



Thorn In My Side!

As soon as Andy Thorn was appointed as the club's Chief Scout last year, it was clear he hadn't forgotten his Dons roots in the Crazy Gang when searching for new recruits. "This is Wimbledon Football Club. You're coming to play for us and that has to mean something. It means you have to win at all costs. We don't walk around and have everyone telling us we have a nice stadium, we want to beat them and send them home."



The only homegrown player in Wimbledon's 1988 FA Cup winning side – at the age of just 21 – the Carshalton-born local boy broke into the WFC as a teenager. "I made my debut at Notts County towards the end of 1983/84. I was 17, on a YOP (Youth Opportunity Programme), earning £108 per month – and I had to give my Mum £25 of that as well!" But four years later he was a Wembley winner, forming a tight central defensive partnership with Eric Young which the pair would also reprise at Crystal Palace later in their careers. Thorn played 107 league games in his first stint at Plough Lane, also winning five England Under-21 caps, and became the first Wimbledon player to score in the top-flight with a

consolation goal in a 3-1 opening day defeat at Manchester City in 1986.

But like skipper Dave Beasant, the cup win signalled their exodus from SW19 as both moved to Newcastle United that summer, each for fees in excess of £800,000. After a year at St James' Park, Andy returned to South London with Crystal Palace and spent four seasons helping the Eagles consolidate their top division status, reaching another FA Cup Final and deputising as captain for Geoff Thomas. A knee injury began to trouble him and he returned to Wimbledon, by now sharing Selhurst Park as tenants, to make another 37 appearances, but after short spells with Hearts and Tranmere, he hung up his boots aged 30 after the last of seven operations on his knee.

He swiftly moved into the player recruitment side of the game, working with David Moyes at Everton, as the Toffees European and England scout and went on to experience different styles and philosophies at several other clubs, where his post-playing career has also seen him occupy Chief Scout roles at Fulham and Coventry City – who he later managed along with Kidderminster Harriers – West Bromwich Albion and Celtic.

We are delighted Andy is this afternoon's WOPA special guest, but we'll leave the last word to a dressing room tale from 1984 and the first training session after Thorn's Wimbledon debut. "I took Wally Downes' place at that Notts County game and fully expected Dave Basset to drop me for him following his return. But 'Harry' left me in. Wally came into the changing room, took his shirt off, took his shoes off, gave me his car keys and joked 'I suppose you want my missus now!'"

