



WOPA

JON MEADES

From a very early age it was almost pre-ordained that Jon Meades would become a Wimbledon player. Coming through the Cardiff City youth system under the supervision of Academy Head (and Dons legend) Neal Ardley, the Gloucester-born defender made his professional bow as a teenager in the second tier of Norwegian football with Moss FK in 2010. Jon had an eventful debut to his three-month loan spell, getting sent-off after a second bookable offence on 84 minutes of a 2-0 home over Alta IF but was still named man of the match!

After returning to South Wales, Meades was later released by manager Malky Mackay after not breaking

into the Bluebirds' first team due to knee and calf injuries. Picked up by AFC Bournemouth initially as a trialist, he was loaned to AFC Wimbledon – where Ardley had taken charge three weeks earlier – and joining fellow Cherries Steven Gregory and Warren Cummings. Quickly making the left-back spot his own, Meades' loan was extended until the end of the season, a campaign that saw him make 26 appearances, score his first senior goal and end it by deservedly landing the Young Player of the Year award.

Oxford United moved swiftly to sign him permanently for 2013/14, but in pre-season he suffered an ankle ligament injury that sidelined him for a year. After making only seven appearances the following season, he returned to AFC Wimbledon for a second spell in June 2015. This was a lot more successful, with Jon making a

total of 118 appearances in all competitions, the highlight of which was the 2016 League Two Play-Off Final, where the Dons defeated Plymouth Argyle 2-0 to reach League One. Jon held his own in the third tier, but again his career was plagued by injuries and he battled back from a second knee operation in the summer of 2017.



But after a year of careful management of his long-standing ankle injury and



discussions when it flared up again in pre-season friendless in July 2018, Meades made the difficult decision to retire. "For a lad of 26 this is a terrible thing to have to do", said Ardley. "A good footballer like Jon doesn't leave his problems behind in the treatment room and eventually the problem permeates everything you do and becomes intolerable. I've worked with Meadesy since he was 14 and the decision was with AFC Wimbledon in mind. He is such a humble, decent



guy, he felt he owed us as a club and me as his manager and friend, not to carry on getting paid and leaving us potentially short of player all season."

Jon gained his UEFA B coaching badge with the FA of Wales, on the same course as Michael Ballack, returning to the Dons to coach within the AFC Wimbledon academy age group sides, but after a year decided to have a clean break from the game and moved to Australia with his

wife. The COVID-19 pandemic brought them back to the UK and since then he has become a personal trainer, working 'hybrid' (both face-to-face and online) with athletes and others of all ages. "AFC Wimbledon is still the first result I look for – and Cardiff City the second", said the former Welsh Under-21 defender, so tonight seemed like the ideal opportunity to welcome him back to Plough Lane!

