

Youth is the key to Blues' future

WANDERERS chairman Andrew Howard says he will be meeting a Premier League club next week in the hope of bringing more talented youngsters to the club.

In the absence of their own youth set-up Wycombe have turned to signing young players from teams higher up the Football League and nurturing their talent by giving them an introduction to senior football.

This season Blues have won plaudits for their work with the likes of 18-year-old Fred Onyedinma and Alfie Mawson, who went on to be nominated for League Two Player of the Year in his first full season in professional football.

Howard said: "Everyone talks academies but they're massively expensive. It's shifting up all the time and I think a lot of clubs will look to clubs below them in the leagues to help them develop their players."

Plans are being put in place to house young players, who arrive on loan, in order to create an environment which will entice clubs higher up the football pyramid to loan their best young players to Wanderers.

"We have a meeting with a Premier League club next week to work with their development team, the main reason being that we can give them a life academy," said the Wycombe chairman.

"It's a life academy for these youngsters to come in and the house is integral to that. You can't take a 17-year-old, pluck him out of home and just take them out of the club they've played at for six or seven years.

"You have to make sure they're in a safe environment, and we have to push them and develop them. That's why the house works and that's why the house will work."

Manager Gareth Ainsworth commented that links struck up with clubs like Brentford, who've loaned Blues four players this season, have become the "lifeblood of our recruitment".

The Blues boss says only the best players from the under-21 league are allowed to leave on loan, but they are not the ones which the club can attract.

"We don't get the best ones because we're Wycombe Wanderers," he said. "We get the ones under the best ones, so it's really important to look after them.

"They're not necessarily coming to play but they might need the life bit to improve their football bit and become the best players. They're not the finished article at 18, 19, 20-years-old – some of them won't even have ironed a shirt for themselves.

"Before you can start thinking about being a top class footballer you need all these things to give you confidence.

"The best thing I ever did was move out of home when I was 18-years-old to go and play football. I was lucky. At the time I didn't feel it because I wanted to stay with my mum and dad but it was the best thing I ever did."