



PICTURE: 196594-46

HOW ABOUT THAT: Members of the Blue Army celebrate on a night to remember at the Walkers Stadium for everyone connected with Leicester City

Pearson has repaid Milan's faith - and in some style too

With just one match to go, I have taken this opportunity to reflect on Leicester City's fantastic season. Bouncing back to the Championship at the first attempt is not easy.

Manchester City were the last side to do it in that epic play-off final victory over Gillingham in 1999. Perhaps Paul Dickov is a lucky charm!

Thankfully, we did not have to suffer the lottery of the play-offs, with Nigel Pearson's men sealing the title in style.

It is worth going over events from roughly a year ago. On May 4, City were relegated to the third tier of English football for the first time in the club's history.

I could not speak after that fateful day at Stoke and simply could not do the Radio Leicester phone-in, I was that gutted.

Just over a month later, most bookmakers named City as second favourites, behind Leeds, to win the League title.



THE STEVE WALSH COLUMN

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But it was June 20 that mattered most, the day that Milan Mandaric put his faith in Pearson to replace Ian Holloway. How he has been repaid.

The City boss' contribution has been astonishing. From the appointments of essential backroom staff members such as Steve Walsh and Craig Shakespeare, to his manipulation of the loan market, he has

got it spot-on all the way through.

In fact, using six goalkeepers because of injury just highlights his shrewdness, having managed to sign four on loan, many at short notice, none of whom have let him down.

In just seven weeks of pre-season, Pearson turned a losing mentality into a winning juggernaut, blowing the opposition aside with slick, attacking and exciting football.

City also lost key players at critical times, yet not once did you hear the gaffer moan.

The likes of Aleksandar Tunchev, Mark Davies, Steve Howard and Andy King were all either injured, suspended, on international duty, or sadly snapped up by Bolton. But it did not stop City as they smashed their way to the top.

This summer will be key as to whether City can bridge the gap and be competitive in the Championship.

Martin Allen seemed to think that 14 new players in and

barely anyone out was the way forward. There is no chance of Pearson making the same mistake.

I am pretty sure that the side he has assembled is good enough to compete as it is, and I trust the backroom staff to make the right additions to make City a genuine force in the higher tier.

I am a great believer in building from the back and, with the likes of Tunchev, Jack Hobbs, Wayne Brown and Michael Morrison, we have a balance of cultured, strong, youthful and experienced centre-backs.

Brown has been a revelation in recent weeks, acting as an impenetrable shield in front of the keeper and I love his no-nonsense, all-action style, which is sure to make him a fans' favourite.

It also feels as if City have made the Walkers Stadium a fortress again, with an incredible home record. If they can use the momentum gained for next season, City are going to take some stopping.

I am reserving my last bit of praise for you. These days, I think of myself as a supporter and we have all been put through the mill over the past few years.

But, your loyalty and unequivocal support, both home and especially away, in no small part means we can wear our shirt with pride and mingle with the glory supporters, safe in the knowledge that we have got something special. We have got our City back.

I was agonisingly close to hitting the jackpot last week, with three out of four tips coming through and just Arsenal letting me down against Chelsea in the FA Cup semi-final at Wembley.

This week, I am going for a treble of Liverpool to win at Hull, Sheffield United to beat Swansea and Tranmere to squeeze past Yeovil. Fitzy at Turner & Kendrick will be donating a £25 bet to Wishes4Kids. Good luck to you all!

Congratulations all around on a very special night

LAST NIGHT was a pretty special evening for everyone

in a penalty shoot-out? We were up against a local lad's

you to him and to everyone who donated! To pledge

finished top of the Senior League Premier Division

on the same day as Nigel Pearson's men in Southend