

THE chips are down. And — mathematically at least—most odds favour the champions as Wycombe Wanderers press hopefully on with challengers Hendon for the 1972 Isthmian League title.

Realistically, it developed into a two-horse race some time ago. But much still depends on other powerhouse Isthmian clubs in the coming search for points.

Three teams, each established in the top half of the table, could hold a major say in the final destination of the title.

Walton, who visit Hendon tonight (Tuesday) also entertain Wycombe on Friday, April 21 — less than 24 hours before Hendon are due to face Enfield in the Amateur Cup final at Wembley.

Sutton United travel to Hendon on Saturday, April 15, and will be at Loakes Park on April 29. Meanwhile, Bishop's Stortford do things in similar order — home to Hendon on Tuesday, April 11, and closing the season at Wycombe on May 13.

In fact it could easily all be left with that last, fateful

few days of the season, if the title isn't clinched either way on May 9 — when Wycombe and Hendon collide under the Claremont Road floodlights. Wanderers would be hoping hard for a repeat of that tremendous 3-1 win they gloried in last April.

Wycombe's programme is 100 per cent demanding from here on. Six fixtures left to manager Brian Lee's squad, and each one against a high ranking opposition. Hendon, with more games and an Amateur Cup final to think about, look on a far easier run-in. But

extra games means more opportunities to slip . . .

'Free Press' readers can keep their own up-to-date check on how the title chasers stand, by filling in the chart supplied above.

Meanwhile, behind the scenes, amateur football seems to be verging promisingly on the start of a more sensible, competitive approach. A worthwhile re-organisation plan put forward by Isthmian Vice-chairman Barry East of Leytonstone — and welcomed by Wycombe — suggests the introduction of a second division along with promotion and relegation.

He has also injected £7,000 to help sponsor the scheme, which promises at last to jerk the staid Isthmian League into action.

By forming a second section, the Isthmians would be involving their Athenian rivals — a merger long overdue to boost amateur soccer. However, the Athenians are already going ahead with re-organisation of their own.

At a recent executive meeting it was decided a proposal be put to the forthcoming annual meeting involving the formation of a 24-club Premier Division and a 22-club First Division.

If, as expected, the scheme gets a green light, the top ten division one clubs at the end of this season will be promoted (remembering that from the Premier. Leatherhead will be joining the Isthmian League, and Harlow Town are also leaving the competition).

In local terms, it means Marlow will have risen from the bottom to the top of the Athenian ladder in two event-

ful years — but without gaining promotion on the football field!

Anticipating this re-grouping numerous Athenian League clubs — including Marlow — pulled out of next season's Premier Floodlight League competition before last Thursday's withdrawal deadline.

It is a provisional resignation however. Marlow hope for re-admission should the Athenian plans fall through.