

Waddock: 'I'm not about to become Crawley boss

■ Manager dismisses speculation he's set to join Crawley

By Andy Carswell

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GARY Waddock has laughed off speculation he is set to join League One newcomers Crawley Town, insisting he's staying at Adams Park.

The Blues boss was this week among the favourites to become the new manager of the Sussex club after Sean O'Driscoll defected to Nottingham Forest.

Speculation Waddock was set to move to the Red Devils intensified when the odds-on favourite for the job, Aldershot boss Dean Holdsworth, said he wasn't interested in the role.

That led to bookies slashing Waddock's odds on jumping ship to as low as 13/8 – but the Wanderers manager says he has had no contact from Crawley and is puzzled as to why he was so hotly tipped to move on.

And he has reassured Blues fans that he has no intention of moving on.



SO HAPPY TOGETHER : Gary Waddock, right, seen here with coach Gareth Ainsworth says he is bemused at how he became favourite at one stage to become Crawley's new manager

Speaking after Wednesday's friendly at Luton Town, Waddock said: "From my side, it came out of nowhere so I was very

surprised at the speculation.

"I had a number of calls and text messages regarding the fact that I was favourite, but I have got

a job to do here. I'm concentrating on this, my focus is here – it's as simple as that.

"I haven't had any contact. I'm very focussed on the job that I'm doing here."

The rumour mill went into overdrive last weekend when Waddock avoided the press by failing to conduct his usual post match press conference following Saturday's 2-1 win at Staines Town.

Instead he handed the duty over to his assistant Richard Dobson with the club saying it made sense because, as the former youth team manager, Dobson was more familiar with some of the young players in that squad.

Meanwhile, Sheffield United's youth team coach John Pemberton has emerged as the new favourite for the Crawley job after the Sussex side asked the Blades for permission to speak with him.

Waddock meanwhile can still be backed at 8/1 to take the job.

I'm running out of Gaz so this could be my last season of playing

By Andy Carswell

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GARETH Ainsworth admits this season is likely to be his last one as a player.

The veteran, pictured above with manager Gary Waddock, was handed a player-coach role by Waddock as he makes his first steps towards a future career in management.

And he says the fact he will be focussing more on the coaching side of things means he will probably hang up his boots at the end of the campaign.

Ainsworth said: "It [being player-coach] is a step closer to what I want to do when I finish playing, which will probably be the end of this year. I always said I wanted to play until I was 40 and I'm 40 at the end of the season, so it's probably my last season as a player.

"This is my 24th year as a player. I think the average is seven years in the game and I've more than trebled it, so I'm well happy with the career I've had

"I never want to say never – you never know what circumstances arise or what

happens – but I will say it will probably be my last season as a player."

The winger has only made cameo appearances during pre-season and he expects that to continue once the League Two campaign gets underway.

He hasn't discussed with Waddock how many games he is likely to play but said: "He's very aware I can still play and I can still do a bit, probably from the bench rather than starting this season.

"If I don't play all season it'll mean we are doing really well and my coaching's OK, but if he needs me I'll be able to come off the bench or start. I'll give my all for Wycombe."

Adjusting to the longer days as a coach is the biggest difference he's noticed since changing roles.

Ainsworth said: "You don't realise as a player how easy it is and how well you're looked after. It's not easy as a coach. You're well looked after as a player but you can't go on forever as a player. I do want to be a coach and also a manager one day. This is my first step."

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Lee's hitting the right Angols



FLYING START: Summer signing Lee Angol, pictured here against Staines, scored for Blues in a 3-1 win over Keith Scott's Windsor & Eton on Monday. The ex-Spurs youngster netted alongside Olly Taylor and Gareth Ainsworth.

Foster and Winfield ruled out

WANDERERS will be without two key defenders for tomorrow's home friendly against Premiership Fulham (ko 3pm) with Danny Foster and Dave Winfield ruled out.

Foster is the only member of Blues' first team squad not to have featured in a pre-season match because of the mystery ailment.

He was due to have it assessed as we went to press and Waddock said: "We'll possibly know later on this week whether it's an injury we can get him back quickly from or if it's longer term."

His absence has opened the door for youngster Anthony Stewart, who has featured at right back as well as in the middle of defence.

Waddock has been impressed with his displays and those of fellow teenager Charles Dunne, both of whom excelled against Luton on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, Winfield won't be risked against The Cottagers as he continues to recover from injury.