

WANDERERS FACE FRESH TEST OF ATHENIANS' CUP APPROACH

A COLD shiver ran down the spines of many a Wycombe supporter when news came through at midday on Monday of Wanderers' first round Amateur Cup draw — away to Aveley.

The Blues travel into Essex on Saturday, January 8 with the label of favourites dangling around their necks. But they must know it's not that simple.

Between them and a place among the last 32, lies a bogey built up by results spanning the past two seasons.

TACTICAL

For, as the 2-0 F.A. Cup defeat at Maidenhead again revealed, Wycombe are yet to discover a convincing, consistent answer to the tactical approach adopted by clubs of Athenian League, Premier Division status.

Again, this season, the trio of new Isthmians from Athenian backgrounds—Hayes, Walton and Bishops Cleeve—have proved among Wanderers' most dogged opposition. And Slough, of course, k.o.'d them

in both the F.A. and Berks and Bucks Senior Cups last season.

On most days, Wanderers can outplay and outmanoeuvre any team in amateur football—with very few exceptions, none outside the Isthmian realm.

But somehow the mixture of robust and skilful soccer so commonplace among top Athenians seems to knock them out of their usual stride.

Aveley, midway in the Premier Division, possess Cup-fighting qualities highlighted by runs both last and this season.

A major question is: can they reproduce the formula for victory so often used with effect against the Isthmian champions?

LESSONS

But the all important factor will be whether or not Wy-

combe have learnt sufficiently from past lessons. Can they show enough flexibility to end their bogey?

Thwarted twice in the quarter final stages in 1970 and 1971, Wanderers keenly aim to reach Wembley this time around. Apart from the obvious glory attached to such an achievement, it is the financial aspect which must be considered.

The luck, and importance of a home draw was mirrored by the immediate reactions of two men connected with Wanderers.

Treasurer, Roger Lee quickly reflected on how much larger the "gate," and thus the share of profits, could have been.

Assistant manager John Reardon would also have liked the match to be played at Wycombe—but for other, equally as ob-

vious reasons. The Loakes Park roar and its slope is usually worth a goal at least to the Wanderers.

Both Reardon and Wycombe boss Brian Lee will "eye" Aveley between now and their Cup date—chewing over more than the bones of their Christmas turkeys as a result, no doubt.

REACTION

Aveley reaction to the draw was quite favourable. Tilbury, their local rivals are away in the competition, thus assuring a sizeable gate at Millfield (capacity 6,000).

Average league attendances are just under 1,000, and the Athenians anticipate a crowd of around 3,500 for the Wycombe match. If this theory turns into fact, Wanderers can ease worries on the financial score.

Although these figures are still under those probable at Loakes Park, such an attendance would be as high as they could expect almost anywhere away from home in round one.

Aveley coach, Terry Matthews has been with the club for four seasons, leading them to the quarter-final stages last time around.

This season their mid-table position is largely due to a workmanlike side, in which leading scorer, Jim Holder, also claims top place among the Athenian League marksman list with 12 goals.

Only new player of note is former local League man, Ricky McQueen—"a phenomenal goalscorer" claim local observers.

General feeling in the Essex area seems to be that Wycombe are not the side they used to be. Aveley, with a recent history of Cup success, consider their chances high.

Isthmian League champions and current leaders, Wanderers know exactly what must be done to disprove Aveley's theory.

M.W.