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Released Fred backs City to flourish in League One

EXETER CITY LATEST
BY MATT BAMSEY

FRED Murray has backed Exeter City to hold their own in Coca-Cola League One next season.

The defender was among five players to be released by the Grecians following their promotion to the third tier of English football.

But Murray understands the decision to off-load him and has tipped City to enjoy a season of consolidation as they prepare to face the likes of Southampton, Norwich City and Charlton Athletic.

"I am confident they will compete and survive in League One," said Murray. "Whether they can kick on and mount a challenge at the top remains to be seen."

"Sometimes you need a bit of money behind you and a bit of backing to challenge towards the top."

"Stability will be the priority for any club going into this division. I am sure everyone at Exeter knows that it is going to be tough because there are a lot of good teams in there."

"But I am sure they have got a realistic goal to be successful."

The 26-year-old made just three starts and featured twice as a substitute after joining the club last September.

And he wasn't the least bit surprised when Tisdale informed him that he was surplus to requirements at the end of the season.

"It was disappointing, but it wasn't a shock," said Murray. "I haven't really played a lot, but by the same token I feel I made a decent account of myself when I turned out in the first team or the reserves."

"I never got a run of games, which is understandable because the team were winning and it is difficult to change a team when that is happening."

"I thought I had one or two decent games. But the chance didn't come and, after the Brentford game, I knew where I stood in the pecking order and it was going to be one of those seasons for me."

Murray, a former Blackburn Rovers trainee, made 92 appearances for Cambridge United between 2001 and 2004 before joining Northampton.

After three years at Sixfields the Irish centre-back spent the 2007/08 season at Stafford Rangers and played seven games on loan at Stevenage.

He returned to Ireland to train with Drogheda at the start of the season, where he was offered a contract. But Murray was keen on a return to England and a phone call from City's director of football Steve Perryman paved the way for him to spend some time on trial at St James's Park.

His performances for the reserves persuaded City bosses to offer him a contract until the end of the season.



Fred Murray, who has now been released, in action for Exeter City

LAURENCE UNDERHILL



Exeter City's victory parade down the High Street last weekend

GARETH WILLIAMS

Victory parade shows how far we have come

BY BARRY FULLS

I HAVE never been in the Guildhall before and never really wanted to be either, if I'm honest. It has always seemed to be a little out of place on the High Street, set between the modern stores and throngs of shoppers.

However, last Saturday I found myself not only in the Guildhall, but overhanging the High Street up on the balcony — and I would not have swapped my location for any other in the world at that moment in time.

The street below was buzzing with a sea of red and white, sprawling away up the High Street as far as the eye could see.

From my vantage point you could feel the noise levels rising and at times it felt like it shook the balcony. What a sight — a really privileged viewpoint to watch and take in the victory parade for Exeter City Football Club, promoted to Coca-Cola League One.

The Lord Mayor of Exeter is a City fan and what a year in office he has had. It started with promotion back into the Football League with victory at Wembley and has come to an end with automatic promotion to League One.

I kind of feel for the next Mayor — that is a tough act

to follow. Mind you, if he has the same effect as the last one we could be in the Premiership!

Paul Tisdale delighted the crowd when he spoke from the roof of the bus. "Who said at the start of the season that they would settle for mid-table?" He said. I wish he had asked people to put their hands up, it would have been interesting to see.

August seems a long time ago now but I remember very clearly the first 45 minutes of our League Two campaign at Darlington.

We were played off the park, never looked at the races and I was left feeling at half-time that it was going to be a long, hard season.

Tis said after the match that our season did not start until half-time. Exeter came out for the second half a different team, played some lovely attacking football and could have won the game.

My mood was transformed and by matching one of the fancied teams in the division, I believed that we could compete in the league and, dare I think, challenge for a play-off place.

Now, in May, I looked up the High Street on a city celebrating knowing that we do not have to go through the stress of the play-offs — we are League One.

Boss hopes to keep Gill

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park, coupled with the nine goals he scored, have made him a prime transfer target.

But Tisdale is hoping City's promotion into Coca-Cola League One will persuade him to stay at St James's Park.

"I have had talks with Matt over the past six months. It's not like I have just started talking to him now," said Tisdale.

"He wanted to wait until the end of the season and I understand that."

"He wanted to step up to a higher level of football and I am glad we got promotion because it gives us a chance

to accommodate him. It is coming to a head now and I would have thought that we would find out by the end of May what he is going to do."

When Gill arrived from Notts County in January 2006, he was considering an alternative career as a tennis coach.

Former City manager Alex Inglethorpe persuaded him to stay in football and he has gone on to play 169 times for the Grecians.

TOMORROW
Jack Obersteller on his future following his release by the Grecians

"Exeter came in for me and I was thankful for the opportunity. I really enjoyed it — I enjoyed the area and liked the people at the club," he said.

"Of course I wished I had played more but I look at my time there in a positive light and say it was a successful year. I played my part and I wish them all the best in the future."

"It is sad but I have moved around all my career so you kind of get used to it. But I have made some good friends and I will keep in contact with quite a few of them."

Murray is in no hurry to find a new club and will assess his options before making a decision about next season.

"It is difficult at the moment because the season hasn't finished yet

and there are still clubs in the play-offs," he said. "I have already spoken to one or two clubs but a lot of them are sorting out their affairs at the moment."

"I will probably wait for a couple of weeks until things settle down."

"You need a bit of luck — somebody to take a punt on you and give you an opportunity. I will just have to wait and see what comes in."

Bookies shorten odds on Tis becoming next Reading boss

THE odds on Paul Tisdale becoming the new Reading boss have shortened.

Bookmakers bet365 have the Exeter City boss as the 8/1 third favourite to land the post behind the strongly-backed Brendan Rodgers and Alan Curbishley.

Reading are looking for a new manager after Steve Coppell quit in the wake of their play-off semi-final defeat at the hands of Burnley.

Tisdale is on a two-year rolling contract at St James's Park, meaning

anyone interested in luring him away would have to stump up two years' wages as compensation.

● Swindon Town have turned down two bids for top scorer Simon Cox.

One of the offers was from Leicester City and it is

thought the other club could be Celtic.

Leicester chairman Milan Mandaric confirmed the striker is on their list of transfer targets, having scored 32 goals this season.

Mandaric said: "He is a quality player and Nigel

(Pearson) and his staff think highly of him."

"We are interested but we are facing competition. He is on a shortlist."

● Hartlepool United striker Michael Mackay has agreed a new contract to remain at Victoria Park.

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