

# FIVE MINUTES OF YOUR TIME

BY ROGER SLATER

## GORDON BARTLETT

**Back in the 2012/13 season Gordon took five minutes to talk to Roger Slater. The following is the interview in full.**

**Ealing Schools, Middlesex County and West Ham Youth and Portsmouth. How good were you as a player before the injuries that curtailed your career? Not very!**

I was a hardworking front player and seemed to have a knack of scoring goals from early schoolboy days right through.

A couple of clubs tried to turn me into a midfield player or a full back but I wasn't good enough. I just ran around up front and goals seemed to keep coming. As he was growing up, my son Craig once asked me if I was quick when I was a player? My answer was no not really. He then proceeded to ask, did I have a good touch? Was I strong? Good in the air? With pretty much the same answer to all of them, he paused and said, well how the hell were you a professional footballer then? - Good question!!!

**Can you remember much about your League debut for Portsmouth and scoring your only League goal? Did you think at the time that was the start of.....**  
I remember it well.

George Graham was injured and I had been scoring a few goals in the reserves and Ian St. John pulled me in his office on the Friday and told me I was in the squad against Bolton then in Div 2 (Championship today).

We were leading 1-0 when I came on as sub with about 20 to go and nicked a goal after about 5 minutes reacting quickly to a save from a Norman Piper shot.

I lacked confidence in my own ability and my thoughts were only about how lucky I had been. I was offered apprentice forms after scoring 4 on my debut for Pompey in the FA Youth Cup. I then got my pro contract on the

back of another 4 goals in the following year's FA Youth Cup, a hat trick in my opening reserve game and then I nicked a goal on my first team debut!

I now realise that luck balances out and the knee injury soon followed. I'm so pleased I didn't get carried away with such a good start because it all went horribly wrong very quickly. **You're an established team with Gordon, but did you ever want to take up the reins yourself and be solely responsible for a side?**

As I said I hadn't really given management much thought and I 'fell' into it rather than planned to get into that side of football so I can't say I had a burning desire to be in charge as such. I guess what made it easier was the fact that Gordon and I got on so well together right from day one and the immediate success we had. Gordon was always willing to listen to my views and take on board any changes or ideas I had so I never felt the need to go on my own. I'm also a massive believer in loyalty and working together with people for the benefit of the greater entity and as the years together progressed I was more than happy to support Gordon and 'watch his back' so to speak, over the years I've probably dealt with a few issues he didn't even know about, leaving him to get on with the job. I think it is important that the man in charge can trust and rely on the team backing him up and not have to worry that they might be undermining him in any way.

In any case I got my fix of being the main man by managing a Sunday team then managing at youth level for nine years also on a Sunday morning!

**In 'Off The Bench' you told the story of how you made the move into Coaching and then Management. Do you think the mind-set is different? How did you learn and adapt from being a Player who Coaches into a full blown Coach and Manager?**

I just learnt as I went along really and have continued to adapt as I gained more experience.

One thing I recognised very early in my Management career was the importance of

having good people around me, especially ones who complement my personality and make up for my deficiencies.

As I mentioned in the book, Leo was the main person who made me realise the importance of delegation. After our first season of working together at Hounslow, he pulled me to one side and said he felt he was wasting his time because I didn't let him do anything. I took the training, negotiated the money, picked the team, did the scouting and I wasn't giving anything to him - fair point. I had learned to trust him and I bet now he wishes he'd never said anything as he does all of that and a lot more.

**What is the one element that stands out from all others in the Gordon Bartlett Book of Management?**

Treat other people the way you like to be treated and try to give everyone respect.

**Your early career in Management was quite successful with a number of Promotions, Cup Wins and two FA Vase finals with three clubs (Southall, Hounslow and Yeading). Was there a common factor in those sides that made the difference?**

A winning mentality!  
There was also a very strong spirit within the group of players, especially at Yeading. In fact, two members of that team watched our recent game against Met Police and likened the grit and determination in our team to that Yeading team. The lads should take that as a massive compliment but I must confess that Leo and I did not share their opinion!

**What was the hardest decision you made in those days as a Coach / Manager?**

No doubt about that one. Selecting teams for the Wembley finals and then having to tell the players I was leaving out that I was taking away their dream of playing on the hallowed turf. Now that was tough!

**Then the move to Wealdstone. You knew the club in our time at Yeading and it was no doubt a tough decision to join The Stones. Is it easier or harder than you expected?**

It's totally different - more people came to the first 'Meet the Manager' night than Leo and I



saw at most home games while we were at Yeading. The passion and expectation was something we and the players had to come to terms with but it was great to enjoy success with a fantastic vocal support behind you. On the other hand, we had to cope with the criticism when results went the wrong way.

In summing up, easier and more enjoyable when we win and harder and far more strenuous when we lose.

This job has certainly been good for character building and learning about those around you.

Social media has actually made the job a little more difficult over the years because we could shield the players to a certain extent from the comments or opinions voiced in the bar after a game but nowadays it is out there for all to see within seconds of the event.

The player's social lives have also become more assessable with the aid of Facebook and Twitter and they also need to be careful of the picture they are painting of themselves. It's funny how easy it is to associate a poor performance when you know someone has been out the night before!

Gordon's Complete Management Record

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## FIVE MINUTES OF YOUR TIME cont..

**You've been with the club for eighteen years all but. What has been the lowest point and what made you grit your teeth and carry on?**

Easy! Football wise it was Barking away. That was the closest I have ever been to quitting. A string of poor results and a lack of fight from the players was unacceptable and that night was the final straw. Leo, Fred and myself spoke outside the Master Brewer until the early hours of the morning and decided to sleep on it.

Strangely enough, I woke up very positive the next morning, went to a board meeting in bullish mood and had a fighting finish to the season.

Not getting Prince Edward Playing Field completed was my other low point. I couldn't do anything about that but I still believed in a positive and successful future for our Club despite yet another major setback. **What one thing in those eighteen years grates with you - what is the one thing you'd do differently given your time over again?**

The way I dealt with Fergus Moore when I sent him out on loan. He said it would be out of sight out of mind and I promised him it wouldn't. We were struggling and my focus was getting us out of relegation and I didn't communicate with Fergie. He was right and I regret the way I treated him to this day. I was wrong and apologised which Fergie accepted (eventually)

I stand by my decision but certainly not by the way I dealt with it! He deserved better especially for what he gave me and Wealdstone every time he put a shirt on. **And if you could change one thing about the relationship?**

I honestly wouldn't change anything, 27 years together must be testament to that.



**Man Management has to be one of your biggest skills - to mix and manage the personalities in the side with the expectations of the fans and the wishes of the board but can you change a players psyche - can you give them a winning mentality and make them part of a team?**

I don't think you can change a players character, but I do feel you can influence their mentality. The group mentality can have a massive influence on an individual, especially in one off games.

The mix in the changing room is very important, but to be successful, you must have enough strong characters with a winning mentality to help influence the others.

**Those payers that have moved on into the pro game - from Les Ferdinand and Andy Impney to Jermaine Beckford, Carl Martin**

**and Marvin McCoy - you must feel proud to have been part of their progression but do they keep in touch?**

It's a good feeling to see any players that were once associated with your club moving up the footballing

ladder but we should not expect any thanks or gratitude because they are the ones who have the talent and have worked hard to get there. We have given them the opportunity and they have taken the chance.

As for keeping in touch, I am the world's worst person for doing that so I would never criticise any of the lads for not keeping in touch after they leave us. They have their own lives to lead and Wealdstone is a distant memory.

**You have also built up a great number of contacts in the game and the vast majority respect you as a Manager - even to the extent that some consider you a 'Mentor' - are there any that ring and you think 'Christ, not him again....'**

Not really.

Whoever calls, I always try to offer my

## GORDON BARTLETT

BY ROGER SLATER

# Bartlett is new favourite for Boro' job



● Gordon Bartlett - top tip to take over at Earlsmead.

By **Aaron Gransby**

HOUNSLOW boss Gordon Bartlett is the new favourite for the vacant Harrow Borough manager's job, but no appointment will be made until the beginning of next week.

Bartlett, one of the brightest young managers around, has already been interviewed and is understood to have made a good impression with Borough's interviewing panel of general manager Keith Chamberlin and football director Peter Rogers.

His successes include taking Southall to the FA Vase final at Wembley in 1986 and leading his current club Hounslow back to the Beazer Homes League from the Hellenic League.

Now he has taken Hounslow to second place in the league's southern division, despite operating on a shoestring budget. Among his players at the Denbigh Road club is former Wealdstone keeper Alex Welsh. He is also the first full-time employee of the Middlesex County FA, for whom he is county coach.

Bartlett confirmed to the Observer: "I have been approached and have already had an interview. If I was offered the job I would seriously consider it. But there are many other considerations, including the fact that Hounslow are lying second in the league and going so well."

Two other candidates who have already been interviewed for the vacant post are Colin Barnes, the Burnham boss, and Farnborough coach Alan Taylor.

But as Borough do not have any league games in the coming week, the board has decided to take its time in making an appointment. Meanwhile, Keith Chamberlin has been running the team for the last week.

"We don't want to reach a decision too hastily," said Chamberlin. "The club has received a number of applications for the manager's job and interviews are being conducted this week. There will be a full board meeting early next week at which a decision will be announced."

Six more candidates are to be interviewed on top of the three already seen. They are believed to include former Kingsbury boss Terry Dyson and ex-Hayes manager George Goodie. Once all the interviews have taken place, a shortlist of two or three will be drawn up for the board to consider and make their final decision.

honest advice on a situation, player or team and then it's down to that person to deal with it in the best way he thinks possible.

**You are also now coming up against some of your former players that are Coaches and Managers of our opponents. How does that feel - do you see or look for yourself in them?**

Two things come to mind; Firstly, it makes me feel bloody old! Secondly, they have probably only gone into management because they've looked at me and said, if he can do it, anyone can!

I don't look for myself in anyone. My only advice would be to yourself.

**What drives you?**

I'm not really a great one for listening to music but do associate Wealdstone with Lady Gaga's Edge of Glory. We have been so close over the last couple of seasons that this song typifies our situation. I want to turn that nearly into success.

**Finally, what's next for Gordon Bartlett? Do you ever see yourself not directly involved in football?**

I'm not sure. I've never been one for setting personal goals or time limits. I am enjoying my involvement, I still feel the club is going in the right direction and more importantly, I believe we can be successful.

Football is like a drug, I don't think I could be without it totally so I will just have to see what happens when my managerial career finishes.



# GORDON & LEO STATS....

Most Goal for in  
a season  
1984/85  
**104**

POINTS PER GAME **1.52**

GOALS PER GAME  
**1.67**

WIN RATIO  
**46%**

**2263**  
GOALS SCORED  
IN ALL  
COMPETITIONS

HIGHEST  
POINTS  
2013/14  
**96**

WEALDSTONE  
GAMES  
MANAGED  
**1275**

## WEALDSTONE FC

- 1996-97 **Isthmian League Division Three Champions**  
**Associate Members Trophy Finalists**
- 1997-98 Isthmian League Division Two Third - Promoted to Division One
- 1998-99 Isthmian League Division One Third – Denied promotion to the Premier Division on ground grading
- 2001-02 Middlesex Senior Charity Cup Finalists
- 2003-04 Isthmian League Division One - Won play-off for a place in the new Premier Division  
**Middlesex Senior Charity Cup Winners**
- 2009-10 Isthmian League Cup – Finalists
- 2010-11 **Middlesex Senior Charity Cup Winners**
- 2011-12 Middlesex Senior Cup Runners-Up  
**Middlesex County George Ruffell Shield Winners**
- 2013-14 **Isthmian League Premier Division Champions**  
Middlesex Senior Charity Cup Runners-Up

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Southall	60	32	12	16	119	82	60
Hounslow	163	83	19	61	273	248	163
Yeading	355	171	81	103	630	429	355
Wealdstone	1275	581	278	416	2263	1786	1275
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1853</b>	<b>867</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>596</b>	<b>3285</b>	<b>2545</b>	<b>1853</b>

## In 2010 Roger Slater sat down with Gordon Bartlett to document Gordons (then) amazing 25 years in non league football. The following extract describes in Gordons own words the detail around his and Leo's decision to join Wealdstone FC.

I can't remember at what stage Paul Rumens, then Wealdstone Chairman first mentioned the possibility of my becoming the new Stones Manager but what I do know is that Phil Spurden, Yeading Chairman, was not best pleased to put it mildly. Paul and I had spoken a number of times over the two seasons that Wealdstone ground shared at Yeading, following a costly spell at Watford's Vicarage Road. He and his partner, Lori were always around when we returned from away games and the like. During the summer, I was made redundant from my job at Atholl School where I had been teaching, and I had already put wheels in motion to go back to the Middlesex FA coaching position on a full time basis. Almost simultaneously, Layne Patterson contacted me and asked if there was a chance I'd be interested in joining and I agreed to speak to Paul who subsequently made me an offer to take over.

On consideration, I had probably taken Yeading as far as I could. We had gone from Division 2 to 9th in the Premier Division over 6 years, yet we were still playing in front of very small crowds while Wealdstone were at their lowest ebb supporter wise but they comfortably outnumbered Yeading week in and week out. I was sold on the history and potential of the club plus the promise of a new stadium in a couple of years. It would be financially better for me and with my 'day job' uncertain, I seriously had to consider the opportunity but the major negative was moving from the Premier Division down to Division 3 where Wealdstone, having transferred from the Southern League, were to

compete in the forthcoming season. It would be a great opportunity to establish myself, with hopefully some success and then we could really push on once the new stadium came along. I was keen to accept the challenge of turning around the fortunes of a once big club and help them get back to former glories. With a mortgage and a young family and being about to lose my Teaching salary, a move to Wealdstone would provide some good compensation which helped finally clinch my decision.

I sat down with Leo and although I really wanted him to join me, it had to be his own decision as I reckoned Yeading would offer him the manager's role. We sat down over a couple of drinks and wrote a list of all the pro's and con's of moving. The pro's were the fan base, the history, the finance and the potential for the development. The con's? It was going to be a huge wrench to leave Yeading after such a long time. We had a good young side with a number of players on contract, an excellent pitch, great facilities, various options for training and then of course there was the FA Cup exception till the 4th Qualifying round next season. Despite the obvious advantages of Yeading we mutually felt that we had taken the club as far as we could. Leo did make his own decision to come with me and consequently I was able to tell Paul that we would both accept the challenge of taking Wealdstone back up the pyramid. That, in hindsight, was the easy bit. Then, I had to inform Yeading we would be leaving. That did not go down at all well. Understandably and bearing in mind we had no intentions of moving at the end of the previous season, we had been totally sincere in our concluding programme notes.

Having been at Yeading for seven years, everyone including my self thought that we had become part of the furniture. Everything had been moving in the right direction with year on year improvements. You can only conclude that to progress every year, you must be doing the job well enough. We'd had a couple of promotions, won a number of Cups including the prestigious FA Vase and got further in FA Competitions than ever before. I look back with satisfaction on our achievements there and we left Yeading with our heads held high and with the club in a

better position than when we joined. It was time for pastures new.

Outside of football, due to the loss of my teaching position, I had also taken on the FA County Coach role at Middlesex County on a full time basis, which would work hand in hand with my new position at Wealdstone. A great opportunity, a new stadium being built and a real chance to put the club back on the football map. I felt optimistic that I could get my feet under the table and get the club progressing forward again unless of course, I cocked it up but there is always that risk.

Soon afterwards, I answered a phone call from the Headmaster of Alpha Prep School, who had lost his PE Teacher. Sadly he had died of a heart attack and they had a vacancy and I was a PE teacher looking for a job. The call had come totally out of the blue and I got the position on a trial basis. Starting in the September with the position reviewed at Christmas, I learnt subsequently that my predecessor was another Wealdstone connection. Alex Tsitsis was a supporter who played regularly for SFC Wealdstone, the supporters football team and he had also progressed to play for the main club as well as playing both Rugby and Cricket for sides in Bedford where he lived. He was around 40 when he died one Sunday afternoon on the cricket field and it meant that fate had transpired to present me with three jobs!

All of this activity took place towards the end of May and into early June. Wealdstone had finished the previous season with a massive budget yet carrying so called 'name' players who under performed to say the least, finishing near the bottom of the Southern League. Paul called the whole squad together for a meeting with Leo and me. Some of the wage figures being thrown around were mind blowing. Far more than we had ever seen or had control of at Yeading or anywhere else. Although the budget was being reduced drastically, it was still more than we were used to. Whether the players would be prepared to take a drop in wages was something we needed resolved immediately. The meeting took place at Viking Sports and about 15 or 16 of the squad turned up. Paul introduced me with a spiel that was so good I wondered who on earth he was talking about. It was a bit 'over the top' to

say the least. I may have had a good couple of years and a decent track record but listening to Paul the analogy with 'sliced bread' came to mind.....



'Start the way we meant to carry on' was my first thought. Thanking Paul, I then addressed the players emphasising that everything he said was history. All that mattered now was the future of Wealdstone FC and that was where I would be judged. Looking around at the players, I commented that some had had professional careers or had played at the highest non league level in the Conference, but comparing results and the cost incurred, Wealdstone had certainly not had value for money, but I would judge them all on how they performed for us. I guaranteed every player in that room, that despite the lower club budget they would all get the same money for the new season. The bad news was that they would have to earn it. Whatever they were on, a quarter of it would be 'Basic Money', a quarter paid on attendance at training, a further quarter 'Appearance Money' and the balance would be a 'Win Bonus'. This guaranteed them an opportunity to earn exactly the same



## OFF THE BENCH CONTINUED..

as the previous year but to do so they would have to show they were committed to giving 100% effort in every respect and to give a fair return for the club. Leo and I then told them pre season training would start on the first Tuesday in July at the American Colleges Playing Fields in Honeypot Lane and said that the details would be confirmed in writing. Leo and I shook hands with them all, said we looked forward to seeing them in due course and starting the new season together. What happened? I wasn't at all surprised that only two of them actually turned up. It just about summed up the level of commitment and illustrated why their performances were so negative the previous year. Not unexpectedly this caused some concern around the club but actually, it proved helpful as we needed fresh faces. We had to turn the club round and get a whole new squad assembled in a short space of time, whilst ensuring that any signings were of the right calibre and attitude. This meant umpteen phone calls to players and clubs alike. Not easy but hardly much different from most summers when clubs rebuild at this level. Ultimately, by the opening day of the season, Roddy Brathwaite was the only player in the starting line up from the previous year with John Shanahan on the bench

It had been a good pre season with about 20 players signed up for the start of the campaign including Steve Croad who would be the cornerstone of the new squad. It was coming together nicely and we felt it was more than capable of getting a good start to the season in a new home, the club having moved from Yeading to groundshare at Edgware Town closer to the Harrow roots. The move had finally taken place around the time I was considering the job. At Yeading, there was the main pitch, a training ground next door, a floodlight Astro turf pitch, Bars and a Banqueting hall everything you could want as a manager. Now, I was at Edgware. I remembered it as a bit run down and dilapidated, so I went over and had a look. I arrived to find my memory had been playing tricks on me. What do they say about rose tinted spectacles? It was far worse than I remembered it! I drove into the pot holed car park, surrounded by a broken fence, squeezing into the ground via the buckled gate

I gazed at the pitch. My immediate thought was 'What the hell have I done?' Screwing on my positive head I reminded myself that it was just a temporary base for a couple of years, then there would be a brand spanking new stadium and I could put all of this behind me. A couple of years of hardship would be paid back many fold in the new facilities with it's all weather surfaces, training pitches, club and bar, gym and to cap it all a new stadium with a capacity of 4,000. In reality, I'd dropped down three divisions on the playing side but it seemed like five with the standard of the 'temporary' facilities, but it would all be worth it, wouldn't it?



**OFF THE BENCH - A quarter of a century of non-league management is available in print ISBN 978-0-9566621-4-9 and on Amazon Kindle.**

*Gordon Bartlett*

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by

**Gordon Bartlett & Roger Slater**

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