

Sponsors' deal for soccer club



FANATIC Wayne Wild

■ Top local firm pledges cash backing for AFC Darwen after pulling out of deal with Ewood Park

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METAL fabrication firm WEC has unveiled a lucrative sponsorship deal with AFC Darwen.

The Darwen-based company, which last season pulled out of sponsoring the Darwen End at Blackburn Rovers' Ewood Park, will be the club's main sponsor.

The firm's logo will be printed on the club's home and away kits and the name of the ground has been changed to the WEC Group Anchor Ground.

The deal, the value of which has not been disclosed, came on the back of the club's ground going through a number of renovations recently, financed by manager and owner Kenny Langford.

And club bosses said they were delighted to be able to link up with the firm, which employs more than 400 people.

Commercial manager Stephen Hurn said: "It is fantastic news for us. It is a great sponsorship which is a dream come true. We are all over the moon.

"Kenny has spent a lot of money on the ground and now we have got a big name on our shirts. Let's hope the deal can bring us some success. We were

very close to promotion to the North West Counties Premier League last season."

The deal was masterminded by WEC Group director and football fanatic Wayne Wild.

Mr Wild, a Blackburn Rovers supporter and co-chairman of Rovers Trust, pulled the plug on the firm's sponsorship of the Ewood Park club after owners Venky's failed to communicate with him.

As part of the AFC Darwen deal, WEC apprentices will provide a new dugout and there will be incentives for WEC staff, such as free use of the bar as a function room.

There will also be events at the ground including a friendly match between staff at WEC and Optare later this month.

WEC Group marketing chief Jean Yves-Dziki said: "We previously sponsored Rovers but we wanted to do something local to Darwen and this was perfect for us.

"We do a lot of projects in the community so this type of partnership is something we are accustomed to."

The club has also signed up Howarth Timber as the sponsor of its main stand after the firm provided materials for the stand to be redeveloped.

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