

After the 'sacking' of Keen . . .

WHO'S NEXT FOR THE HOT SEAT?

WYCOMBE Wanderers will start their centenary season in August with a new manager, after their decision to part with Mike Keen.

Mr Keen was told last week that the club will not renew his contract at the end of the current campaign, thus severing his four year connection with Loakes Park.

In announcing the club's decision, chairman Brian Lee said: "We feel a change would be in the best interests of the club." He declined to elaborate on this explanation.

Wanderers' move means that Mr Keen will carry onto the end of the season, but then be replaced.

The manager, who informed his team of the club's decision before the league match with Harlow last Thursday, said he was disap-

pointed but not surprised by the decision.

"I said when I took over that I would put Wycombe back on the map as a top non-league club. I think I did that.

"Now it's important to pick up a few more points in the league and go on to beat Sutton in the Hitachi Cup final. That's my top priority at present," he said.

Disappointed

Mr Keen's demise indicates the high risk nature of the manager's job at Wycombe. The club are geared to success, and one relatively poor season, by their high standards, has once again cost the boss his job.

Remember, during his four years at the club, they won the Isthmian League championship once, finished third on two occasions and reached the semi-finals of the F.A. Trophy.

Add to these, their performances in the Hitachi Cup with two appearances in the final and one in the semi-final.

A record like this at another club, might earn the manager a sinecure for life, especially when his job was not made easier by the club

keeping a tight rein on finances.

On the debit side, has been the club's slide down the table this season, when Isthmian standards have reached an all-time low.

His squad has been badly hit by injury, but his failure to find a replacement for mid-field general Howard Kennedy was a big factor in the club's relative decline.

George Borg, a temperamental character, did not help matters with his public outbursts against the boss.

However since Borg's departure to Dartford, Wycombe have suffered only two defeats in 18 league games, many of them with a drastically weakened team. It may not have been pretty, but it had to be done.

But the unbeaten run was not enough to save Mr Keen, and now the spotlight turns to his speculation as to his successor.

There is a long list of characters — most of them former Wanderers — whose names are being discussed.

One of them, Larry Pritchard — the assistant manager at Sutton, told me he is definitely not interested in coming to Loakes Park.

He said that he lived too far away from Wycombe and thought the job would probably go to someone with a local connection.

The two most obvious candidates in this respect are Slough Town boss Terry Reardon and Oxford City's John Maskell — but both have their drawbacks.

Although relatively successful, Reardon's players have had a poor disciplinary record this season, and, according to reports, are not the most neatly dressed when arriving for matches.

Candidates

These factor may seem insignificant but Wycombe chairman Brian Lee is known to value them highly.

Maskell has not enjoyed much success at Oxford who were expected to make a strong bid for promotion this season.

Although he was Wycombe's regular goalkeeper for more than a decade, the club have been wary of 'keeper/managers following their experiences with the team of Andy Williams and Howard Wells, whom Mr Keen succeeded.

Other candidates include Keith Blunt, formerly a coach at Sutton who has been managing a club in Norway, Jimmy Kelman, the much respected boss at Hungerford, who have continually failed to get out of the Isthmian Division Two, and Hayes defender Peter Suddaby.

An outside bet could be Mr Keen's current assistant Alan Davies.

But, whoever takes it on will be in the hot seat.

Michael Knox