

Wycombe supporters meet the manager



Wycombe Wanderers' manager, Brian Lee, answers one of the many questions put to him by the club's supporters on Wednesday evening. On the left is High Wycombe referee, Bill Cleere, and 'Free Press' Sports Editor Mike Whitesman, who chaired the meeting, is in the centre.

REFEREES UNDER ATTACK!

FOOTBALL REFEREES came under heavy fire from Brian Lee on Wednesday night when the second "talk-in" was staged between Wycombe Wanderers' manager and the club's supporters (writes Stuart Farp).

Refereeing was just one of the many interesting topics raised at the meeting. There were also questions for well-known High Wycombe referee Mr. Bill Cleere, who agreed to join Brian on the panel.

An incident in Wycombe's game with Oxford City prompted the debate on referees when that particular referee, Mr. D. R. Smith (Enfield) prevented a player from using the advantage of the bank at Loakes Park when taking a throw-in.

Mr. Cleere answered the question on whether there was a law against it. "There is no law that I know of," he said, "you can throw the ball in from where the referee thinks is a reasonable distance."

This prompted the Wycombe manager: "The thing we are trying to get is consistency," he said, "never once has this happened before. That decision drew attention to something that was irrelevant.

"Last year in 86 games only three Wycombe players had their names taken. I, as a manager, feel pride about behaviour, appearance and dis-

cipline. In our third game this season at Leytonstone, two names were taken.

"We are trying to educate the referee into trying to understand what makes us tick and we want to understand what makes him tick. We can't expect consistency between two different referees. But the same referee?"

Bill Cleere answered, "Your opinion is from the half-way line. I am up here every Tuesday and Thursday trying to educate the players. Wycombe are not a dirty side, you have the right spirit in your team but other managers do educate their players to do certain illegal things."

"I have been involved in different levels of football and I don't know any manager who will teach or coach anything illegal," replied Mr. Lee.

"Players play for Wycombe Wanderers and play for the manager because their future hinges on what he thinks of them. There must be respect between a manager and his players. Basically teams play for managers and a manager is reflected in the play, conduct and discipline."

One way of helping with the referee's clean-up campaign was a suggestion by Brian Lee of a "sin-bin" policy. This would involve players being sent off the field for a

period of 10 minutes. Mr. Lee thought this would benefit the other team.

Bill Cleere felt that the "sin-bin" idea could be beneficial. He explained that at present players cannot be cautioned twice—on a second lapse he must be sent off.

Asked whether it was true that he advised several of his players to leave the club, among them Barry Baker, Charlie Gale, Bernie Bremer and Geoff Anthony.

Mr. Lee replied, "There are two things lacking in amateur football — honesty and sincerity. There are a lot of rumours—but I don't play any part in them. Players are free agents in the summer but I expect to be told if they are not playing for the same club next year. I had no communication from Barry Baker.

"Geoff Anthony couldn't maintain his form, respected my decision, but wanted to play on Saturdays. Bernie Bremer had a disappointing start but also wanted to play regular football.

"Charlie Gale had been a good servant to the club but couldn't get a regular place so I arranged for him to join Maidenhead United. There was no bitterness, these things happen," he said.

Wycombe's manager was

asked what was his biggest disappointment at Wycombe. He replied, "The loss of certain games and the dropping of a point at Kingstorian (at the end of the 1969-70 season). Everyone wants to win the Amateur Cup, but it is more important to make the club a viable proposition — only if you do this, will you keep the interest going."

The use of substitutes was also one of the big talking points of the evening. "Why, when there are no injuries do you bring on a substitute with only 10 or 15 minutes left?" asked one supporter.

Mr. Lee explained that he likes to involve 12 players but added that some players are good substitutes and some are bad.

Another question put to Mr. Lee was why Johnny Hutchinson was usually the player taken off for the substitute. Brian Lee felt that Hutchinson was a bad pacer of himself and usually struggles at the end of a game.

The subject of the squad system was raised and a suggestion that young footballers get little chance to make the grade in senior amateur football, arose.



Brian Lee replied. "Players must decide whether they want recreation or to look at sport in a competitive way. I am against the squad system but circumstances dictate. When I came to Wycombe most reserve players were not good enough for the Isthmian League. It is players, competition and finance.

"The squad system is with us and we have got to accept it. Any manager would want a reserve side but for a part-time manager it is just not on. I think the club is in a healthier state because of the squad system."

Chairman of the meeting, Free Press Sports Editor, Mike Whitesman, in bringing the meeting to a close said he thought it had been a great success and he hoped that others would be staged in the future.