

'The sight we dreamt of at season's start'

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THE centre of Yeovil came to a standstill on Tuesday as the town's victorious football team toured the streets in an open-top bus.

Thousands of fans young and old turned out in green and white to greet their heroes in a victory parade organised by the *Western Gazette*.

The League One play-off trophy gleamed in the sunshine as players and officials held it aloft, while high above, banners blowing from windmills proclaimed the Glovers: "The Pride of Yeovil."

Addressing the adoring fans in a voice hoarse after two days of interviews, manager Gary Johnson said: "Thanks very much for turning up for our team today. We really appreciate it. We feel very humble up here.

"This is the sight that I asked these boys to imagine at the start of the season so thank you for making all their dreams and our thoughts come true by seeing you here today."

Following Sunday's heroics, Yeovil, with a population of 40,000, now has a higher-placed football team than the likes of Bristol, Wolverhampton and Plymouth.

The town is renowned for punching above its weight – and its football club has long had a name for being a giant-killer. In fact, some of the supporters who squeezed into the town centre for the victory



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parade pointed out that Yeovil could now be regarded as a giant that needed beating.

It was the only negative note to be heard amid the deafening throng as the open-topped double-decker bus, supplied by First Bus, pulled into the town centre just after midday.

Most people were talking up the future and what the club's promotion to the mighty power Championship and its big-name teams will mean for the area.



THUMBS UP: Yeovil Town players Lewis Young, Byron Webster and Matt Cafer greet Glovers fans in the Borough on Tuesday. Bottom, town crier Bruce Trigger and mayor Manny Roper both hailed the team's achievements as being good for the whole town.

Town crier Bruce Trigger said: "This will bring a lot of money back to Yeovil – people will come here to see the town, and they will see it's a nice place – and hopefully spend more money here.

"I shall be welcoming them – and they will enjoy their taste of Somerset."

Mayor Manny Roper, who welcomed the team as the bus arrived to roaring cheers in the

central Borough area, was also in an hugely optimistic mood. He said: "This is the biggest and best thing that's happened to the town – we've been on the map for many years, but this has put us on the national stage, big time.

"We had 20,000 people going to Wembley – the population here is 40,000 – so you basically had half the town up there on Sunday.

"Now they're here with the other half today. We're hoping visiting football fans from the big Championship clubs will bring their families down when they come to play. Let's hope they like what they see – because Yeovil is central for the whole West Country.

"It is a win-win situation for the entire region. Yes, I'd say this is the happiest town in England."



Squeezed into the town square crowd with his daughter Anya was taxi driver Simon Murray.

He said: "This is going to make a real difference to the town – we're thinking that it is going to bring extra revenue in. There's going to be a lot more people staying and eating in the town – it can't be a bad thing. We could certainly do with a lift in business at the moment."

Fan Dave Trevett said: "This is going to give Yeovil the shot it needs. It's going to be good for tourism – at some of our home games we are getting 50 to 100 away fans – now we'll be selling out to 2,000 in most games – and they will see the lovely countryside around here."



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