

Looking Back in Amber 1977-78



After winning the London Spartan League championship in May 1977, Cray faced the challenge of retaining the title after the summer break. Manager Jimmy Wakeling was clearly working on the “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” approach. In a very low-key build-up to the season, only one new signing was made, that of experienced striker Bobby Hawkes from Erith & Belvedere.

Local rivals Alma Swanley were again expected to be strong challengers to the Wands’ supremacy, whilst the most interesting of the four promoted sides were Welling United, who had taken over the vacant Park View Road ground that had lain dormant for a year following the demise of Bexley United.

In fact, many local supporters made their way to Welling on the first Saturday of the season in order to witness their historic first game at a stadium that was far superior to any of the other London Spartan clubs’. The home side made a good start in their new surroundings, with a 2-1 victory over Farnham Town. Meanwhile, Cray’s title defence got off to the worst possible start with a 0-2 defeat at Chingford, which shattered any illusions they might have had that the league would be something of a stroll.

The following Thursday night (an odd choice of day), the first home game took place as Swanley Town, always difficult opponents, visited Oxford Road. After a goal-less first half, Hawkes opened his Cray account five minutes after the break. When John Maloney added two more on 68 and 83 minutes, the Wands were well into the comfort zone.

There followed a crazy end to the game, with the Swans pulling one back, John Russell restoring Cray’s three-goal advantage and Terry Smart netting at the wrong end to leave the final score reading 4-2 to the Wands.

The Bank Holiday Saturday game was to be at home to BROB Barnet, but an unseasonal downpour washed out the Oxford Road pitch and led to the unusual event of a waterlogged pitch in August.

Two days later, it had dried up enough for Cray to take on red-hot rivals Alma Swanley. Alma had played three away games so far (their St. Mary’s Road ground was still in use for cricket) and their impressive record of two wins and a draw had put them into second place, a point behind Chingford, who had a 100% record. Whilst the Wands had been watching the raindrops, the Alma had won 2-0 at Bracknell Town.

A good crowd of 229 gathered at Oxford Road to see a full-blooded local derby. Goals from Terry Smart, Dave Waight and Pat Carey helped Cray to squeeze to an important 3-2 victory.

Two wins out of three represented a reasonable start to the season for the Wands, but Welling had done even better with full points from their three games, including nine goals over the Bank Holiday weekend, against pointless Berkhamsted Town and Barkingside.

September is a month that for non-league clubs is usually dominated by cup-ties and for Cray Wanderers 1977 was no exception. Only one London Spartan League game was played, on the first Saturday of the month.

This meant a trip to one of the newly-promoted clubs, Whyteleafe, who had made a steady start in the higher sphere, with one win and one defeat. It proved a relatively comfortable afternoon for Cray, as they recorded a 2-0 victory, with Bobby Hawkes again finding the net, before old favourite John Scott added a second.

The following week, Edgware were the visitors to Oxford Road for a London Senior Cup tie. This was in the days when the London Senior was considered a very prestigious competition. Edgware were attractive opponents, as they played in the Athenian League, considered a notch about the London Spartan, and they unbeaten in their league.

As usual, Trevor Mulligan listed the visitors' team in the programme, and unsurprisingly, we hadn't heard of any of them. "B. Stein", their centre-forward seemed a skilful young player, and he notched two goals in a three-minute spell just before half-time. The Wands were up against it, but hit back in the second-half with two goals of their own in three minutes, as both Steve Greenway and Pat Carey beat the lanky young Edgware 'keeper, "D. Beasant".

Little were we to know that these two players were future England internationals. Brian Stein played once in Bobby Robson's team, whilst at Luton. Dave Beasant is, of course, best known for his penalty save for Wimbledon in the F.A. Cup final. He played twice for the national side whilst at Chelsea in 1989/90.

As it happened, the hero of the day was another Edgware player, Hutchinson, who scored the winning goal with eight minutes left.

If this early cup exit was a bit disappointing, the following week's F.A Cup defeat was little short of disastrous. Cray travelled down to East Kent to face Snowdown Colliery. The miners were then a lower half of the table Kent League side, with little support and limited ambitions.

It was a game the Wands would certainly have expected to win, but they put in a thoroughly lack-lustre performance and lost 2-1, with only a Pat Carey goal to show for their efforts.

A third successive cup defeat would really have damaged Cray's season, so the F.A. Vase trip to Dartford Glentworth assumed great importance. The former Dartford Amateurs, who played in Lowfield Street, (behind the swimming pool!) were also a Kent League side, but a much stronger proposition than Snowdown.

Both Tony Pamphlett and Micky Crowe missed good chances for the home side midway through the second-half. The Wands took advantage of their good fortune and struck in the 77th minute, when Greenway volleyed home. Two minutes later, the same player was fouled by Glentworth's Micky North and Pat Carey despatched the spot-kick past former Cray 'keeper Steve Pateman. Glentworth pulled one back to give Cray an anxious last five minutes, but they held on for a morale-boosting win.

After a break of almost a month from league action, Cray faced a series of London Spartan matches in October 1977, 25 years ago. This gave them the opportunity to make up ground on the league front-runners.

The visit to Merland Rise, Banstead, provided a tough encounter. The home side were several places above the Wands, with only one defeat in six games. Bobby Sustins opened the scoring with a rare goal after just five minutes and for the remaining 85 the Wands held on to rob Banstead of their unbeaten home record.

Cray were still down in eighth place in the league table, but only three points behind leaders Bracknell Town with three games in hand. More serious challengers appeared to be second placed Welling United, who boasted a 100% record after five games and Chingford, in fourth, who had dropped only one point and were top goalscorers.

When Barkingside visited Oxford Road, the Wands were very confident of chalking up a big win. The Essex team were rooted to the bottom, with only one point and had conceded 35 goals in just seven games. Cray manager Jimmy Wakeling unveiled three new signings. Experienced defender Gary Cooper from Erith & Belvedere, midfielder Dermot Trainor and centre-forward Butch Dunn, from Fisher Athletic, made their home debuts.

All three newcomers were players of high quality, but their first game at Oxford Road was little short of disastrous. The new-look Wands side just did not “click” and Barkingside were able to escape with a heroic, and rather fortunate, point from a goalless draw.

And it was little better the following week when mid-table Farnham Town were the visitors. Again, Wakeling altered the team, leaving out Dunn, but bringing in two more new players, both from Erith. Glen Cooper apparently joined in order “to be with his brother”, whilst Andy Bushell stayed for only a couple of games (although he returned two years later).

The changes did not have an immediate beneficial effect. By half-time, kicking down the Oxford Road slope, Farnham’s big striker Chris Yates put them two up at the interval. A Trainor penalty gave Cray some hope midway through the second half, but it took an injury time equaliser from Steve Greenway to rescue a point.

Cray’s visit to East Ham United was a lively affair. Goal-less at half-time, the Wands established a 2-1 lead thanks to goals from Butch Dunn, with a cracking strike that was his first for the club, and a Trainor penalty. The home side then lost their discipline and, after a bit of an altercation, their scorer, Bull, was sent off. Meanwhile, their goalkeeper got involved in a heated “discussion” with the Cray supporters behind his goal that nearly turned very nasty indeed.

The trip to Surrey for the next round of the F.A. Vase was an altogether more pleasant occasion. Chertsey Town played in the higher ranked Athenian League and, though they were next to bottom, their one win had come the previous week away to Edgware, who had won at Oxford Road earlier in the season.

Any hopes Chertsey may have had, though, were destroyed by half-time as John Russell, Dunn and Glen Cooper (his first Cray goal) netted for the Wands. Dunn and Billy Parry added second-half goals to round off a stunning 5-0 victory. The home side’s misery was complete when they missed a penalty.

November 1977 began with an important London Spartan League match as Cray, in fourth place, entertained fifth place Welling United. This was the Wings’ first, and indeed only, competitive game at Oxford Road.

Both sides were missing their first-choice centre-forwards. Butch Dunn and John Bartley went on to be prolific scorers at higher levels in non-league circles and both sides looked short of firepower without them. Cray manager Jimmy Wakeling moved Gary Cooper up front, a position he had filled successfully for many years at Erith & Belvedere.

Welling had started the season in cracking form, with six straight wins, but recently the wheels had come off with three successive defeats without scoring a goal. And their goal drought continued at Oxford Road as the Wands cruised to a comfortable victory. First-half goals from John Canavan and Gary Cooper settled matters.

The two points enabled Cray to leapfrog Alma Swanley and Banstead Athletic and move into second place, just four points behind Bracknell Town, with three games in hand. The games in hand were set to increase as the next three games were all cup-ties.

In the Kent Senior Trophy the Wands had to travel to Salters Lane, to take on Faversham Town. Faversham were a strong side. They were holders of the Trophy and challenging strongly for the Kent League title. So their game with the reigning London Spartan champions was undoubtedly the “tie of the round.”

In goal for Faversham was former Charlton ‘keeper Graham Tutt. He had made his debut for the Addicks as a 17 year-old and was a regular in their second (now first) division side before tragedy struck in February 1976. He was accidentally kicked in the face by Sunderland’s Tom Finney at Roker Park and

suffered an injury to his right eye that affected his vision and put a premature end to his highly-promising professional career, after 78 games.

Tutt was attempting to resume playing, in Faversham's colours, and he was certainly in marvellous form against the Wands", keeping a clean sheet as the home side won 2-0. Sadly, though, after a few more games for Faversham, he gave up playing altogether. Faversham went on to win both the League and Senior Trophy.

The following week Cray had a much easier task in the first round of the League Cup. Visiting Oxford Road were Royal Arsenal, from the division below and at the bottom of that. But Cray fans who were expecting an avalanche of goals were disappointed. A combination of stout defending and curious refereeing (three goals were disallowed) kept the scoresheet blank until just before half-time. Butch Dunn then netted twice in quick succession to give the Wands a 2-0 interval lead.

The second-half was a complete non-event. Cray seemed happy enough with their passage to the last sixteen, and even conceded an 89th minute penalty, which Bolter converted. It was a rather unsatisfactory afternoon.

The next match was a much more exciting affair. Haringey Borough from the Athenian League were the visitors for an F.A. Vase second round tie. The local press made much of the fact that Haringey were managed by Jimmy Wakeling's cousin, George, who later, of course, managed Bromley with some success.

The Wands welcomed back Dermot Trainor, but were missing Glen Cooper and Dave Waight, who had been banished to the reserves (whose game against London Fire Brigade was postponed due to strike action!). Haringey's side included former Wands captain Eddie Webb and Lee Holmes, who later moved to Brentford.

The Wands got off to a cracking start with a Butch Dunn goal after just 7 minutes but Chris Pye equalised for the visitors on 28 minutes and Dave Stevenson headed the winner midway through the second half. It was a case of "what might have been" for Cray, as they missed a host of chances. Haringey went on to reach the quarter-final of the Vase.

Having been eliminated from all but one of the Cup competitions, Cray really could now "concentrate on the league." With a run of five Saturday League games through December and the weather set reasonably fair, there was a great chance to take a major step towards retaining their London Spartan title.

The Wands were third in the league, but with games in hand on leaders Bracknell Town and Welling United. The long trip to Bracknell came at the right time for Cray as the home side seemed to have gone off the boil, having only gained one point from their previous two games.

The "Newtonwers" were swept aside by the Wands' attacking flair. Butch Dunn continued his rich vein of form with two more goals and Steve Greenway added a couple. The 4-1 scoreline was the exact reverse of the previous season's defeat at Larges Lane and effectively ended Bracknell's title challenge. Bracknell's form spectacularly nosedived after this defeat. They won only two more league games and finished the season fifth from bottom.

Dunn was in sparkling form for the following week's trip to Barkingside. The lowly home side had frustrated Cray at Oxford Road a couple of months earlier and escaped with a goalless draw. It looked like they might do the same again, as the first 45 minutes produced no goals. But much to the Wands' relief, Bobby Hawkes opened the scoring early in the second-half and then the floodgates opened. Dermot Trainor converted a penalty, Steve Greenway scored and Butch contributed two more, missing out on his first hat-trick only due to an offside decision.

Dunn was absent for mid-table Whyteleafe's visit to Oxford Road, but was hardly missed as Cray cruised to victory with goals from Pat Carey, Ronnie Owlett (his only first-team goal for the club) and Hawkes.

The 'Leafe were another side whose subsequent form was disastrous – they only avoided relegation by two points.

The result put Cray top of the table just in time for Christmas and they approached their Boxing Day visit to South Darenth to play Heathside Sports full of confidence. Sadly, Dunn was again unavailable and this time the Wands could really have done with him. Heathside won by the only goal in a game where refereeing decisions seemed to go in the home side's favour. The result shot Heathside up to second place in the table, a point behind Cray.

It was touch and go whether Butch would make it for the New Year's Eve clash with East Ham United at Oxford Road. It was just as well that he did! In one the most devastating displays of forward play ever seen at Oxford Road, for the first ten minutes of the game he was utterly dominant. He ripped through the visitors' defence, helped himself to two goals and the game was over as a contest. His hat-trick was completed in the second-half, with Carey and Trainor (penalty) also contributing to a 5-1 victory.

Dunn had scored ten goals in his last five appearances, and was the main reason why Cray were at the top of the league. As 1978 dawned, the Wands had a two point advantage over Chingford, who had taken second place in a congested top half of the table. In fact, only two points separated Chingford from Farnham Town in eighth. And with Alma Swanley and Banstead Athletic staking their claim with impressive New Year's Day victories, it was clear that "Super Butch" needed to stay on form if the Wands were to stay in pole position!

The New Year opened with everything in the Cray Wanderers garden looking very rosy. The first team were top of the league, the reserves were second with games in hand and the news had just come through that planning permission had been obtained for the club to develop a ground of their own at the Morphy Richards Sports Ground off Rectory Lane in Foots Cray.

BROB Barnet were the first visitors to Oxford Road in 1978. Although lowly placed in the table, they gave a good account of themselves, with their goalkeeper pulling off a string of fine saves. It was 1-1 at the interval, but two second-half John Canavan goals (one looking far more like an own goal, to be honest) sealed the two points. Steve Greenway was Cray's other scorer, which meant that for the first time in two months, Butch Dunn had failed to hit the target.

The following week brought a visit to Park View Road to play Welling United. The home side were in fourth place, still with outside title aspirations and the local derby generated a lot of interest. There was a large and noisy crowd and they enjoyed a thrilling match.

The Wands got off to the worst possible start, conceding a first minute penalty. John Bartley's spot-kick squeezed in agonisingly off the post, after a brave attempt to save it by Cray 'keeper John Cox. Worse was to follow as Ray Burgess added a second for the home side soon afterwards.

From that point on, Cray completely dominated the play, attack after attack raining down on the Welling goal. Excellent second-half strikes from Greenway and Dunn levelled the scores and it seemed as if there could be only one winner. Then, deep into injury-time, Bartley broke clear of the Cray defence and, with the ruthless efficiency of a man who already had 275 Welling goals to his name, slotted the ball past Cox. It was a sickening way to lose, with so much local pride at stake.

The Kentish Times gave excellent coverage to the game, publishing two different match reports, a Cray-based one in their Sidcup and Orpington editions and one with a Welling bias in the others. The other big story in the local paper that week was the news that the Wanderers had applied to join the Kent League, after a 40-year absence.

At first, this seemed an odd decision to some supporters. We had assumed that the Kent League was of a lower standard than the London Spartan. After all, some Southern League reserve sides played in it (there was only one division on those days), one of whom (Dover Res.) had been beaten by Cray's Reserves earlier in the season.

But we warmed to the idea when we discovered that the Kent League was re-launching itself as a more senior competition. The reserve teams would be removed and other local sides, such as Athenian League Erith & Belvedere, would also be joining.

This news made the Wands even more determined to leave the London Spartan League as champions. Banstead Athletic were emerging as their most serious challengers, now just one point behind. A win at Oxford Road over Berkhamsted Town was essential.

And again, Butch Dunn obliged. He notched two first-half goals, although a penalty for the visitors on the stroke of half-time kept the game competitive. Butch completed his hat-trick midway through the second period with a brilliant angled header at the near post from a corner. Two minutes later, a Dermot Trainor spot-kick put the result beyond doubt. Final score: 4-2.

Cray's London Spartan League title challenge came to a shuddering halt during February 25 years ago. Firstly, the weather intervened, causing the postponement of the visit to Ulysses. Then came a visit to Greenwich in the second round of the league cup.

This was the Borough's first season on their return to senior football. The previous year they had been in the same division as Cray's reserves. They had made a good fist of adapting to the higher level and lay in fourth place in Division One (the Wands were in the Premier). The three teams above them were all destined for higher things: Fisher Athletic, Beckenham Town and Wandsworth (now called Croydon Athletic).

Nonetheless, Cray were clearly the favourites and they duly took the lead five minutes before half-time through John Canavan. They never looked comfortable, though, as two players who were later to play for the Wands, Micky Shorter and Steve Barry, looked increasingly dangerous.

It was Barry who notched the equaliser after 56 minutes and for a while a shock seemed on the cards, before Butch Dunn calmed the Cray supporters' nerves with a goal 15 minutes later. But five minutes from the end, Barry forced the game into extra-time. Four minutes into the extra period, Steve Greenway, who had replaced Pat Carey, gave the Wands the lead for the third time.

Still the Borough would not lie down. With just seven minutes remaining, Barry completed an excellent hat-trick with his third equaliser. There was to be no replay, though. For the referee, a well-known local character who we christened "smiler" Rundle, due to his affable approach, endeared himself to us even more by awarding Cray a penalty. In the gathering gloom, Dunn calmly knocked the pressure kick past Dave Sommerville, who also played for the Wands several years later, and Cray finally claimed their place in the quarter-final.

Steve Barry made a name for himself in his short spell with the Wands. He scored the winner in Cray's 1-0 F.A. Cup victory at Farnborough Town two years later. This was quite an act of giant-killing. Incidentally, Farnborough felt able to stage the game on their own ground!

Ulysses were the next visitors to Oxford Road. The team, which was for old boys of London University, were considered no match for Cray and, as usual, were in the lower half of the table.

For the first time in the season the "gate" was under 100 and it proved a miserable afternoon for the small band of Wands supporters who bothered to turn up. The ex-students notched to only goal of the game to snatch a surprise victory. To make things worse, second-placed Banstead Athletic fought out a goalless draw with third placed Heathside Sports to move a point ahead of Cray at the top of the table, though the Wands had a game in hand.

A visit to lowly BROB Barnet provided the perfect opportunity to get back into winning ways. Again, though, in a match that took a very similar course to the Greenwich cup-tie, Cray made heavy weather of

it. Twice ahead, through Dunn and a Dermot Trainor penalty, they let the home side equalise before Dunn notched the winner.

With Banstead winning 2-0 against Whyteleafe, the positions at the top remained unchanged.

A point behind leaders Banstead Athletic with a game in hand, a win at Berkhamsted Town, who were in the bottom four, was essential to maintain Cray's London Spartan League title challenge. But the home side, whose ground is beside them main line out of Euston by the Station, proved more of a challenge than expected. It took a Pat Carey equaliser to rescue the Wands.

The disappointment was softened by the news that Banstead had also drawn, 2-2 at Swanley Town. There was good news of the reserves, too. They were pursuing the league title and were still in two cups. In a 3-1 victory over Beckton United, Terry Smart had to take over in goal after Mal Sutton broke his arm. The same unfortunate 'keeper broke his leg at Oxford Road some four years earlier.

The first team's stuttering form continued the following week at home to Bracknell Town. An own goal gave Cray a first half lead and when, in the middle of the second-half, the visitors had a player sent off and Jimmy Wakeling brought Butch Dunn off the bench, it looked like the Wands could win comfortably. But the second goal never came and it was a case of hanging on for the welcome two points.

A trip to Motspur Park to play Ulysses was no easy proposition for a side that was beginning to look rather short of confidence. The student side were in a real purple patch (pun intended, that was the colour of their shirts), with a run of victories including Cray's first home league defeat for two years a month earlier. It was a game dominated by penalty kicks. Both sides missed one and the one that Dermot Trainor netted for the Wands was twice-taken.

A 1-1 draw was probably a satisfactory result for Cray but it didn't greatly help in the title race, as Banstead stretched their lead to two points with a 3-1 win over BROB Barnet. And, almost unnoticed, Alma Swanley had crept back into the reckoning, their 2-0 win at Barkingside moving them up to third, just four points behind the Wands with two games in hand. Meanwhile, there was disappointment for the reserves who lost 0-1 to Medway Res. in the Kent Intermediate Cup semi-final.

Frimley Green, three places off the bottom, came to Oxford Road on Easter Saturday. Again Cray huffed and puffed and it was not until Dave Waight came on as a second-half substitute for the injured Bobby Sustins that the goals came. Carey notched the first after 58 minutes and Dunn casually rolled home a last-minute penalty.

Two days later mid-table Chingford were the visitors. The faithful Wands supporters were probably expecting another struggle but, well before the gaggle of fans who liked to stand behind the goal had time to get to the bottom end of the ground, the Wands were one-up. Butch Dunn scored after just 51 seconds, believed to be the fastest goal ever scored at Oxford Road.

What followed a complete demolition of the Essex side. It was as though the Cray players were collectively throwing off the shackles that had inhibited them over the previous two months. The goals flowed. Dunn added another, Steve Greenway chipped in with two (though one looked like an own goal), Carey got one and Dermot Trainor converted a penalty. And to round things off nicely, defender Gerry Collier scored his first goal for three years. The 7-1 scoreline was the best of the season.

On the same day, Banstead won 1-0 at home to Welling to remain two points clear, whilst Alma dropped a point to slip back a little.

The London Spartan League fixture secretary had produced a series of matches for the Wanderers during April that would make or break their championship challenge. A series of three tough away games, followed by the visit of league leaders Banstead Athletic to Oxford Road lay in store.

Actually, it didn't work out like that as the April Fools' Day visit to Farnham was postponed. This allowed Cray Reserves to include Pat Carey in their line-up to face Waltham Abbey, leaders of their division. Carey duly got his name on the scoresheet, along with Mick Shorter (2), Ronnie Owlett and Alan White, as the Wands stormed to a crushing 5-0 victory and took over at the top of the table.

Meanwhile, Banstead moved four points ahead with a 3-2 win over Swanley Town, whilst Alma Swanley consolidated third place with a home win over Berkhamsted. Cray had two games in hand over Banstead and faced two midweek trips to play the Swanley clubs over the course of five days.

The Swanley Rec. in St. Mary's Road had never been a particularly happy hunting ground for the Wands, although they did have happy memories of their match with Alma exactly 12 months earlier, when a 4-1 win went a long way towards claiming the title. Could Cray repeat that result?

The answer was an emphatic "yes" as goals from John Canavan, Butch Dunn and a Dermot Trainor penalty secured a comfortable 3-0 victory. Alma also lost their next match (2-1 at East Ham) and this effectively knocked them out of the championship reckoning.

The quick return to play the other half of the Swanley groundshare arrangement looked easier on paper, as the Swans were wallowing in mid-table. But with the likes of powerful striker John Kane and former Cray defender Graham Taylor in their line-up, they were a tough nut to crack.

So it proved. Midway through the second-half, whilst Cray were disputing a throw-in, Swanley broke quickly and took the lead. The referee consulted his linesman, but allowed the goal to stand. The official's popularity with the Wands' supporters did improve a few minutes later when he awarded Cray a penalty. With regular penalty taker Trainor out of the side, Dave Waight stepped up to take the kick. Dave was never very reliable from the spot and our fears were realised when Martin Dillnutt saved his weak kick, but fortunately he was able to tuck away the rebound.

Then, in the dying seconds, Dunn scored one of his trademark goals, bursting into the box and firing home. The Wands had "got out of jail" and the two points put them top on goal average from Banstead... and the next game saw the two sides meet.

If ever there was a Championship decider, this was it. The two sides had identical records, 40 points with four games to play. An excellent crowd of 304 gathered at Oxford Road, including a good contingent from Banstead. Cray were probably slight favourites, as the visitors had suffered a shock defeat seven days earlier when they went down to lower division Bexley F.C. in the League Cup.

An excellent game ensued. Banstead were an accomplished side, but they conceded goals either side of half-time from Waight and Dunn. Both were shots from outside the box, and both took enormous deflections that gave the visiting 'keeper no chance. Banstead pulled a goal back in the closing stages, but the Wands held on for a somewhat fortunate victory that put retaining the title firmly in their grasp.

After beating their closest rivals Banstead Athletic in what had been billed as the London Spartan League decider, Cray's task was deceptively simple – five points (two wins and a draw) would guarantee a second successive title, without having to worry about goal average.

Fifth placed Heathside Sports visited Oxford Road for the last home match of the season three days after the Banstead game. It may have been the early evening kick-off, or a case of "after the Lord Mayor's Show," but the Wands never got their game together. Fifth placed Heathside had already registered one victory over Cray and when they went 2-0 up early in the second half, they looked like completing the double, and severely damaging the Wands' title aspirations.

Fortunately for Cray, they had a sympathetic referee who awarded them two penalties in the closing stages. Each was despatched confidently by Dermot Trainor to earn the Wands a point they barely deserved. Maximum points from the last two away games were now required.

The trip to lowly Frimley Green brought a comfortable victory, Glen Cooper, Dave Waight and John Scott scoring without reply. But Farnham Town were expected to be a tougher proposition. By a strange coincidence they had been Cray's opponents 12 months earlier on the day the title had been won.

Everything seemed to be going to plan when Butch Dunn knocked in two early goals, but then things started to go badly wrong. Farnham refused to lie down and their star striker Chris Yates scored twice himself, the equaliser coming shortly after half-time. To make matters worse, Brian Fitzpatrick then got himself sent off for protesting too strongly after two penalty appeals were turned down.

It looked as though the Wands were about to self-destruct, but Dunn, so often the hero in a season in which he scored 32 goals, completed his hat-trick to put Cray back in front. And rather than attempt to sit on their lead, the ten men produced an excellent last half-hour scoring again through Waight and Cooper to win 5-2.

To retain the league title was an excellent achievement, matching the back-to-back London League Championships exactly 20 years earlier. The Reserves brought further honour to the club, winning their division as well.

The season was not quite over, as there was the League Cup to play for. In the quarter-final, Cray faced a short trip to Bourne Road to play Bexley F.C. The game with a lower division side who played on an unenclosed ground, with a roped-off pitch, would normally have been considered a formality. But Bexley's stunning victory over Banstead in the last round meant they had to be treated with respect.

Cray boss Jimmy Wakeling brought Mal Sutton back into the side, the popular 'keeper having just recovered from a broken arm. There must have been some doubts, though, as John Cox was named as one of the two substitutes and, sure enough, he took up his usual position between the sticks, when Sutton was sadly unable to continue midway through the first-half. This was Cray's only real problem, as they cruised to a 4-0 victory with goals from Scott, Gerry Collier and two more from Dunn.

Cray's semi-final opponents were Beckenham Town, who were also in the lower division, but had earned promotion for the following season. They borrowed Hayes Lane for the big match and shocked the Wands by taking an early 2-0 lead. John Canavan and Dave Waight brought the scores level as Cray got on top but, in an almost identical finish to the game at Welling earlier in the season, Beckenham scored a last minute breakaway goal.

The Wands' hopes of a league and cup double were dashed, but Wakeling, who resigned during the summer, could look back with pride on two wonderful seasons.

PETE GORINGE