

MEMORIES of epic cup battles of the past came flooding back to old Wycombe Wanderers fans when their side were drawn at home to Bedford in the first round of the F.A. Trophy to be played on Saturday January 12.

Wycombe and Bedford have enjoyed some classic tussles in the past — all in the F.A. Cup. Bedford took three matches to dispose of the Blues in the mid-sixties, when the final winner, I believe, came from a disputed penalty.

Then four years ago the

MICHAEL KNOX reports

clubs met in the first round proper. After a goalless draw at Loakes Park, Wanderers came back from two goals behind to snatch a draw. Blues eventually won the second replay at home thanks to a goal from Dave Bullock.

Of course history will mean little when these clubs meet next month and Wycombe manager Andy Williams commented: "I hope we finish it off first time this year."

Mr Williams was quite satisfied with the draw. "Bedford were not on my list of clubs to avoid. I'd rather play someone outside our own league. It's normally more difficult against Isthmian sides," he said.

Bedford play in the new Midland Division of the Southern League, having missed out on gaining entry to the Alliance Premier League.

Everything about the club

suggests it will not be long for they are selected to the Alliance. They have excellent facilities and are currently top of the Midland Division with a side bursting with former Football League professionals.

Probably the best known of their players is the former Southend and Northampton forward Billy Best. He was a prolific scorer for Southend, netting 106 goals in 233 appearances before joining Northampton. He found scoring less easy for them and now plays in mid-field.

There's a strong Northampton contingent at Queens Park. First amongst them is Stuart Robertson, who was Northampton's skipper and player of the year last season. So it came as something of a shock when the strong defender was immediately released.

He joined Bedford at the start of the season, but has missed recent matches because of suspen-

sion. However he will be back against Wycombe.

Other ex-pros include Ken Goodeve, formerly of Brighton and Luton, Bobby Folds (Gillingham and Northampton) and the player-manager Trevor Gould, who gained Football League experience with Coventry and Northampton.

Bedford's strength is undoubtedly their defence but they have a dangerous man up front in leading scorer George Cleary. He is a prolific marksman wherever he goes and can boast Barnet, Hillingdon and Dunstable amongst his former clubs.

Their worst result of the season so far came when they went out to Chesham United in the third qualifying round of the F.A. After drawing 1-1 at the Meadow, Bedford lost the replay 1-0 on their own ground. That defeat still rankles.

It is a good draw for Wycombe — only their second home one in ten matches since they first entered the competition six years ago. However at present they seem to be playing their best football away from Loakes Park.

All the B's

However the most encouraging factor for the Blues is the extraordinary information that all four sides that Wanderers have beaten in the Trophy, began their name with a 'B'. These were namely Barnet, Bridgend, Barking and Blyth. I wonder if Bedford will be added to this list.

That game is more than one month away. Wycombe's immediate prospect will be to climb up the league table with a victory at home to Hendon tomorrow.

Saturday's victory at Croydon and the encouraging performance in the five-a-sides, has lifted the confidence of the club. That has also been helped by the exciting debut of former Chalfont St Peter goalkeeper Gary Lester at Croydon.

There must be a doubt about the fitness of Steve Long, whose illness has been diagnosed as tonsillitis, while Mick Hollifield, although he has been training is not yet fully fit.

Hendon will be without their long serving veteran Rod Haider, who quit as player manager one month ago.

He is succeeded as manager by John Evans, who led the club to some of their great moments at the start of the decade. A recent signing is Paul Currie — younger brother of international Tony — from Tilbury.

BERGER ISTHMIAN LEAGUE (Up to December 4)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Enfield	26	15	5	6	45	17	50
Harrow Boro	26	12	9	5	39	31	45
Tooting	25	14	3	8	38	30	45
Dulwich	25	10	12	3	34	22	42
Dagenham	26	11	9	6	43	33	42
Walthamstow	21	11	5	5	43	27	38
Barking	24	10	6	8	39	29	36
Woking	23	10	6	7	42	33	36
Sutton	23	8	10	5	31	20	34
Hitchin	24	8	9	7	37	39	33
Hayes	27	9	6	12	32	39	33
Harlow	20	9	5	6	31	27	32
Leatherhead	26	8	8	10	31	31	32
Wycombe	24	7	10	7	34	29	31
Hendon	25	8	5	12	23	32	29
Carshalton	21	7	5	9	28	38	26
Tilbury	23	6	8	9	28	33	24
Boreham Wood	24	6	6	12	22	40	24
Oxford City	23	5	7	11	23	44	22
Croydon	23	5	6	12	30	34	21
Staines Town	23	5	4	14	18	38	19
Slough Town	22	3	6	13	18	46	15