

PUT ON ICE!

THE bizarre, never-ending saga of Wycombe's blighted Hitachi Cup tie with Bishops Stortford has taken another twist.

This week Blues received a directive from the Isthmian League saying that all Hitachi games have been put in cold storage until March 14 because of the severe weather.

That means that Wycombe will have waited over three months — since December 11 — to play a third round match which has already been postponed three times.

The hitachi competition is now way behind schedule with fourth round ties originally due to take place this week.

Blues would have met the winners of the Harrow v Leyton Wingate match — another casualty of the weather — if they had the opportunity to dispose of Stortford!

The Isthmian hierarchy had little alternative but to shelve the Hitachi for the time being.

The Arctic sub-zero temperatures have wiped out scores of fixtures in recent weeks.

And it now looks certain that clubs, including Wycombe, Chalfont St Peter, Flackwell Heath and Marlow, will be playing three times a week when the thaw eventually arrives.

"It looks very much that way," commented Wycombe boss Paul Bence.

Wycombe's match with Harrow on Satur-

Hitachi saga will run on until March

day at Loakes Park was the latest victim of the freeze-up.

But Bence's troops did manage to get a useful 90-minute workout on Saturday morning against Reading's first team on the artificial surface at Bisham Abbey.

Despite the absence of striker Declan Link, through work commitments, and full back Graham Pearce, who was confined to bed with 'flu, Wycombe won 3-0.

Young Mark West joined Simon Read and Roy Fairchild on the scoresheet.

"Reading were only without two of their recognised first team," explained Bence.

"So it was a good performance from my lads.

"The most important thing was having the game at all because it keeps the team match fit and that is a problem which every club is facing at the moment."

The national centre at Bisham became a mecca for professional clubs this week with

Wimbledon, Fulham and Tottenham gratefully getting in some practice to combat their lack of match activity.

Tottenham actually played on Sunday morning — the only time they could have use of the popular facilities — against a touring Austrian side.

Wycombe's next scheduled match is on Thursday night against the RAF.

If the weather relents the game will take place at Loakes Park, kick-off 7.30pm.

But if the temperatures remain low, Blues will switch it to Bisham.

Bence is anxious to keep his squad in action. So the RAF clash goes ahead at Loakes Park he will fix up a friendly for his second string on the artificial turf.

Meanwhile, Trevor How is still a Wycombe player.

Manager Bence confirmed that there had been no suitable offers this week for the unsettled defender who played instead of Pearce against Reading.

This Saturday Wycombe are due to travel to Stortford for a league match — weather permitting.

But if the bad luck which has plagued the Hitachi tie is any gauge, Blues may have to wait until May to pick up a possible three points!

BY JIM McCANN