

My plans for Wealdstone

— By David Morrirt



THE Observer today offers readers an exclusive preview of David Morrirt's plans for a futuristic new soccer stadium in Harrow.

The controversial Wealdstone chairman, who recently bid for first division Watford, has now stated: "It is still my ambition to build a Morrirt Stadium in Harrow."

And for the first time, he has backed up his plans with concrete details and an artist's impression of the projected stadium's masterpiece — a 2,000-seater main stand with 16 executive boxes.

"It will be sleek and slimline and truly something that Wealdstone and the whole borough of Harrow can be proud of," said 44-year-old Mr Morrirt.

"But we will do it properly and make it unobtrusive. Its total height will only be around 30ft — 20ft of seats and another 10ft for the boxes.

"It will run almost the length of the pitch and there will be terracing at each end of the ground for standing spectators.

"On the other side of the pitch, we will build the foundations for another stand which will be built up as the club progresses."

Mr Morrirt estimates the cost to be between £2m-£2.5m. The money would be available from the sale of the club's Lower Mead ground in central Harrow.

Despite his much-publicised move for Elton John's controlling interest in Watford, Mr Morrirt says his first ambition has always been to build a new ground in Harrow.

"A Morrirt Stadium has always been my dream, and this stand is my vision for it. It is what I really want to see, what I have worked nearly seven years towards.

"But we will keep it small. Small is beautiful, and we don't want it to be ugly or annoy our neighbours.

"A stadium in Harrow that the Borough can be proud of"

"All I need now is a five-acre site to build it on. Time is running out and I will go to almost any lengths to find the right place."

The original plans for the ground included a multi-sports and leisure complex, but Mr Morrirt says he will drop these if he has to find a site.

"The crunch is coming for Wealdstone. In about four months' time we will have to spend £200,000 on improvement to Lower Mead to make it safe. And we may only stay there for one more season.

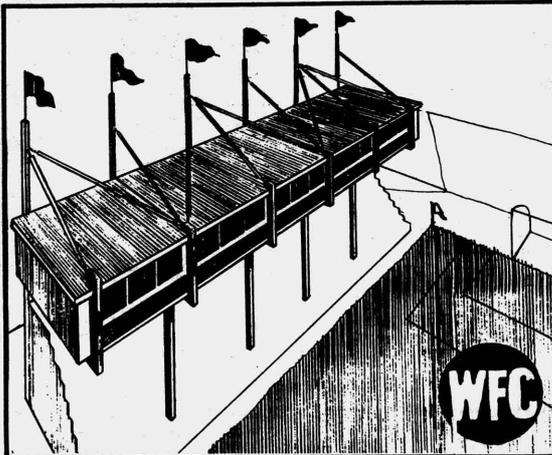
"That is why I moved for Watford. They already have a suitable stadium and moving there would have solved a lot of headaches for us. Economically, it would have been a good move for Wealdstone.

"If it had been agreed, it would still have been subject to the club members' approval. But it seems most members would rather see the club stay in Harrow, so I must note that."

Although Wealdstone are still nowhere near buying a new site, last week's Government announcement that the Inner London Education Authority is to axed could be good news for the club.

Mr Morrirt has always been interested in the Prince Edward Playing Fields in Canons Park, a site owned by ILEA.

He said: "The Prince Edward site would be ideal for use. It is out of town and on



● The new Morrirt Stadium — an artist's impression

bus and tube routes. It is a large site and we could use just a corner of it. Our stadium would not dominate the skyline, but blend in with the area."

But his desperation will not force him into a deal at inflated prices, he insists.

"Whatever we buy has to be at the right price. I have to safeguard the interests of the members — that is my job as chairman — and I will be looking for a sensible price."

He says the actual building of a new stadium, once planning permission has been obtained, would take around nine months.

The sale of Lower Mead should not be a problem, with all the major supermarket chains looking to buy the site. Figures of £6m have been mentioned regarding its value.

But contrary to recent rumours, the ground definitely has not been sold yet. "I can't do anything until we have possession of a new ground. Lots of people are interested in Lower Mead but they will have to bid their time," assured Mr Morrirt.

All the different elements of the sale of Lower Mead and the acquisition of a new ground have been the topic of debate for years.

"The move has always been my intention

since I became chairman and I won't be happy until we have our new ground."

"We made it to the top of non-League football when we won the double three years ago and we said then that we would have to re-group and aim next towards getting a new stadium. That is still what we are looking at."

No doubt Wealdstone supporters will view the new plan with some scepticism, after all there have been no end of ideas in the past. But this time, David Morrirt seems determined to make it work.

As he himself says: "I just keep praying that something suitable will come up. There is always light at the end of the tunnel and if we keep trying hard enough it will happen."

And he had this message for the Stones' fans: "Naturally, my business comes first which is why I haven't been around much. But my heart is still very much in the club and I still have the same ideas I had when I first came here.

"I want to see Wealdstone in a new ground and then in the Football League. I was always tough that if you want something enough, you don't give up just because you are going through a down turn."

Boro' get a crack at Stones

LOCAL fans are in for a treat on Saturday when old rivals Wealdstone and Harrow Borough meet in a hastily-arranged friendly at Lower Mead.

With both sides without a game, Tony Jennings and Keith Chamberlin decided the opportunity would be ideal to try out players on the fringes of their squad.

Jennings said: "It will give me an opportunity to use all our fit players and try a few experiments that I would not be able to do in Conference matches."

Dennis Byatt and Alan Cordice could both get their chance to stake a claim. Byatt has been out with a knee injury and Cordice with chicken pox.

Borough boss Keith Chamberlin will give long term injury victims Steve Scott and Matt Loddy a run-out to prove their fitness.

Both Boro and Stones are in action next Wednesday. Boro travel to Yeovil and Stones play Weymouth, in a match to be played at second division Bournemouth's ground.

Boss Alan boosts Wembley

Grays Ath 0, Wembley 0

WEMBLEY manager Alan Dafforn and trainer Ernie Ford were forced to play for the first time in eight years as the Lions fought out an incredible draw with league leaders Grays on Tuesday.

Several players failed to turn up in time, so they both trotted out in a team of ten.

Sylvester Williams arrived five minutes after the start to make up the 11, and Derek Brown and John Ward made up the substitutes.

Wembley performed a constant rear-guard action and held out well, denying Grays both time and space. Whenever they did get through, they found Lions keeper Fred Smart in inspired form.

Wembley: Smith, Flaherty (Borough), Lucas, Murphy, Janaway, Smart, O'Connor, Bhatia, Dafforn, Ford, Williams. Sub: Ward.

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Onrun with Observer

THE third annual Harrow Observer Mini-Marathon takes place on Sunday in Harrow Recreation Ground. The event is also the selection trial for the Mars London Mini-Marathon in April. The first ten male and female Harrow residents in the under-14, under-16 and under-18 events will win places in the Harrow team for the London race.

Brent have also decided to use the Observer race as a guide to selection for their London teams. Athletics organiser Rez Cameron hopes that all possible Brent runners will take part in the Harrow event and boost the Brent team for this major sporting event.

To help the Brent effort and encourage the maximum participation, organisers Old Gaytonians AC have agreed to take entries on the day. The fee is £1.50. Registration is at the Harrow St Mary's pavilion in the south-west corner of Harrow Recreation Ground.

At the time of writing there are 230 entries with 61 in the under-14 race and 89 in the over-18 event. More runners are needed to boost the numbers in the under-11 race (15 entries), under-16 (37 runners) and under-18 (28 athletes).

There are Observer awards for the first six boys and girls in each race.

International star Andrea Whitcombe is hot favourite for the under-18 event, while her Parkside clubmate Elizabeth Bowers heads the entries for the under-14 race.

Old Gayts athletes are likely to dominate the male events with Eddie Burton and Anton Hurley battling for the under-18 title. The under-16 race could go to Harrow champion Barry Hancock while reigning champion Colin Brown tipped to retain the under-14 title.

The race timetable is as follows: 2pm Under-11 2700 metres; 2.30pm Under-14 5000 metres; 3pm Under-16 5000 metres; 3.30pm Under-18 5000 metres; 4pm Over-18 5000 metres and veterans.

Cadogan is back for Lions

LANCE Cadogan is back from a five-week holiday and will be available to boost Wembley's goal-shy attack as they entertain Walton and Hershaw on Saturday.

But defender Steve Ray has an ankle injury and is doubtful. Lions travel to Finchley on Tuesday in the Middlesex Senior Cup.

Goalkeeper Mick McDonough is likely to miss Kingsbury Town's home clash with Boreham Wood on Saturday. He picked up a hamstring injury against Staines last week.

He will be replaced by 17-year-old reserve team keeper Peter Hales. Town's much-delayed Middlesex Charity Cup quarter final with Northwood is now scheduled for Tuesday.

Rayners Lane's Darren Colwill is doubtful for their Hellenic League Cup quarter final at fellow strugglers Bishop's Cleeve on Saturday. He is suffering from an ankle injury.

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