

# Shock news from Loakes Park

# WYCOMBE AXE RESERVE SIDE

**WYCOMBE Wanderers are to disband their reserve team at the end of this season.**

Club chairman Brian Lee broke this dramatic news on Saturday, saying there was no longer any need for such a team at Loakes Park.

This is the second time in 15 years that Wanderers have disposed of their reserve team, which is currently being used to give young local prospects a chance to progress.

The first occasion occurred shortly after Mr Lee took over as manager in the late 1960s. Mr Lee preferred to operate with a squad system.

Successive managers Ted Powell, John Redon and Andy Williams continued the trend. But when Mike Keen took over a reserve team was one of his priorities.

## **Final**

So they were re-formed in 1980 and joined the Suburban League where they joined the reserve sides if Isthmian, Southern and Athenian League clubs.

In their second year back they reached the final

of the Berks and Bucks Intermediate Cup and each season they have finished near the top of the table.

Mr Lee explained that there were three main reasons why the reserves were being dropped.

Firstly, there was too big a gap between the first and reserve teams. He cited the example of young defender Dave Crook, who returned to Flackwell Heath because he did not feel he was improving by playing at a reserve team level.

Playing in the Athenian League was more use to his game and Mr Lee hoped that Wycombe could draft in players for local teams, should the need arise.

## **Fitness**

Secondly, Mr Lee said that very few reserves had actually become established in the Isthmian League team. The recent rise of Richard Mikurenda was the exception rather than the rule.

At best, considered Mr Lee, only five or six of the reserves were likely to play in the first team, and that the other players "were, with respect, padding."

The final reason was finance. Bearing in mind the above, money could be saved by not running the reserves. He declined to put a figure on the cost.

Mr Lee agreed that the reserve team was useful in getting players back to fitness after injury, but added: "In my day I used to arrange friendly matches to benefit just one player."

Friendlys will be the order of the day next season, when the current reserve team boss Tim Anning will have to find another job.

## **"Disappointed"**

The decision to axe the reserves has certainly upset manager Mike Keen.

"I'm very disappointed that there won't be a reserve team next season. When I came I helped to instigate the team, and it's not been a complete failure by any means.

"I feel a club of this standard should have a reserve team. But the committee have made their decision and I'd rather not say any more about it."

The main benefits of having a second string were seen earlier in the season when injuries and suspensions robbed the first team of six or seven regulars.

If the club had not had a reserve team, one match against Hayes might well have been called off.

**Michael Knox**