

They’ve set the standards now

NEIL Lennon piled praise on his new team-mates after their 2-0 win at Accrington and warned them he will be demanding the same from them each week.

He said: “The attitude was brilliant. That is the standard they have set and they can’t fall below that now.

“They either maintain it or improve it and that’s what I’ll be demanding of them when I’m on the pitch.

The 36-year-old midfielder joined the Chairboys from Nottingham Forest on transfer deadline day and his impact was immediate last week helping Paul Lambert’s reshuffled side maintain their promotion pushwith their fourth away win since Christmas.

He said: “I really enjoyed it and I was very impressed with my new team-mates. When I trained with the guys on Friday I was really surprised by their footballing intelligence.

“There is a nice balance in the team with older and younger players.”

Reserves win

DANIEL Fitchett scored the 47th minute winner as Blues reserves beat Brighton 1-0.

Chris Palmer was just the width of the post away from doubling the lead with a free kick and also played in Chidi Ogbuagu who was stoped from scoring by Kerry Mayo’s professional foul, for which he was sent off.

At the back, Mike Williamson strolled through his second successive 90 minutes for the reserves following his cruciate and hand injuries.

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LEAGUE TWO													
TEAM	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	P	Ps
MK Dons	30	8	2	5	25	11	11	2	2	27	12	61	
Darlington	28	7	6	1	22	8	8	2	4	24	11	53	
Rotherham	29	8	3	4	26	17	7	5	2	17	11	53	
Peterborough	28	10	2	3	39	17	6	2	5	16	15	52	
Hereford	28	6	4	4	21	14	9	3	2	24	16	52	
Wycombe W	30	8	4	3	18	9	6	4	5	20	20	50	
Chesterfield	30	5	6	4	25	19	8	3	4	26	16	48	
Rochdale	27	4	3	5	13	15	9	5	1	29	18	47	
Morecambe	30	7	4	4	22	20	6	4	5	18	18	47	
Stockport C	29	5	4	5	26	22	8	3	4	22	21	46	
Grimsby	30	5	5	5	15	18	5	4	6	17	20	39	
Brentford	28	4	3	7	14	20	7	3	4	18	20	39	
Bradford	28	6	3	4	18	16	4	5	6	20	20	38	
Shrewsbury	30	8	1	6	23	15	3	4	8	17	26	38	
Chester City	29	4	3	8	16	20	6	4	4	22	22	37	
Barnet	26	4	5	4	16	17	5	3	5	13	17	35	
Accrington	29	4	1	9	15	25	6	2	7	17	27	33	
Lincoln City	30	4	3	8	19	27	5	1	9	14	21	31	
Notts County	29	5	3	7	15	18	1	8	5	11	20	29	
Macclesfield	30	2	6	7	17	23	3	7	5	16	25	28	
Bury	28	3	4	8	16	23	3	3	7	15	21	25	
Dagenham	29	2	5	7	12	21	4	2	9	11	24	25	
Wrexham	28	4	3	8	10	20	2	2	9	11	22	23	
Mansfield	27	4	1	8	19	20	2	3	9	10	19	22	



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Milan to Adams Park in less than 12 months

**Wanderers
by Dave Peters**
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THIS time last year Neil Lennon was preparing for a match against AC Milan in the last 16 of the Champions League.

Now, 12 months on, instead of facing Kaka, Maldini, and Gattuso, the former Celtic and Northern Ireland captain will make his home debut for Wanderers as they take on League Two’s bottom club Mansfield tomorrow.

You would expect a superstar with 13 major trophies under his belt to know nothing about Billy Dearden’s Stags – but that would be to underestimate Lennon for whom football and winning is a drug he’s not prepared to wean himself off yet even though his 37th birthday looms this summer.

He speaks with knowledge of the threat that Michael Boulding or Matt Hamshaw could cause tomorrow and he admits he will be nervous, excited and fired up about the challenge – just like he was when he made his Wycombe debut in front of just 1,200 fans at Accrington Stanley last Saturday.

‘I hate losing and I hate failure. I’ll play with the same intensity I did at Celtic’

He said: “I was nervous before the game and I don’t think I’ll ever lose that. You’re still trying to make an impression. I might not have to prove anything to others but I’ve always got to prove it to myself, I’m my own biggest critic.

“Even though I’ve got all this experience I’m going into the unknown a wee bit now.”

Adams Park won’t be rocking tomorrow with 60,000 like Celtic Park was for the visit of the Milanese but that won’t matter.

Lennon said: “I hear people say they’re winding down their career but I don’t think you can do that. I find it really hard to wind down. It is not me to play with less heart or effort than I did at Celtic.

“I hate losing and I hate failure. I’ll play with the same intensity I did at Celtic and if I lose that I might as well wrap it all up.

“For me getting this club promoted would be as good as anything I’ve done in my career. Winning is winning. It is such a special feeling.

“I’ve still got that hunger. There’s a real challenge here and I’ve got to have something to strive for at the end of the season.

“The next medal is the most important one.”

He knows exactly how many medals he’s got and how many caps he earned for Northern Ireland before sectarian death threats from Protestant extremists – angry that he was playing for Celtic a Catholic club – forced him to call time on his country years before he was ready.

He said: “It was a very tough time. What happened to me was the straw that broke the camel’s back and they’ve worked really hard to get through to the Sectarian element at Windsor Park.”

He is used to having it tough though. Lurgan-born Lennon overodsd on sport as a kid and his career could have been over before

he even hit 20.

He was diagnosed with a stress fracture of his lower spine when he was at Crewe.

He said: “I was out for a year. I was on football’s bottom rung and was skint as well, There was only

Lennon factfile

WINNERS MEDALS

League Cup: 1996–97,1999–00
Runner-up
Scottish Premier League title: 2000–01, 2001–02, 2003–04, 2005–06, 2006–07
Scottish Cup: 2000–01, 2003–04, 2004–05, 2006–07
Scottish League Cup: 2000–01, 2005–06

RUNNERS-UP MEDALS

Scottish Cup: 2001–02
Scottish League Cup: 2002–03
UEFA Cup: 2002–03
League Cup: 1998–99

one way to go and that was up.”

Fired by that hunger he has done just that, captaining Crewe at 19 and then going onto enjoy Premiership success with Leicester under ex-Wycombe boss Martin O’Neill and even greater glory when O’Neill took him to Scotland with Celtic.

It was at Parkhead where he teamed up with Wanderers boss Paul Lambert in Celtic’s midfield.

Lennon could have stayed there this season as well.

He said: “It was my decision to leave Celtic. There was a contract for me if I wanted it but I’d done everything I wanted to do there. I had played in all those big games and wanted a new challenge.”

He was close to joining Wanderers in the summer but opted for League One Nottingham Forest instead.

He said: “I had just come out of winning the league and cup double with Celtic and it was very close between Forest or Wycombe.

“I was unsure about stepping into League Two. Forest appealed to me because I knew the area and the tradition of the club and they made me a very good offer as well.”

But, after signing him, Forest boss Colin Calderwood then baffled the Irishman by putting youth before experience.

Lennon said: “I was getting increasingly frustrated at Forest so when the transfer window opened



Len-ding a hand: Neil Lennon on his debut at Accrington after joining on a free transfer until the end of the season

and Lambert came in again I thought ‘Aye why not.’

“I was very keen to join him in the summer but the timing wasn’t right.”

It is now and he jumped at the chance of teaming up with Lambert again – although he says he doesn’t know how he’s going to stop giggling when he has to call him Gaffer.

He said: “Paul was always cut out for management. He’s a leader. He was captain of Celtic during one of the most successful periods in the clubs history.

“He’s a Champions League winner and you don’t get bigger than that – he’s so humble about it but he has that steely

determination about him.

“He’s winner and, if he can get things right here, God knows where it could take him.”

Lennon, who sees his own future in managment, has had no shortage of managers offers himself.

Scottish clubs Hibs and Inverness Caledonian Thistle both wanted to talk to him – but Lennon wants to keep on playing and learning the ropes under Lambert.

He said: “I’ve been linked with a few management jobs but I’m not ready yet. I’ve done my B licence but I’d rather play at the minute.

“I’m looking for a learning curve into managing and hopefully I can have more of an influence here.”

There has been no formal offer of a coaching role at Wycombe but Lennon is ready to assist if called.

He said: “If the manager needs my help he only needs to ask and we can bounce a few things off each other. If Paul asks me to do stuff I would be delighted to.

“I know what Paul Lambert is thinking and we have similar opinions on things and how we want the game played.

It is linking up with Lambert again that is the big draw and he dreams about the pair of them going back to Celtic again some time in the future.

But he wants to learn from Lambert first former team-mate who he believes could be heading back to Parkhead as manager one day.”

“I’d love to go with yer man if gets the big job up there any time. I’d like to think that we could form a coaching partnership.”



In my life, I’ve played them all: Some of the stars Neil Lennon has played against. Tomorrow it’s League Two basement side Mansfield