

MANY of those with Wycombe Wanderers allegiance risked jumping the gun to offer a smile at the Amateur Cup quarter final draw when it was announced from Lancaster Gate on Monday.

No one is forgetting the obstacle of a third round away trip to Walton and Hersham on March 4. Nor are they overlooking Hayes' win at Wycombe in November.

They are, however, grateful — both for the home draw, and that it is against a side which, with all due respects to the Church Roaders, presents no special problems.

Hayes — like Walton, in their first season as Isthmians — will no doubt point proudly at the three League points they have defended out of Wycombe's reach. They are the only away winners at Loakes Park this

First Walton, then the smiles can broaden...

term in major competitions. That 1-0 success followed a goalless draw in Middlesex.

But, realistically, Wycombe should never have lost that match — just as they should not lose the Cup clash if it comes about. Since that day last November, Wanderers have gone down only once more — and that was four days later at St. Albans.

The uncertainty of Cup football must be Hayes' greatest ally if they are obliged to travel to Loakes Park. It was a big

enough shock when they clinched the League match with a 46th minute Tony Roberts' goal.

Few Wycombe supporters would agree lightning could strike twice in the same place, however.

Wanderers failed both times to penetrate the Hayes defence. But on present scoring form, the likes of Tony Horseman, Keith Searle, Larry Pritchard and, of course, Micky Mellows, will take some stopping a third time!

The Hayes defence no longer

possesses the strengthening assets of Dave Bullock, who, injury and Walton permitting, is surely in line for a place against his former colleagues. But his replacement in the Hayes back four, Graham Thomas is equally a player to be reckoned with.

On past evidence, Wycombe need carry no overwhelming fears of the Hayes attack, in which Roberts is the most obvious dangerman. He has 17 goals to his credit so far. Meanwhile newcomer Micky

Taylor is fast emerging as one to watch. The 18-year-old scored twice in only his second first team outing on Saturday. How would he fare against a Wycombe back row, boasting three England "Caps," and the experience that goes with them, though?

Hayes, managed by former Slough boss Bob Gibbs, and skippered by another ex-Rebel Bobby Hatt, could not be dismissed lightly. Their Cup run to date shows a 5-1 home defeat of City of Norwich Old Boys, a 2-1 away win at Barking, and a 3-1 home success over Croydon Amateurs to take them into the last eight. They would rather meet Walton than Wycombe. But, either way, they realise the difficult task facing them. The Church Roaders are keen, however, to improve on last season, when they lost to Leatherhead in the quarter finals.

For Wycombe, much depends on whether or not the rugged men from Walton can balk them on the Wembley trail.

If they can't, Wanderers' hopes of reaching the last four must be high — even to those who recall the quarter final upsets against St. Albans and Skelmersdale in the past two years.