

It's the toughest pre-season ever

NIKKI Bull was glad to have the day off on Wednesday after taking part in the toughest pre-season training regime he's ever faced.

Wanderers' number one played the full 90 minutes of Blues' game against Crystal Palace on Tuesday night, having taken part in extra training sessions earlier in the day.

Manager Gary Waddock said after last Saturday's game with Braintree he was expecting his players to be tired after being put through a punishing regime by physio Stuart Ayles.

Bull said: "It's probably been the toughest pre-season I have ever known. We've been getting in early and not leaving until 5pm some days.

"We played Palace last night and did weight training and running sessions the same day, so they've certainly been getting their pound of flesh out of us."

The goalkeeper kept his first clean sheet of the pre-season campaign and showed the form that won him both player of the year awards last season with a stunning save from a close-range Glenn Murray header.

He said: "It was good to get the 90 minutes under my belt. I haven't been one to play games too early in pre-season, I'd rather have a week on the training ground getting sharper.

"When I came I sat down with the gaffer and we earmarked the games I would play in and we said I'd play 90 minutes against Palace, West Ham and Northampton Town."

The jury's out

OPINION is still divided among Blues players as to whether Chelsea's Yossi Benayoun meant to score the wondergoal that's become an internet sensation with 875,000 hits.

The Israeli midfielder scored a stunning backheeled lob over Wycombe keeper Nikki Bull last week, with the goal doing the rounds on YouTube and Twitter.

Bull, said: "At the time I didn't think he meant it. I came out to narrow the angle – I like to close the gap so they just hit it against me – and I thought he was going to take another touch. Looking back, he definitely meant it.

"That's life – bigger and better and well-paid goalkeepers have let in goals like that. You take it on the chin. As a goalkeeper I will make mistakes that cost goals or make you look silly but that's the life of a goalkeeper. You're always walking that tightrope."

Team-mate John Halls wasn't as certain. He said: "I haven't seen it again but the I thought he was trying to get away from our two big defenders that were around him and he was lucky to get it over Bully's head. A few people have told me he meant it and I'm still not too sure."

Matt Bloomfield said: "I think he meant it. On the day he was their stand out player. He's a fantastic footballer and they missed him last year when he was injured. This year he's going to be a real plus to them."