

= Nigel Gibbs =

Nigel James Gibbs ( born 20 November 1965 ) is a former English professional footballer and most recently worked as first @-@ team coach of Millwall . A Watford supporter , as well as a product of their youth system , Gibbs spent his entire professional career as a right back for the club . He was assistant manager of Leeds United after being appointed on 12 April 2013 alongside Brian McDermott , whom he assisted at Reading . He departed from Leeds United in August 2014 .

Gibbs made his Watford debut in 1983 , in front of 38 @, @ 000 spectators in a UEFA Cup match against Sparta Prague . In his early career Gibbs also played nine times for the England youth team , and five times for England under @-@ 21s . Under the management of Graham Taylor , Gibbs eventually established himself as a first @-@ team player at Watford , making 100 Football League appearances before the club 's relegation from the First Division in 1988 . Gibbs remained a key player for the team in the Second Division , and was voted Watford F.C. Player of the Season in 1992 .

Manager Glenn Roeder appointed Gibbs as club captain for the 1992 ? 93 season , but a series of serious injuries restricted him to 33 appearances over the following four seasons . When his contract expired in 1996 , Gibbs considered retirement , but he went on to earn a new contract and make the most appearances of any Watford player in 1996 ? 97 . Gibbs featured regularly in Watford 's rise from the Second Division to the Premier League between 1997 and 1999 , and went on to play a further 17 games at the top level of English football . Watford were relegated in 2000 , and Gibbs made eight further appearances before retiring in 2002 .

Gibbs remained at Watford as a coach , primarily working with the youth and reserve teams . He took charge of the first team for a week following Ray Lewington 's sacking as manager in 2005 , but in turn was dismissed by incoming manager Aidy Boothroyd just before the start of the following season . After taking a year off to acquire the UEFA Pro Licence , Gibbs joined Reading as youth team manager in 2006 , and became assistant manager in 2009 ? 10 . He continued in this role , and in 2011 ? 12 Reading won the Football League Championship title , earning promotion to the Premier League .

= = Early life = =

Born in the city of St Albans , Hertfordshire , Gibbs attended How Wood primary school , and as a nine @-@ year @-@ old striker helped his team win a district six @-@ a @-@ side competition . Gibbs began training with and supporting Watford from an early age , and was watching from the Main Stand at Vicarage Road as Watford sealed the Fourth Division title in 1978 . Although part of Watford 's youth system , he occasionally played for St Albans City 's youth team due to their close proximity to his home and school . He also played for Hertfordshire schools at under @-@ 14 to under @-@ 16 levels .

Although initially a striker , Gibbs switched to the position of right @-@ back as a teenager . Further success came with Watford 's youth teams ; he played in the first leg of the youth team 's 7 ? 6 aggregate FA Youth Cup win against Manchester United in 1982 , and in the final as Watford finished runners up in the Southern Junior Floodlit Cup . These performances earned him a callup to England 's youth team , for whom he played nine times . However , after signing as an apprentice in July 1982 , Gibbs played in midfield for the reserves . Due to his height , first team manager Graham Taylor was concerned about Gibbs ' ability to cope with the physicality of being a first @-@ team full back , and placed 17 @-@ year @-@ old Gibbs on a steak and Guinness diet as an attempt to " beef him up . "

= = Professional career = =

= = = Turning professional in the First Division = = =

Gibbs turned professional on 20 November 1983 . Three days later , he made his Watford debut in a UEFA Cup third round home match against Sparta Prague at the club 's stadium , Vicarage Road . He also played in the away fixture , in front of 38 @, @ 000 spectators . Faced with snowy conditions in Prague , Watford were eliminated 7 ? 2 on aggregate . Gibbs made his first Football League appearances in Watford 's final three First Division games of 1983 ? 84 , including as a substitute in a 2 ? 1 win over Arsenal . However , he was not selected for the 1984 FA Cup final .

Gibbs , now 18 , returned to the reserves for much of the following season . Watford 's first @-@ team struggled , failing to win any of their first nine league games . Although his first start of the season ended in an 2 ? 0 defeat to Queens Park Rangers , Gibbs retained his place for 10 of the remaining 11 matches , experiencing only one further defeat . Continuing in this vein , 1985 ? 86 saw Gibbs establish himself as the team 's first choice right @-@ back . He missed only two games all season , both of which resulted in defeat for Watford . His first goal came on 5 April 1986 in a 4 ? 1 home victory over Newcastle United , while he also played in a 5 ? 1 win over Chelsea at Stamford Bridge on the final day of the season . Gibbs ' consistency helped him to third place in the voting for the club 's Player of the Season award .

After suffering a foot injury at the start of 1986 ? 87 , Gibbs was restricted to 18 appearances as his team finished the season 9th in the First Division . However , the departure of Graham Taylor and arrival of Dave Bassett the following season signalled a decline in the club 's fortunes . Gibbs lost his place shortly before Bassett 's departure in January , and although he soon returned to the side under Steve Harrison , Watford were relegated in 1988 . At the time of the club 's relegation , Gibbs had made precisely 100 First Division appearances .

= = = Second Division = = =

Despite the disappointment of relegation , Gibbs started 1988 ? 89 strongly . The defender played every minute of Watford 's four opening fixtures , with the team keeping four consecutive clean sheets . During this run , he also scored the only goal of the game against West Bromwich Albion at The Hawthorns . Playing in all 46 league games , Gibbs finished second in the Player of the Season vote behind Glyn Hodges . Watford finished the season in a play @-@ off position , behind Chelsea , Manchester City and Crystal Palace . The team faced Blackburn Rovers in the semi @-@ finals , drawing both games but being eliminated on the away goals rule . The following season saw Watford slip down to 15th , although they did keep 11 clean sheets in the 41 games that Gibbs played in . Gibbs briefly lost his place in the team following Harrison being replaced by Colin Lee , but regained it before the end of the campaign .

An injury sustained on 25 August 1990 kept Gibbs out for two months , and once he had regained full fitness , his team were bottom of the table . His return coincided with a winless run of seven league matches , leaving Watford seven points from safety with nearly half the season gone . Nonetheless , Watford managed to climb to 20th place , and despite missing 14 games , Gibbs was once again shortlisted for the club 's end of season award . In 1991 ? 92 Gibbs finally became Player of the Season . Missing only three matches , he rounded off a good season by scoring his first goal in four years in Watford 's last league game , cementing a top @-@ ten finish in the Second Division .

= = = Career threatening injury = = =

Gibbs was appointed club captain at the start of the 1992 ? 93 season . The team started the season with three First Division defeats in their opening six games , keeping just one clean sheet . However , on an individual level the season was to get even worse for Gibbs . He sustained a knee injury against Notts County on 7 September 1992 , putting him out of first team contention for six weeks . During his comeback , at home to Tranmere Rovers , Gibbs aggravated the previous injury , putting him out of action for more than two years . Concern over the injury , coupled with the good form of Gerard Lavin , restricted Gibbs ' opportunities under Glenn Roeder in 1994 ? 95 .

After making only nine appearances during Watford 's 1995 ? 96 relegation season , general

manager Graham Taylor released him upon the expiry of his contract , over injury concerns . Gibbs considered retirement .

== Comeback and return to the top division ==

Despite receiving enquiries from other clubs , he stayed at Vicarage Road for pre @-@ season , in the hope of regaining his match fitness . After proving that he had recovered , Gibbs was offered a short term contract at the club , which was eventually extended . Newly relegated Watford finished 13th of 24 teams in 1996 ? 97 . They conceded 38 goals in 46 league matches , the joint @-@ best defensive record in the division . Gibbs missed just one of the club 's 57 fixtures , scoring in a game against Brentford . The defender later noted the irony that having been released as an injury concern , he ended up playing more games the following season than any of his team @-@ mates .

Kenny Jackett stood down as manager following Watford 's disappointing season , becoming assistant to Graham Taylor . The effect was immediate ; Watford won six of their first seven league games , eventually becoming 1997 ? 98 Second Division champions and earning promotion . Gibbs played part of the season at left @-@ back due to an injury to Paul Robinson , although in turn Gibbs also missed games to injury . He started the 1998 ? 99 season as a first @-@ team regular , but sustained an injury in a game against Bolton on 20 October 1998 , and only made two further appearances . Nonetheless , Watford secured promotion via the playoffs in Gibbs ' absence , and when Watford won the play @-@ off final to secure promotion , Gibbs was the first person to celebrate the win with Taylor .

== Later years and retirement ==

When fit , Gibbs had been Watford 's first choice right @-@ back since 1985 , with the exception of 1994 ? 95 , where Gerard Lavin 's form kept a recovering Gibbs in the reserves . A combination of Gibbs ' age , and a desire to acquire more strength in depth for the Premier League , prompted Taylor to sign right @-@ backs Des Lyttle and Neil Cox in 1999 . Despite the competition , Gibbs managed to make 20 appearances in 1999 ? 2000 , and his Premier League experience included victories over Chelsea , Coventry City and Southampton , although these were not enough to prevent relegation back to the First Division . By now in his mid thirties , first team opportunities became scarce for Gibbs in 2000 ? 01 . He made only seven first team appearances , although Watford managed to avoid defeat in six of those . His final appearance , and only game under Gianluca Vialli , came on 24 April 2002 . An 82nd @-@ minute substitute , Gibbs was unable to prevent a late Gillingham goal , which secured them a 3 ? 2 victory . Among Gillingham 's players for Gibbs ' professional swansong was Andy Hessenthaler , the man who became Watford captain after Gibbs ' injury . Gibbs retired as Watford 's second highest all @-@ time appearance maker , although he started more matches than Luther Blissett , the man ahead of him .

== Style of play ==

Considerably shorter than the average footballer at 5 ft 7in , Gibbs made up for his physical disadvantage with positional play , determination , accurate tackling , and staying on his feet . Although a defender , his lack of goals ( 7 in 491 appearances ) and reluctance to get forward were often remarked upon . Gibbs refuted the suggestion that he didn 't attack enough , while former managers Roeder and Taylor both considered Gibbs to be an excellent crosser of the ball when he did venture forward . He scored his first professional goal during his 59th game . By comparison , Gibbs ' long @-@ term successor at right @-@ back , Lloyd Doyley , scored his first professional goal on his 269th appearance .

== Career statistics ==

Key

## == Managing career ==

After retiring , Gibbs served Watford as a coach for three years , initially working with the reserve and youth teams , and later as an assistant manager . During this period he oversaw the development of players such as Ashley Young , Lloyd Doyley and Hamer Bouazza , and helped Watford to a Premier Reserve League win in 2002 ? 03 . Following Ray Lewington 's sacking in March 2005 , Gibbs briefly managed Watford on a caretaker basis , although his reign did not include a single game . Following the appointment of Aidy Boothroyd , Gibbs left Watford in July . Having had a formal connection with the club since the 1970s , he felt that his departure had been " very poorly handled " . In 2006 , Gibbs received his UEFA Pro Licence , which means he can manage any football club in England on a full @-@ time basis . At the beginning of the 2006 ? 07 season , Gibbs joined the management team at Reading , where his initial responsibility was working with the younger players at the club . Further Premier Reserve League success followed in 2007 , and Gibbs was promoted to the role of assistant manager in 2009 ? 10 . On the penultimate game of the season , Reading faced Watford at Vicarage Road . A Reading victory would have put their opponents in danger of relegation , but Watford emerged 3 ? 0 winners to seal their Championship survival . Gibbs remained at Reading under the management of Brian McDermott , and in 2011 ? 12 the team won the Football League Championship , earning promotion to the Premier League . He left Reading on 11 March 2013 following McDermott 's departure as manager .

Following the departure of Neil Warnock in April 2013 , Brian McDermott took over as manager of Leeds United on 12 April 2013 on a 3 @-@ year contract , with Nigel Gibbs joining him at the club as Assistant Manager .

On the 1st of February 2014 , after the dismissal of Brian McDermott , Gibbs took charge of Leeds United as caretaker manager in the 5 @-@ 1 win over local rivals Huddersfield Town .

On 15 December 2014 , Gibbs was appointed first @-@ team coach at Millwall .

## == Personal life ==

Gibbs was born into a football family . His father Dennis had played for Hitchin Town , Hemel Hempstead Town and St Albans City , while father @-@ in @-@ law Alan helped form the youth team Nascot Wood Rangers . Although a Watford supporter from childhood , Gibbs is related to supporters of both Watford and Luton Town , despite the rivalry between the two . He maintains a connection with his former club , regularly attending club events and occasionally playing for their masters football team .

Among others , Gibbs remains close friends with former teammates Luther Blissett and Kenny Jackett , both of whom coached him after ending their playing careers . Owing to his long association with the club , he is also a friend of Elton John , and once filled in as a backup singer for John on a Watford tour of China . During the " Let 's buy back the Vic " fundraising show at Vicarage Road in 2005 , John dedicated his performance of Electricity to Gibbs ' wedding anniversary .

## == Honours ==

Watford F.C. Player of the Season

Winner : 1991 ? 92

Shortlisted : 1985 ? 86 , 1988 ? 89 , 1990 ? 91 , 1996 ? 1997

Watford F.C. Hall of Fame

Inducted : 2010

FA Youth Cup

Winner : 1981 ? 82

Football League First Division

Promotion : 1998 ? 99

Football League Second Division  
Winner : 1997 ? 98