



Steven Gregory

Steven Gregory is still only 37 and looks like he could still do a job on the pitch in his customary holding midfield role but hung up his boots back in 2016 after turning out for his local Hellenic League side Thame United to concentrate on building a career away from the game. He has since founded the Fitlife Health Club in Haddenham, which has won the Buckinghamshire New Business of the Year award in 2018.

Gregory began his football career as a 15-year-old in the Wycombe Wanderers academy, later captaining the Chairboys to a Berks & Bucks Senior Cup Final win over Milton Keynes, and made his EFL debut in 2006. Loan spells at Hayes & Yeading United and

Havant & Waterlooville followed and he joined Hayes permanently two years later. Two goals in the Conference South Play-off Final win over Hampton & Richmond in 2009, brought attention and AFC Wimbledon manager Terry Brown moved quickly to bring him to Kingsmeadow that summer, fitting the Club's new training regime of four mornings a week around his then day job as a personal trainer.

Steven became a regular in the side, picking up two England C international caps and was a member of the starting XI that eventually triumphed over Luton Town in the Conference Premier Play-off Final in 2011, to help the Dons reach the Football League,

just nine years after reforming. Still a close-knit squad who keep in touch with one another, he recalled the excellent camaraderie among the players. "I was called a 'posh boy' by Alan Inns because I grew up in Buckinghamshire and most of the other boys come from in and around London. They also claim I speak 'properly' – though I think I speak like the others. In any case, Innsy lives in Berkshire and is a schoolteacher, so he's hardly one to talk!"

That summer however, after being a pivotal figure in the Dons promotion campaign and attracting so many scouts to one of his final games that non-playing squad members were forced to vacate their seats and

stand on the terraces with Dons fans, AFC Bournemouth – then in League One – won the race to secure Gregory's services for an undisclosed fee. He made 32 appearances for the Cherries during 2011/12 but slipped down the pecking order at Dean Court that summer and when a loan opportunity arose, he opted to return to AFC Wimbledon, in a 93-day deal organised by coach Simon Bassey.

When his contract at Bournemouth expired after he returned to Dorset, Gregory joined Gillingham, playing 55 games for the Kent club. But after this, Steven admits he fell out of love with football. "Not with playing it, but definitely the politics side of

the industry. I decided it wasn't what I wanted to do anymore. I say to everyone that AFC Wimbledon was the best club I played for by a country mile. Purely for the supporters and the people involved with the Club and what it meant to them. The fans would appreciate everything you did and even if you lost you would be in the bar with them afterwards. You really felt that togetherness with the supporters."

Steven is here today with his son Ezra, aged six, "who is completely football crazy and doesn't quite believe that his Dad used to be a player." Well, Ezra, you'd better believe it now, because he was!