

# Hardwick mystery adds to problems

WYCOMBE'S current player shortage, caused by injury and unavailability, has been aggravated by the non-appearance of their talented centre-back Steve Hardwick, writes MICHAEL KNOX.

Hardwick had good reason to miss the first month of the season, as he was in Mexico playing for the British Universities in the World Students games. But the party arrived back about ten days ago.

Since then the Wycombe management have been trying to contact him without success. Andy Williams said: "I tried to ring him this Tuesday at his office, but apparently he is away on holiday."

## Problem

Unless Mr Williams, who is beset with problems, can get hold of Hardwick soon, he will be unable to field him in tomorrow's crucial Berger Isthmian League match at home to local rivals Slough.

This lack of communication between a contracted player and his manager does not bode well for the future when he does return. But in the current crisis Mr Williams needs every player he can get.

There's no immediate prospect of John Maskell, back injury, and John Priestley, damaged knee, making quick returns, while Paul Birdseye will not be back from holiday until the weekend.

So once again it looks as though Wycombe will be forced to play several players in unaccustomed positions. This is most unsatisfactory, especially as this season the club appointed a scout to search out for local talent.

At present Nicky Beach has not come up with any new full-backs or mid-field players, the positions that need filling desperately.

Mr Williams was in a glum mood after Tuesday's disastrous defeat by Enfield and was clearly unhappy with the performance of his players.

But he answered critics of his close season changes by saying "none of the players who left would have done any better."

One of the more controversial decisions on Tuesday was to put Tony Price, who scored a hat-trick against Hitchin, on to the substitute's bench. He explained that by saying: "The crowd-pleasing players aren't always the most effective in this sort of game."

Tomorrow's game will prove crucial to both sides, for Slough

are doing even worse. They stand only one place off the bottom after a disastrous start.

But they showed signs of a recovery with a 3-0 F.A. Cup victory over Crawley in midweek, Peter Feeley scoring twice.

This match coincided with the return after injury of David Russell. With Slough, perhaps about to turn the corner, and Wycombe struggling, the result will be watched with great interest throughout the league.

## BERGER ISTHMIAN LEAGUE PREMIER DIVISION (Up to Sept 18)

|                | P        | W        | D        | L        | F         | A         | Pts       |
|----------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Dulwich        | 8        | 5        | 3        | 0        | 16        | 6         | 18        |
| Dagenham       | 10       | 4        | 6        | 0        | 18        | 10        | 18        |
| Harrow Boro    | 9        | 5        | 3        | 1        | 16        | 10        | 18        |
| Tooting        | 10       | 5        | 3        | 2        | 17        | 10        | 18        |
| Leatherhead    | 10       | 5        | 2        | 3        | 17        | 11        | 17        |
| Woking         | 8        | 5        | 2        | 1        | 12        | 12        | 17        |
| Sutton         | 9        | 4        | 4        | 1        | 16        | 8         | 16        |
| Enfield        | 10       | 5        | 1        | 4        | 16        | 8         | 16        |
| Walthamstow    | 8        | 4        | 3        | 1        | 18        | 12        | 15        |
| Hayes          | 9        | 4        | 3        | 2        | 15        | 14        | 15        |
| Barking        | 7        | 3        | 1        | 3        | 12        | 10        | 10        |
| Croydon        | 9        | 3        | 1        | 5        | 11        | 10        | 10        |
| <b>Wycombe</b> | <b>9</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>11</b> | <b>14</b> | <b>10</b> |
| Harlow         | 7        | 1        | 2        | 4        | 8         | 9         | 8         |
| Hitchin        | 9        | 1        | 5        | 3        | 12        | 15        | 8         |
| Staines        | 8        | 2        | 2        | 4        | 7         | 12        | 8         |
| Tilbury        | 9        | 2        | 2        | 5        | 5         | 10        | 8         |
| Borehamwood    | 9        | 2        | 2        | 5        | 8         | 20        | 8         |
| Carshalton     | 8        | 2        | 1        | 5        | 9         | 16        | 7         |
| Oxford         | 6        | 1        | 2        | 5        | 6         | 16        | 5         |
| <b>Slough</b>  | <b>8</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>5</b>  | <b>17</b> | <b>5</b>  |
| Hendon         | 9        | 0        | 4        | 5        | 8         | 15        | 4         |