Carling Cup run and with a year in League Two under his belt he should be able to translate it.

He has now assembled his own team and has the benefit of a full pre-season behind him.

With Ian Culverhouse as his head coach he has got someone all the players respect and enjoy working with. Last season Wanderers had an awful finish to the season as injuries took their toll but they were still in with a shout of the play-offs until the final two weeks.

With the depth in squad they have now got they are unlikely to go off on such a crippling 13-match sequence without a win again.

But they will have to start converting draws into wins. With three points for a win, 14 draws ultimately proved too costly.

Adams Park also needs to become a fortress. Too many teams have enjoyed their matchday experience in Bucks and Blues need to make their visitors feel uncomfortable. Wanderers always talk of being a Championship club in the making but they are now embarking on their fourth season in the basement division.

Last year they produced their worst ever finish (12th) in their Football League history despite reaching the Carling Cup semi-final.

That magnificent achievement coupled with the run of injuries derailed their league ambitions – this season the play-offs are a must.