

NON-LEAGUE FOOTBALL

Key game for Wycombe

By Paul Newman

After his experiences last year, when Wycombe Wanderers were relegated in their first campaign in the Gola League (now the GM Vauxhall Conference) after taking only five points from their last 14 games, Alan Gane is taking nothing for granted this season. However, even the Wycombe manager, admits that victory at home to Yeovil Town tomorrow would leave his side "in a very good position to win promotion."

Wycombe are 15 points clear at the top of the Vauxhall-Opel League premier division. With only 13 games left, Yeovil, their closest challengers, must win to keep alive their outside chance of winning the championship. The Somerset club have won all three encounters between the two sides this season but have recently lost crucial ground.

Wycombe, meanwhile, have won 24 of their 30 league

matches, a remarkable run considering their collapse at the end of last season. They never recovered from the shock of Paul Bence's resignation as manager in January. Gane, Bence's assistant, took charge, but was unable to halt a slide which ended in relegation by goal difference. He made sweeping changes in playing personnel in the summer.

"Morale is never good when you get relegated, so it was important to bring in new faces," he said. "We were very unlucky to go down, but the side basically wasn't good enough. We had made the mistake of taking on the Gola League with an Isthmian team. We won't make that error again although there are no obvious weaknesses and this is a better side than the one we went up with before."

Gane's master stroke was to sign from Enfield two players

with vast non-League experience, Noel Ashford and Keith Barrett. Andy Graham, who scored 12 goals from midfield in his first 11 games after joining from Wealdstone, has been another key player. Recent signings include Mark Dawber, a winger from Woking, and Declan Link, who has hit four goals in three games since his return from the United States.

"We've thrown together almost a completely new side and I've been delighted with the outcome," Gane said. "In the early weeks we didn't play well as a team but were great as individuals. Now with the lead we've established the only real danger is complacency."

● Colin Meldrum, the former Reading midfield player, has been appointed manager of Wealdstone in succession to Brian Hall.