F.A. CUP, ROUND 2

WYCOMBE W. v READING

A 4-page souvenir supplement

F.A. CUP, ROUND 2

CAN WANDERERS DO IT AGAIN?

Wycombe Wanderers' line-up before a Tuesday night training session recently. Back row (from left to right): Ted Powell (manager), John Reardon (assistant manager), Keith Mead, John Maskell, Mick Holifield, Peter Cruse, Tony Horseman, Dylan Evans, Dave Bullock. Front row: Jock Sheppard (physio.), Alan Phillips, Peter Spittle, John Priestley, Paul Birdseye, Bobby Davies, Ian Pearson, Howard Kennedy.

Reading's squad this season. Back row (from left to right): Maurice Evans (coach), Dave Moreline, Robin Friday, Ray Hiron, Tommy Youlden, Gary Peters, Paul Bennett, Gordon Neate (groundsman). Middle row: Fred May (secretary), Jim Wallbanks (physio.), Steve Death, Bruce Stuckey, Andy Painter, Jerry Williams, Bryan Carnaby, Charlie Hurley (manager). Front row: John Murray, Stewart Henderson, Frank Waller (chairman), Gordon Cumming (capt.), Dennis Neldon, Duncan Vincent (director), Eamonn Dunphy, Mick Hollis.

Wycombe v. Reading preview by STUART EARP

CAN Wycombe Wanderers reach the third round of the F.A. Cup again? That's the question everyone will be asking when Wycombe take on Reading in round two at Loakes Park tomorrow (Saturday).

The club had to wait 90 years to get through to the third round stage, a feat achieved two years ago when they met Middlesbrough, finally losing 1-0 after a replay. Now, incredibly only two seasons later, they have the chance to do it again.

So what are Wanderers' chances of getting through against their Third Division opponents tomorrow?

On paper they would seem to be good. In recent seasons Wanderers have overcome two league clubs in Newport and Bournemouth and put up two marvellous performances against First Division Middlesbrough. And last season, they lost only 1-0 down at Ninian Park to Cardiff City, who later won promotion to Division Two.

Wycombe's cup fighting reputation is feared throughout the Football League and their recent history in the F.A. Cup is the reason for a general air of optimism amongst their followers.

But although the chances of a Wanderers' victory appear to be good, there is little doubt that their task against Reading will prove exceedingly difficult.

Cup opponents no longer make the mistake of underrating non-league opposition and Reading are no exception.

Some will point to Reading's recent run of poor results in the Third Division which has seen them go five games without victory. In fact, they have only taken three points from their nine matches.

MORE FUEL

More fuel is added to the fire when one considers they struggled to beat Southern League Wealdstone 1-0 in the last round of the cup, and that with Wealdstone reduced to nine men after two of their players had been sent off.

Despite these facts, I still feel Wycombe will have to produce a five-star performance to beat Reading tomorrow.

There's no doubting that Reading have had their problems this season. After winning promotion from Division Four, they began their campaign well, but when the results began to go against them, they slid slowly down the table.

During the summer manager Charlie Hurley made only one signing to supplement the side which finished third in Division Four with 60 points, clinching the second promotion in the club's history. That was his move for Southampton centre-half Paul Bennett, who has proved good value for his £8,000 price tag.

And Bennett's signing was absolutely vital since last season's regular No. 5 Geoff Barker quit the game during the summer. Barker wasn't satisfied with the new contract offered to him, and when he discovered it would not be improved he quickly found a job as a representative for a building company and moved back to his native Hull.

UNHAPPY

Unfortunately for Reading, Barker was by no means the only player unhappy with the club's wage offer for Division Three.

None of the squad signed a new contract until they had met club chairman Frank Waller to air their grievances. Some extra money was eventually forthcoming — but the good feeling engendered by promotion in the spring was quickly forgotten.

Since that promotion was achieved eight months ago, no fewer than seven of the 16 players concerned have asked for transfers. Four of them — Robin Friday, Steve Hetzke, Tommy Youlden and Dennis Nelson — are now on the list at their own request.

Three more — Steve Death, John Murray and Mick Hollis — have been told they must stay at Elm Park. And Eamonn Dunphy, the players' spokesman in their protracted wage negotiations, was give a free transfer just six days after signing a new contract.

This suggests unrest amongst the playing staff, but nevertheless, Reading's preparation for tomorrow's game has been thorough. And it includes the use of a sloping pitch near Elm Park in an attempt to acclimatise to the Loakes Park slope.

They are fully aware of the dangers at Wycombe and club officials have been down to Loakes Park on scouting missions several times this season.

READING 4-3-3

Manager Hurley has named the team that was due to play York City last week in Division Three with a change of substitute. He brings in defender Tommy Youlden, recently back after injury, for striker Mick Hollis which suggests his first aim is to insure against defeat. Reading will, however, play 4-3-3.

Hurley's counterpart, Ted Powell, is keeping his cards close to his chest and will not name his side until 2 o'clock tomorrow. It seems likely that the manager will field the side that beat Waterlooville 2-1 in the last round although Ted might make a change in midfield.

Much will depend on the form of Wycombe's front three. The Blues' defence has been magnificent in recent games and should do a good job in containing the Reading forwards. Midfield also seems evenly matched which leaves a great deal on the shoulders of the home strikers.

Manager Powell will have drummed into his players the need to treat Reading with every respect and they know they will have to be on their best form to overcome the opposition. A near capacity crowd will certainly give Wanderers an extra boost although Reading will not be without support as over 3,000 of their fans are expected to make the short journey to Loakes Park.

Spectators are requested to arrive early to avoid a last-minute rush and the turnstiles will be open from 1.30. Those paying through the gate are also requested to have the correct money—prices are 60p adults, 40p children, 30p O.A.P.s. Ticket holders should use the top gate only.

The draw for the third round of the F.A. Cup will be made on Monday at 10.30 am.

REPLAY DATE

SHOULD tomorrow's F.A. Cup tie end in a draw, the replay has been set for Wednesday at Elm Park, Reading, with a 7.30 kick off.

In the event of a draw, stand tickets for the replay will be on sale at Loakes Park on Sunday morning from 10 a.m.-12 noon and on Monday and Tuesday evenings from 7-9 p.m. Stand tickets only will be on sale as spectators will, of course, be able to go through the turnstiles as normal.

Should tomorrow's game be called off due to the weather, the clubs must play the match (at Wycombe) by the following Thursday. A date can be agreed between the two clubs before the Thursday.

Referee

REFEREE for tomorrow's F.A. Cup-tie between Wycombe Wanderers and Reading is Mr John Homewood, a F.I.F.A. official. Mr Homewood was in charge of Wycombe's games against Pistoiese in the Anglo-Italian Tournament last season.

Fixtures

WYCOMBE Wanderers have rearranged two Rothmans Isthmian League matches. Next Saturday (December 18) they are at home to Leytonstone while on Tuesday, December 28, they are at home to Croydon. Both kick offs are at 3 pm.

Alan Phillips, who scored the only goal in Hendon's 1-0 victory over Reading in the cup last year.

No foregone conclusion says Alan

ASK most people around High Wycombe how they rate Wycombe Wanderers' chances against Reading and you'll probably get the answer 'a home win'. But one man, more experienced than most in FA Cup football, feels it will not be as easy as that (writes Stuart Earp).

The man in question is Alan Phillips, the Blues centre half, who is likely to receive special attention tomorrow at Loakes Park. The reason? It was Alan who sent Reading crashing out of the Cup last season when he scored the only goal of the game for Hendon at Claremont Road.

Alan remembers the goal well. "It came from a set piece after about 60 minutes. Bobby Childs sent over the free kick and John Baker flicked the ball on. The marking was surprisingly lax for professionals and I headed in from about eight yards. It was a similar goal to the one against Merthyr at Wycombe this season."

Apart from the glory of that goal, Alan tells an amusing story of the Hendon v Reading game which was in the first round.

"I wasn't feeling too good on the day and I had lost my voice on the Friday before. I remember the players saying they would enjoy the game far more without my usual comments coming from behind them. Poor Dave Yerby suffered the most. Throughout the game I kept thumping him to shout at the players."

But although he has already been on the winning side once against Reading, Alan feels that tomorrow's game is anything but a foregone conclusion. "My main worry is that everyone is tipping us to win. Reading are a good side and I keep telling people they will be a real handful for us.

"We will have to be at our very best to win this one and if we do play as well as we can, then we'll give them a hell of a game.

"But we can't afford to have some players in the side off form. If only four are playing on top form, we could struggle. We need the whole side to be 100 per cent."

Alan feels Wycombe will have to harass the Third Division club from the start. He says: "Basically professionals are more skilful than non-league players. Therefore we must chase and harry them to upset their rhythm."

Two things in Wycombe's favour, says Alan, are the crowd and the pitch. "The crowd will help us considerably while the pitch is never easy when you play on it for the first time.

"It's not easy to adapt to Loakes Park and on some occasions it can be worth a goal start. But there can be no complaints about the surface which is second to none in the league."

FA Cup giant killing has been part of Alan's career for a long time. This will be his seventh crack at a Football League team and so far his record reads Won 2, Drawn 3, Lost 4. Apart from the win over Reading, he was in the Wanderers team that drew and beat Bournemouth two years ago, followed of course, by those two epic matches against Middlesbrough.

With Hendon, he has met Swindon, Plymouth and Newcastle. Hendon lost 1-0 to Swindon at home after the Reading game last season, while Plymouth beat them 1-0 with a goal in the dying seconds at Home Park.

The Newcastle matches must hold a special place in Alan's memories. They were watched by 30,000 at St James Park when Rod Haider equalised to make the final score 1-1. Alan was marking one Malcolm MacDonald in that game and kept him pretty quiet too! It was a different matter in the replay though, when Supermac scored the first goal at Watford in Newcastle's 4-1 triumph.

The former Wycombe skipper has also got his name on the scoresheet a few times in cup matches. Apart from the winning goal for Hendon last year, Alan scored a beauty against Merthyr Tydfil three years ago when playing for Hendon. Wanderers fans will remember just how close he came to scoring for the Blues against Middlesbrough at Loakes Park. A couple of inches the other way and Alan's header could have won Wycombe a home tie with Sunderland in the fourth round. It was the closest Wanderers came to scoring against mighty 'Boro.

Flashback . . . Alan Phillips ends up on the deck after his header had flashed inches past a Middlesbrough upright at Loakes Park.

FOUR PAGES INDEX

As well as the usual sports coverage this week, there is a special four page feature on the FA Cup tie between Wycombe and Reading. Here's an index to the special supplement.

P.25 Match preview, Alan Phillips story, What the fans say

P26. Reading FC's history, meet the managers, action pictures.

P47. Other round two matches, this season's statistics.

P48. A full run down on Reading's team and pictures.

WYCOMBE TO WIN, SAY THE FANS!

STORY BY MICHAEL KNOX

WYCOMBE Wanderers fans, from a small 11-year-old boy to a veteran supporter in his seventies, agree on one thing — their side will beat Reading tomorrow and reach the third round of the F.A. Cup for the second time in three years.

This isn't just blind optimism of heavily committed supporters. Wanderers' performances against recent league clubs backs their claim that Wycombe are on a par with many clubs from allegedly higher leagues.

The most optimistic forecast came from the youngest of the dozen or so fans interviewed before Saturday's 2-0 victory over Southall.

Kevin Hearn, aged 11, of Spurlands Road, Great Kingshill, who has been following the Blues for five years, says: "I think Wycombe will win 6-0. Well, Reading have lost most of their games this season, haven't they?"

Kevin even went so far as to name the scorers. His favourite player Tony 'Bodger' Horseman would get a hat-trick while Dylan Evans "might get one if he tries."

SINCE 1916

His view of a Wycombe victory is shared by one of their most faithful supporters, Alf Rogers from Chapel Lane, High Wycombe. He's been watching them since 1916 and reckons the scoreline will be 2-0 — he should know after all that time.

Alf says, "Wycombe are more likely to beat a big club like Reading than a small local side. Remember the year we met Middlesbrough we only just beat Marlow 1-0 in the first round."

Alf reckons that Wycombe have got the talent but has some reservations about the state of current football. "The players don't look as though they are enjoying themselves like they used to in the old days." Incidentally Alf rates the 1922 side, which included Frank Adams, as the greatest Wycombe team.

He points to one special reason for Wycombe success tomorrow. "In John Maskell, we have two goalkeepers," he said enthusiastically.

Mr Albert Lunnon of Rutland Avenue, also thinks Wycombe's defence is their strong point. "Our best players are Mead and Phillips in the heart of the defence. We are equal to any Division 3 side and I reckon we'll win 2-1."

HORSEMAN FANS

'Bodger' Horseman certainly has a lot of fans down in the shed and one of his main supporters is Ron Langston of Orchard Way, Holmer Green. He predicts a 3-1 victory with Horseman scoring one of the goals.

Ron's still amazed at how much height Horseman attains when he goes for a high ball. "I don't know what he puts in his boots but he's still marvellous in the air." But Ron concedes that 'Bodger' is coming to the end of a great career. "I think this is his last season at the top, but he's done his job.

"I think Wycombe will field the same side as they did against Waterlooville and as they play 90 minute football and have a lot of character, I think they will win."

This view is shared by Michael Coster from Monks Risborough, who names two reasons for the victory. "Wycombe have good teamwork and I feel the slope is a great advantage."

FEMALE SUPPORTERS

The Blues are not short of female supporters and two of them added their voices to the choir predicting a home win. Mrs May Mole of Totteridge, who follows them to most matches, says "They stand a really good chance and I take them to win 2-0."

Mrs Elsie Bradfield, of Orchard Road, High Wycombe says. "I know we shall win for I've got faith in my team especially in my favourite player, Tony Horseman."

However, two of the Wycombe fans interviewed, have their doubts. Edward Messenger of Kennett Close, Terriers, says, "Wycombe ought to be able to draw up here and will probably have the edge. Then I think Reading will win the replay."

Mr Messenger never missed a home match until he was taken ill in September. Saturday was his first outing since then and he chose a chilly day for his return. "I slipped on the ice as I entered the ground," he chuckled.

Another fan expecting a draw at Loakes Park is William Keen of Rutland Avenue, High Wycombe, who has been watching them for a marathon 58 years.

"We will get at least a draw with Reading," he said, "Because we are equal to a lot of sides in Division Three and Four." But he was more enthusiastic when he added, "I think we'll win the replay 1-0."

There's one man from Wycombe who does not expect a home victory. Paul Cander of Carrington Road reckons that with Robin Friday up front Reading will win 2-0. But Paul, who has lived in Wycombe for 10 years is not being at all disloyal to his team because — of all things — he is a Reading supporter and has been for many years!

RON LANGSTON

. . . Wycombe have the character to succeed

ALBERT LUNNON

. . . Blues defence is the strong point

KEVIN HEARN

. . . Horseman hat-trick in 6-0 win

EDWARD MESSENGER

. . . Reading to win after a replay

MRS ELSIE BRADFIELD

. . . faith in the Wycombe team

ALF ROGERS

. . . Maskell equal to two goalkeepers

PAUL CANDER

. . . lives in Wycombe but supports Reading

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Charlie Hurley . . . "Wycombe have everything to gain, we have a hell of a lot to lose."

Hurley's respect for Wanderers

READING manager Charlie Hurley is under no illusions about tomorrow's F.A. Cup tie against Wycombe at Loakes Park.

Hurley knows full well the size of the task awaiting his players and says: "On the day I expect Wycombe to raise their game considerably. After all, they have nothing at all to lose while we have a hell of a lot. It is a one-off job for them and anything can happen in this type of cup tie."

But anyone who thinks the Reading boss is waiting for the inevitable is wrong. "We are certainly not frightened of Wycombe and in fact, we are looking forward to the game."

Hurley's respect for Wycombe comes from his experience of the non-league game. He told me he and his scouts have watched nearly 70 non-league matches this season in searching of possible players, even delving into the London Spartan and Athenian Leagues.

Reading have watched Wycombe three times already this season, before the cup draw was announced. Said Hurley: "Myself and my assistant have seen Wycombe several times. We had a look at a player but I'm not saying which one."

Although it is only speculation, I gather the player under the Reading microscope was Ian Pearson, who was scoring a lot of goals early in the season.

I asked the Reading manager about his team's performances in Division Three this season. "We got off to a brilliant start but then things started to go wrong and nowadays I can only select from a team of 13 or 14 players. I have tried to sign new players but there is not much money around and it searching for players is a long, hard slog."

"Injuries to some of the players didn't help either," he said.

Currently, Hurley has 17 players under his wing but four of those are transfer listed which suggests they are not happy at the club. He singled out goalkeeper Steve Death and several defensive players who have performed consistently through the season.

Of Robin Friday, the manager says: "Robin had two great seasons with us and was player of the year twice. But he hasn't settled this season and wants a better standard of football. You can't blame him for that."

Hurley remembers last season's F.A. Cup dismissal at Hendon, Wycombe fellow Rothman's Isthmian League club. "Hendon began the game really well and we had to soak up the pressure. They scored through their centre half but we had enough chances in the second half to have wrapped the game up. Although we were disappointed in going out in the first round, we felt that promotion was our main aim and, of course, we got it later ih the season."

SOLID TEAM

He feels Wycombe will be a similar proposition tomorrow. "I won't pick out individual Wycombe players but collectively they are a very solid team. Several of their players are experienced in these situations against league clubs and many of them are capable of playing in Divisions Three and Four of the League.

"Players in non-league football seem to enjoy their football. They are more relaxed and the axe is never over the heads for they have a full time job as well as their football. I suspect many non-league footballers can earn as much as some professionals and in this way, they have the best of both worlds."

This is Charlie Hurley's fifth year in management. As a player he won 40 caps for Ireland while his Football League career included four years at Millwall, 12 at Sunderland and two with Bolton Wanderers.

FIRST CAP

His finest moments came when he won his first cap for Ireland and when he was signed as a professional — "every schoolboy's dream."

Other memorable moments in his career came when Sunderland won promotion from the Second to the First Division in 1964 when he was a player at Roker Park and when Reading clinched their Third Division spot last season.

It seems a good run in the F.A. cup is one of Hurley's next ambitions but he knows that if it is to come this season, he has a large hurdle to clear at Loakes Park tomorrow.

S.E.

READING'S 100th YEAR IN F.A. CUP

A look back into the history of Reading Football Club

ON a cold February evening in 1871 a Mr J. E. Sydenham and a few friends got together at the old Bridge Street Rooms in Reading to talk about forming a new football team.

From their meeting Reading Football Club came into being, and, still going strong in its 106th year, is the seventh oldest in the Football League.

Only Notts County and Preston (formed in 1862), Stoke City (1863), Nottingham Forest (1865), Chesterfield (1866) and Sheffield Wednesday (1867) have been in business longer.

This is Reading's 100th season in the F.A. Cup, and only Notts County of the current league sides have been entering for longer.

In their early days the Reading team changed their home ground pretty frequently. From Reading Recreation Ground they moved to Reading Cricket Ground then on to Coley Park in 1882, and again to Caversham Cricket Ground seven years later. It was necessary to take a ferry across the Thames to see their games at Caversham.

In the 1890's the club began to develop quickly — they joined the Southern League in 1894, turned professional in 1895 and with interest in them growing rapidly, they moved to their present Elm Park headquarters the following year.

Just before they changed to professional status the club suffered the worst defeat in their history, crashing 18-0 to the great Preston team in the first round of the F.A. Cup in 1893. That still stands as the biggest defeat ever suffered by any of the present 92 League clubs.

Reading's next milestone came in 1920, when the Football League increased its size to take in a Third Division — and Reading quickly joined its South section.

It didn't take them long to make their mark.

In 1925-26, when only one team went up from Division Three South, Reading won the championship — but only after the closest of photo-finishes. Plymouth Argyle needed only to draw their final game at Gillingham to clinch that top spot, while Reading had to beat Brentford and pray that Plymouth would be beaten.

While Plymouth never looked like getting a point at Gillingham, finally going down 2-1, Reading's Frank Richardson and Hugh Davey sent the Elm Park crowd wild with delight by tearing Brentford to pieces.

Richardson scored four times and Davey three as Brentford were thrashed 7-1 and Reading stormed up to Division Two.

But they found the higher grade of football an uphill struggle and the 14th position they achieved in their first season up, is the highest place they have ever reached in the League. After just five seasons in Division Two Reading were relegated — ironically after a 3-1 defeat at the hands of old rivals Plymouth.

While they were a Second Division side, however, Reading had their best-ever F.A. Cup run, winning through to within 90 minutes of a Wembley Final in 1926-7. Weymouth, Southend, Manchester United (after a second replay at Villa Park), Portsmouth, Brentford and Swansea were all knocked out before the eventual winners, Cardiff City, beat them 3-0 in the semi-final at Wolverhampton.

The record Elm Park crowd of 33,042 saw Richardson score the only goal of the game in the fifth round tie against Brentford.

Back in the Third Division, Reading were always one of the strongest sides, four times finishing runners-up before finally getting out after 40 years.

When they did so — in their centenary season 1970-71 — it was at the wrong end, the club sinking into the Fourth Division after losing 2-1 in their final game at Aston Villa when a point would have kept them up.

However, their second spell out of Division Three ended after just five seasons — and ended triumphantly on April 24 this year when a 2-2 draw at Cambridge United ensured Reading the second promotion of their history.

Now they're hoping that history will repeat itself again — and that promotion will be followed by a record Cup run, just as it was half a century ago.

This season started with much promise for Reading but it now seems to be turning sour. The club has been suffering a run of terrible results in the last two months — just when it looked as though they were poised to make a promotion challenge for the second consecutive season. Now manager Charlie Hurley is busily searching for new players to halt the slide.

Although the beginning of their programme was top-heavy with away fixtures, they could have gone to the top of the table if they had won at Peterborough on September 14. They deserved to do just that, but after leading into the second half they eventually lost to the last kick of the game.

However, wins at Northampton and Portsmouth kept them in the picture and then a convincing 4-1 local derby victory over Swindon on October 3 took them up into the promotion trio.

Since that Swindon triumph, however, the bubble has burst in the most dramatic fashion with the result that Reading have taken just three points from their last nine games.

The two months' absence through injury of experienced striker Ray Hiron and the failure of Robin Friday to recapture his consistent scoring form of the last two seasons have proved extremely costly.

Now Reading desperately need new men to improve their position, and they will be much more likely to afford them if they can beat Wycombe Wanderers and earn a third round tie against one of the first division giants.

Match ball

KEEN and Busby Ltd, the sports outfitters, have supplied the match ball for tomorrow's game between Wycombe and Reading.

On radio

THE Wycombe Wanderers v Reading F.A. Cup-tie will be featured on BBC Radio 2 tomorrow (Saturday) afternoon.

❋ FACTS AND FIGURES ❋

Reading's record victory since turning professional in 1895 is 10-2 against Crystal Palace in Division Three South during the 1946-47 season.

Dick Spiers holds the record number of appearances for Reading with 453. Dick played from 1955 to 1970 and also turned out in 41 F.A. Cup ties.

Reading's best-ever season in the Football League was in 1926-27 when they finished 14th in Division Two.

In 1893-94, Reading crashed to their heaviest ever defeat when they fell 18-0 to Preston North End in the first round of the F.A. Cup.

Highest goalscorer in a season at Reading is Ronnie Blackman who grabbed 39 goals for the club in season 1951-52.

Ted Drake and Roy Bentley are among the list of Reading managers since the war. Others include Joe Edelston, Jack Smith, Harry Johnston and Jack Mansell.

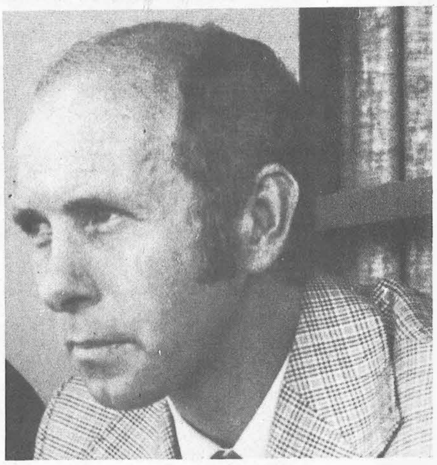
Reading's record transfer fee received for a player was £60,000 by Southampton for winger Tommy Jenkins in 1969.

Pat McConnell is Reading's most capped player. He won eight caps for Ireland.

Reading scored 112 goals in Division Three South during the 1951-52 season — a club record.

In 1927 Reading reached the semi-final of the F.A. Cup. In 1965 and 1966 they reached the fourth round of the League Cup.

Ronnie Blackman holds the Reading record for the greatest number of goals in total aggregate with 156.



Ted Powell . . . "We need the supporters behind us tomorrow against Reading."

The supporters can help us — Powell

TED POWELL, who took on a mammoth job in replacing the successful Brian Lee as manager of Wycombe Wanderers this season, stands on the threshold of a major achievement when his side takes the field against Reading tomorrow.

If the Blues can get through to the third round it will be a magnificent feat for Powell, in only his third year of management. So far he has guided Wycombe to top position in the Rothmans Isthmian League — but a place in round three would be almost miraculous. After all, it took Wanderers 90 years to get there last time.

Ted, an England amateur international and captain of his country, has played two games against Football League opposition during his illustrious career as a player. But both games ended in disappointment.

First occasion was in 1964 when Sutton United were drawn at home to Aldershot in the first round proper. Sutton lost 4-1 and Ted admits the experience was not particularly pleasant. Four years later Sutton drew a plum home tie with mighty Leeds United but again there was to be no success for Ted as his team were put firmly in their place to the tune of 6-0. Ted remembers: "Leeds were a very good side and full of experience. I was disappointed by our display as we didn't raise our game and just played as normal."

WHAT CHANCE?

So it is with those somewhat disappointing memories behind him that Ted sends his team out against Reading tomorrow. So how does he rate Wycombe's chances?

Ted feels that his side's biggest problem will be off the field. He, like many others, is worried by the general overconfidence of the Wycombe public, many of whom feel that the game is all over bar the shouting.

"If the supporters urge us on, I'm sure we have a chance. But it is going to be a very difficult game for us and we need all the support the fans can give us," says Ted.

As Reading have been away from home (at Tranmere) and then had their game on Saturday called off, Ted has been unable to make his usual careful study of the opposition. "I would have liked to have seen them in action but that won't have much effect on Wycombe's display. John Reardon, Alan Phillips and myself all know a fair bit about Reading and some friends in professional football have told me about them."

Ted feels Reading's front three forwards are the real danger men and singles out Robin Friday as a major threat. But the manager is more than happy about his midfield three which, he feels, is second to none in the Isthmian League. Of the defence, he says: "The back four have done exceptionally well over the last six games, especially Alan Phillips and Keith Mead. Only four goals conceded in our last ten games speaks for itself."

UNSETTLED

Powell points out that Reading have been unable to field a settled team in recent weeks, which he thinks might indicate the club is not happy at the moment.

Over the years in the non-league game Ted has had a good chance to judge the differing standard between the part time and full time game.

"The gap between the two has reduced a lot in recent years. Many players I know could easily have gone professional but they are better off in the non-league game.

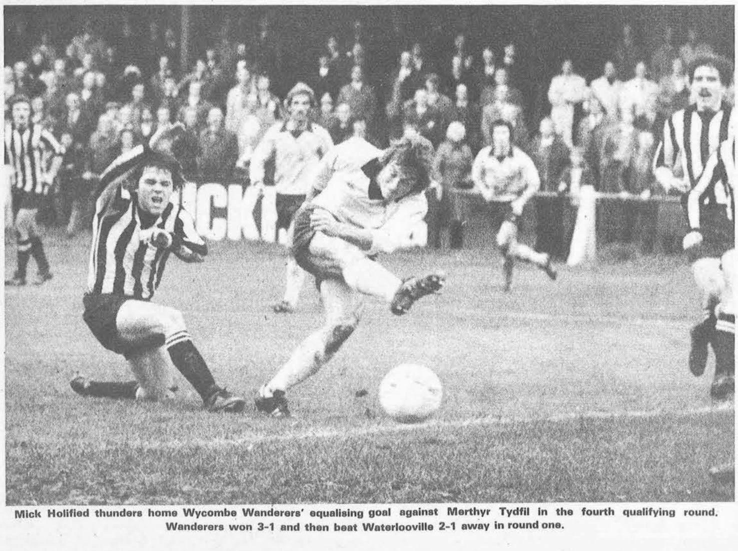
NO SURPRISE

"Some non-league clubs are better organised than league clubs and it's no surprise that the non-league clubs do well in the F.A. Cup. They are all well organised and if they can play 10 per cent above their best against a pro' team who are slightly off form, they are bound to do well."

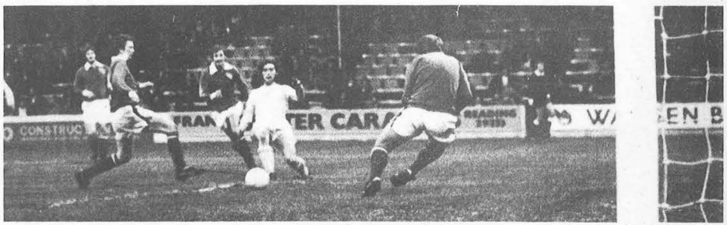
"The top six clubs in the Rothmans Isthmian League could hold their own in the Fourth Division, certainly, if they had the amount of time the pro' clubs enjoy."

It is that sort of confidence and belief that will stand the Blues in good stead tomorrow. As Ted puts it: "If we go out and play, and put them under pressure, we are in with a chance."

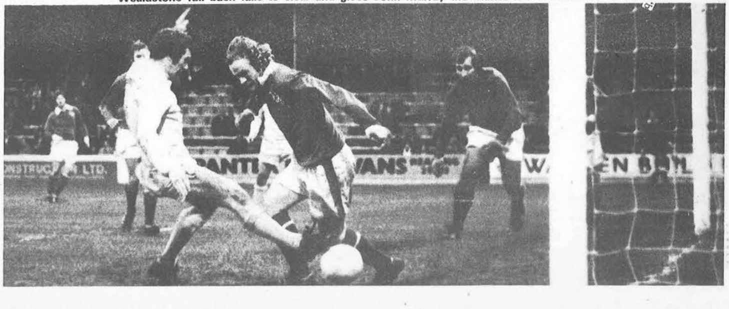
Action from previous rounds of the F.A. Cup



Mick Holifield thunders home Wycombe Wanderers' equalising goal against Merthyr Tydfil in the fourth qualifying round. Wanderers won 3-1 and then beat Waterlooville 2-1 away in round one.



Reading's only goal against Wealdstone in the last round. Above: Robin Friday crosses to the far post when (below) the Wealdstone full back fails to clear and gives John Murray the chance to shoot home.



F.A. CUP, ROUND 2

WYCOMBE W. v READING

A 4-page souvenir supplement

F.A. CUP, ROUND 2

TWO NON-LEAGUERS CERTAIN TO REACH ROUND 3

WHATEVER happens at Loakes Park tomorrow, the followers of non-league football can be certain of at least two clubs in the big F.A. Cup third round draw which brings in the First and Second Division giants.

For although none of the four non-leaguers who were drawn against each other — that's Leatherhead, Wimbledon, Tooting and Mitcham and Kettering — can have been particularly pleased to meet each other in the second round, they know they have the chance of a dream tie in the next round.

Everyone, especially the Press, loves the non-league giant-killers and year after year it is the Wycombes, Wimbledons, Tootings and Leatherheads who capture the main headlines. But is it all that surprising?

The gap between full-time professional football and the non-league game had been rapidly decreasing in recent years. And don't think that these giant-killing acts are just one-off affairs. They're not. Wycombe's football over the years has been on a par with at least Third Division soccer while many a Division Two club might have been embarrassed by a trip to Loakes Park.

Since the sponsorship of Rothmans in 1973 the accent on skill and sportsmanship has brought the best out of top Isthmian League clubs who are now free to concentrate on skill and need not fear the physical clubs. That in itself has improved the standard of the non-league game.

Looking at tomorrow's programme in the cup it is difficult to predict just which of the non-leaguers will get through to the third round. Down at Fetcham Grove, Leatherhead have accounted for many a league club scalp, amongst them Northampton, Colchester and Cambridge in recent years. But Wimbledon are a different proposition.

Two famous cup sides who send shivers down the spines of the league clubs, drawn against each other. It seems a shame but only one can get through and I fancy Wimbledon after a replay. Both sides are extremely experienced while Wimbledon are not the side of last year that won the Southern League. Much will depend on Chris Kelly and his front runners.

The other all non-league clash sees Derek Doogan's Kettering take on Tooting. Kettering have already seen off Oxford United away from home after a replay but they might find Tooting more difficult. Tooting did marvellously last year to reach the fourth round but have a nasty habit of conceding goals which could prove the ultimate difference tomorrow. It will be close but Kettering must be fancied by the odd goal.

ENFIELD SWITCH

But what of the other non-league clubs in action? Enfield take on Crystal Palace and have decided to switch the venue away from Southbury Road. Although this is probably the best bet financially, they will undoubtedly take some of the atmosphere from the match by their action and their chances of winning must surely diminish accordingly.

Enfield, the Rothmans Isthmian League champions, have a strong squad under manager Fred Callaghan, but they lack consistency and a below par performance will surely be punished by the popular Palace. If they can raise their game on the day, though, anything could happen.

Minehead, a mid-table side in the Southern League Premier Division, can expect a somewhat larger crowd than the paltry 397 people that watched them draw 0-0 at Leamington on Saturday, when they travel to Portsmouth. A good cup run is essential to Pompey who up to their necks in financial trouble. It is that motivation that should see them through while Mick Mellows, the former Wycombe forward, is bound to warn them about the non-league game.

Unbeaten at home for a long time, Third Division pacesetters Wrexham should prove too strong for Goole, a Northern Premier League club who have taken 19 points from 17 games this season.

Northwich Victoria must be full of confidence after their replay win over Rochdale in the first round, but they face a tough task at home to Peterborough. Noel Cantwell put Wycombe firmly in their place three years ago with a 3-1 win at Loakes Park. His team is not as strong now but the Posh look favourites to get through although it might take them a replay.

Northwich, however, will point to their record in the Northern Premier League this season. They are currently second with 28 points from 19 games and have lost only once in their last eight home games.

MATLOCK TOP

The top club in the Northern Premier is Matlock who have not lost in their last six away games. They will find life hard at improving Mansfield.

The future has looked pretty grim for Hillingdon Borough over the last few years and the club went through a poor spell when their manager Jimmy Langley left them. Now, some years later, they are having their best cup run for ages and were good value for their success at Torquay in the last round.

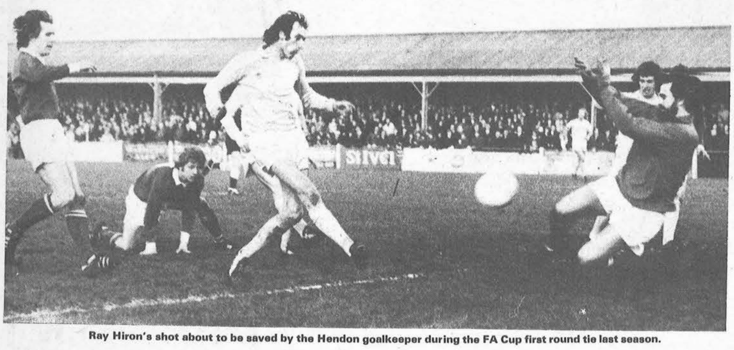
They now meet Watford at home and although Mike Keen's men are improving steadily in Division Four, he must be worried about the task ahead tomorrow. I take the Borough to win this one.

I hope Hitchin Town have not had all their strength sapped by those four games against Weymouth when they take on Swindon tomorrow. Hitchin drew 1-1, 2-2, 3-3 before finally beating their Southern League opponents 3-1, Peter Watson scoring twice.

Inspired by the fair-haired Tony Martin, Hitchin are an improved side this year, but whether they are good enough to account for Swindon remains to be seen.

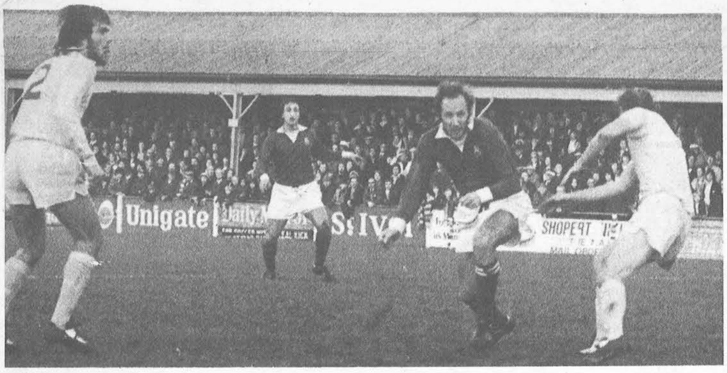
Last of the non-league brigade are Nuneaton Borough, who were involved with Wycombe in the Anglo-Italian Tournament last summer. Nuneaton, placed fourth in the Southern League Premier Division, have been one of the more consistent clubs in non-league soccer over the years but Lincoln look too strong on home ground.

S.E.



Ray Hiron's shot about to be saved by the Hendon goalkeeper during the FA Cup first round tie last season.

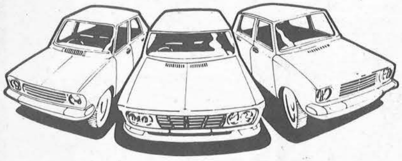
Hendon 1, Reading 0



The winner: Alan Phillips stoops to head home Hendon's goal in their 1-0 victory over Reading at Claremont Road last season.

Tooting's hope for goals at Kettering. Alan Ives in action against Wycombe this season.

Paul Giggle, the skilful Hitchin winger who will be out for goals in the game against Swindon at Topfield.



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How they stand

WYCOMBE

Rothmans Isthmian League Division One

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	Pen Pts C	Pen Pts D
Wycombe Wanderers	**23**	**13**	**4**	**5**	**35**	**21**	**43**	**1**	**0**
Dagenham	22	12	5	5	38	22	41	1	0
Tooting and Mitcham	24	11	4	9	51	45	37	7	0
Hitchin Town	17	11	3	3	26	16	36	3	0
Leatherhead	21	11	2	8	32	21	35	2	0
Enfield	17	10	5	2	24	14	35	3	0
Sutton United	21	10	4	7	31	28	34	0	0
Walthamstow Avenue	21	10	3	8	28	27	33	5	0
Tilbury	20	10	2	8	20	21	32	4	0
Leytonstone	19	9	4	6	30	24	31	4	0
Bishop's Stortford	21	9	4	8	31	26	31	1	4
Slough Town	18	9	3	6	28	23	30	1	0
Hendon	21	8	3	10	28	30	27	4	0
Hayes	20	7	3	10	22	30	24	1	4
Croydon	16	6	3	7	15	17	21	2	0
Southall	20	6	3	11	31	38	21	5	4
Staines Town	17	5	5	7	15	18	20	1	0
Barking	18	6	2	10	19	26	20	2	0
Woking	17	5	4	8	22	25	19	[illegible]	0
Kingstonian	20	4	4	12	20	32	16	7	0
Dulwich Hamlet	21	3	6	12	24	38	15	1	4
Ilford	20	2	4	14	9	37	10	4	0

RESULTS THIS SEASON
Rothmans Isthmian League unless stated

Derby County XI (home friendly) 0-2, Wimbledon (h friendly) 2-1, Spennymoor United (h friendly) 2-1, Redditch (h friendly) 5-2, Tooting and Mitcham (h) 4-2, Hayes (h) 0-1, Dulwich Hamlet (a) 1-0, Hendon (a) 0-3, Dagenham (h) 1-2, Southall (a) 2-1, Enfield (a) 2-0, Staines (h) 3-2, Hitchin (h) 0-1, Kingstonian (a) 3-1, Bishop's Stortford (h) 2-2, Kingstonian (h) 2-0, Walthamstow (h) 4-0, Hayes (a) 1-0, Ilford (a) 1-1, Hendon (h) 1-0, Slough (a) 23, Tilbury (a) 2-0, Staines (a) 1-1, Leatherhead (a) 0-0, Merthyr Tydfil (h F.A. Cup 4th qual round) 3-1, Leatherhead (h R.I.L. Cup 2nd rd) 1-0, Woking (h) 1-0, Wycombe Past (h Testimonial) 5-4, Waterlooville (a F.A. Cup 1st round) 2-1, Sutton (a) 0-1.

Goalscorers: Pearson 18, Kennedy 8, Holifield 6, Kettleborough 5, Evans 5, A. Davies 4, Horseman 4, Phillips 4, Priestley 4, Price 2, Mead 1.

READING

Football League Division Three

		HOME					AWAY					
	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Shrewsbury	18	8	1	0	20	4	3	2	4	11	10	25
Wrexham	18	6	4	0	15	5	4	1	3	15	10	25
Brighton	18	6	1	1	26	8	4	3	3	13	13	24
Rotherham	18	5	3	1	16	8	4	3	2	16	12	24
Preston	18	6	2	0	23	6	1	6	3	8	10	22
Sheffield Wednesday	18	6	2	3	17	10	3	2	2	11	12	22
Mansfield	17	5	3	0	21	5	3	1	5	8	11	20
Chesterfield	18	5	2	3	16	11	3	2	3	9	11	20
Bury	19	7	0	2	20	9	1	4	4	9	24	20
Crystal Palace	17	5	3	1	13	8	1	4	3	4	6	19
Swindon	18	5	3	1	21	13	2	2	5	5	14	19
Lincoln	17	2	5	1	13	10	4	1	4	12	14	18
Tranmere	18	4	3	2	9	6	1	5	3	9	12	18
Gillingham	17	3	4	2	13	11	3	1	4	11	15	17
Chester	17	4	1	2	7	6	3	2	5	7	12	17
Reading	**18**	**4**	**1**	**3**	**13**	**9**	**2**	**2**	**6**	**10**	**21**	**15**
Peterborough	20	5	1	4	11	10	0	4	6	9	22	15
Oxford	18	2	4	2	13	13	1	4	5	12	16	14
Grimsby	17	5	2	2	11	5	0	1	7	6	20	13
Port Vale	18	3	3	3	13	11	0	4	5	4	14	13
Walsall	18	2	4	3	14	14	1	2	6	3	14	12
Portsmouth	18	2	6	2	8	9	0	2	6	7	17	12
Northampton	17	3	1	4	8	10	1	2	6	9	19	11
York	17	3	2	4	8	14	1	1	6	7	20	11

RESULTS THIS SEASON
(Football League, Division 3 unless stated)

Peterborough (home, League Cup 1st leg) 2-3, Peterborough (away, League Cup 2nd leg) 1-0, Gillingham (a) 2-2, Peterborough (away, League Cup replay) 1-3 aet, Shrewsbury (a) 0-2, Walsall (h) 2-1, Wrexham (h) 2-1, Northampton (a) 2-1, Peterborough (a) 1-2, Port Vale (h) 1-1, Portsmouth (a) 2-0, Swindon (h) 4-1, Chesterfield (a) 0-4, Sheffield Wednesday (h) 0-1, Lincoln (a) 1-3, Chester (h) 2-0, Brighton (h) 2-3, Crystal Palace (a) 1-1, Mansfield (a) 0-4, Preston North End (h) 0-2, Wealdstone (home, FA Cup 1st round) 1-0, Tranmere (a) 1-2.

Goalscorers: Murray 10, Friday 5, Cumming 3, Hollis 3, Peters 2, Hiron 1, Nelson 1, Stuckey 1, Hetzke 1, Carnaby 1.

Full report of Saturday's F.A. Cup tie in 'Mid-week'

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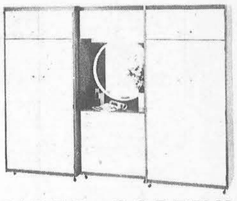

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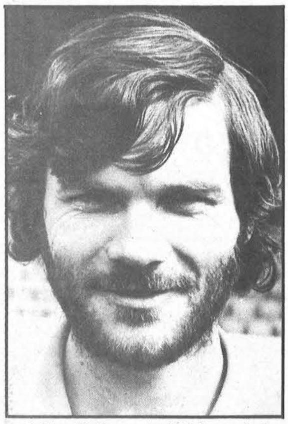
F.A. CUP, ROUND 2

WYCOMBE W.
v READING

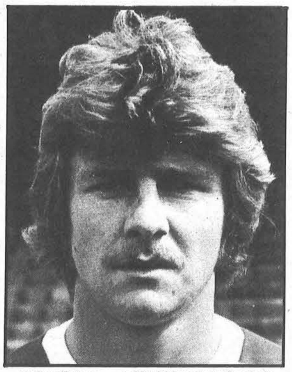
A 4-page souvenir supplement

F.A. CUP, ROUND 2

Meet the Reading squad

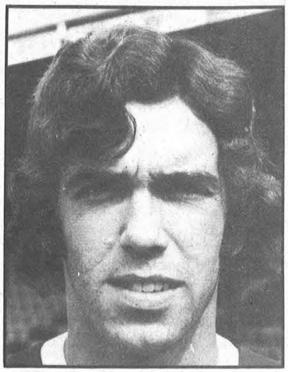


● Steve Death . . . smallest 'keeper in the League, yet regarded as one of the best.

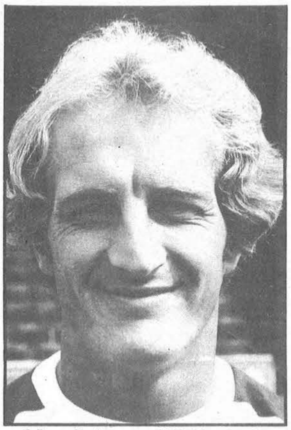


● Gary Peters . . . a £2,500 buy from Southern League Guildford and Dorking.

● Stewart Henderson . . . Eight years at Brighton before joining Reading.



● Dave Moreline . . . tough tackler and one of the key players in promotion run.



● Bruce Stuckey . . . a £10,000 buy from Torquay three seasons ago.

● Paul Bennett . . . a member of Southampton's F.A. Cup-final squad last season.

ROBIN FRIDAY IS THE DANGER MAN UP FRONT

STEVE DEATH (goalkeeper): At 5ft 7ins Steve is the smallest 'keeper in the Football League, but he is unquestionably one of the best in the lower divisions. A former England schools international, he became Reading's record signing in September, 1970, when they paid West Ham £20,000 for him. Death, who has made over 300 appearances for Reading, was chosen in the P.F.A. Fourth Division select side three seasons ago.

JOHN TURNER (goalkeeper): Although John has only made 19 Football League appearances, he has represented no fewer than six clubs. He started with Derby County, before joining Reading for £2,500 in the summer of 1975, having been loaned out to Doncaster, Brighton, Peterborough and Huddersfield during 1974-5. Last season he played in the final 14 games in Reading's successful Fourth Division promotion campaign. A North-Easterner, John was married last month.

GARY PETERS (full-back): Another local boy in the Reading side — but one they almost let get away. Bracknell-based Gary was an apprentice with Aldershot, and Reading only signed him — for £2,500 — from Southern League Guildford and Dorking, after the Hampshire club had released him. He also enjoys playing as a striker, and in the first game of his career up front at Darlington last season, scored the only goal of the match after just five minutes.

STEWART HENDERSON (full-back): Scotsman Stewart started his career with Chelsea but failed to make the first team at Stamford Bridge before moving to Brighton. After eight years at the Goldstone Ground, Reading snapped him up on a free transfer four seasons ago. Principally a full-back Stewart has switched to midfield with some success — in his first-ever game in that position, at Bradford City, he scored twice in ten minutes.

DAVE MORELINE (defender): Londoner Dave joined Reading from Fulham, his only other club, in the summer of 1974 for £3,000. He is primarily a left-back, but has also given a good account of himself both in the centre of the back-four and in a ball-winning midfield role. An extremely tough tackler, Dave was one of the most consistent players in last season's promotion triumph.

TOMMY YOULDEN (defender): Another Londoner, Tommy is in his fifth season at Elm Park after doing four years service at Arsenal and a similar spell at Portsmouth, to whom Reading paid £4,500 for him. This six-foot centre-back is currently on the transfer list at his own request at a fee of £10,000.

STEVE HETZKE (centre-back): A very tall young defender with a great deal of potential, Steve is now on the open-to-offers list at his own request. One of Reading's few home-bred players he was signed straight from school in nearby Newbury six years ago and graduated to the first team through the Elm Park youth side.

PAUL BENNETT (centre-half): Tough guy Paul was Reading's only close-season signing this year to bolster their promotion side in Division Three, moving from Southampton in July for £8,000. He was a member of Saints' FA Cup winning squad in May, although he didn't make the final side at Wembley. Paul, who has had plenty of First Division experience, has proved a shrewd buy so far.

BRUCE STUCKEY (midfield): Like Cumming, converted from an orthodox winger to a midfielder, Bruce also cost Reading a £10,000 transfer fee when he moved from Torquay three seasons ago following spells with Exeter and Sunderland. West countryman Bruce, a talented musician, has since been back to Torquay on a month's loan, but has now re-established himself in the Reading side.

BRYAN CARNABY (midfield): Bryan finally settled at Reading six seasons ago after countless unsuccessful efforts to establish himself with other clubs. He played for two years in South Africa before Reading at last offered him a contract. Bryan scored on his league debut, but doesn't get many goals as his main job is the team's ball-winner in the middle of the park. However, he did score the one which clinched promotion at Cambridge in April.

GORDON CUMMING (midfield): Reading's club captain, Gordon is also their longest serving player, having joined from Arsenal in September, 1969 for a fee of £10,000. A Scotsman, Gordon had the satisfaction of leading Reading to promotion last term after playing in the side which was relegated six seasons previously.

EAMONN DUNPHY (midfield): A former Eire international who won 23 caps for his country, Eamonn was the only ever-present in Reading's promotion side after joining on a free transfer from Charlton at the start of last season. A distinguished writer who recently had his first book published, Dunphy has also played for Manchester United, York City and Millwall, and has now been given a free transfer by Reading.

ROBIN FRIDAY (striker): Reading's top scorer and their fans' "player of the year" for the last two seasons, Robin is now on the transfer list at his own request. He wants a higher grade of football — and Reading want about £50,000 for him. He came to Reading three seasons ago as an amateur, having played for Walthamstow Avenue and Hayes in the Isthmian League.

JOHN MURRAY (striker): Reading's leading scorer this season, "Minty" was involved in his fourth promotion campaign last year. He also went up with all his previous clubs — Burnley, Blackpool and Bury — and has played in all four divisions of the Football League. A Geordie whose transfer from Bury two seasons ago cost £4,000, John made one appearance as a substitute for England under 23's.

RAY HIRON (striker): At 32 the elder statesman of the Reading team. Ray came to Elm Park last season after 11 years in the Portsmouth attack. When Pompey gave him a "free" they went straight down while Reading gained promotion with Ray a regular member of the side. He has scored over 120 Football League goals and is nearing 400 League appearances.

DENNIS NELSON (striker): The fourth player in the Reading squad currently transfer-listed at his own request, Dennis and his family want a move back to the North. He only joined Reading in March when Crewe sold him for £10,000, just in time to help them clinch promotion. An Edinburgh man, Dennis played for Hibernian and Dunfermline north of the border.

MICK HOLLIS (striker): An experienced goal-getter now with his fifth League club, Mick just beat the transfer deadline in March when Stockport sold him to Reading for £4,000. Previously with Leicester, Barrow and Chester, Mick still lives just outside Chester a few miles over the Welsh border.

● Bryan Carnaby . . . Reading's midfield ball winner in his sixth season at Elm Park.

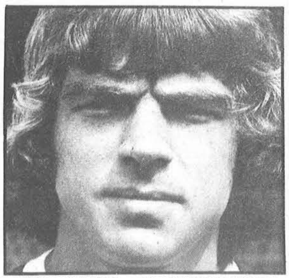
● Eamonn Dunphy . . . 23 caps for Eire. Currently on a free transfer

● Ray Hiron . . . has scored 120 Football League goals in nearly 400 appearances.

● Robin Friday . . . 'Player of the Year' for last 2 seasons and a dangerman upfront.

● John Murray . . . Leading goalscorer this season and an England U.23 substitute.

● Gordon Cumming . . . the longest serving player after joining from Arsenal in 1969.



● Tommy Youlden . . . former Arsenal and Portsmouth in his fifth season at Reading.

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