

ASHFORD TO STAY!

“It has been sorted out” — No

By ROLF NIVEN

NOEL ASHFORD has resolved his differences with Wycombe Wanderers and will be back in a Blues shirt this season.

The England non-league ace, so influential in Wycombe's success last season, ended weeks of speculation over his future by confirming that he wants to stay.

Ashford had been upset by the club's failure to sign top players during the close season and then by Alan Gane's recent shock resignation.

Sorted out

Barnet boss Barry Fry is known to have discussed terms with Ashford but Wanderers have won their battle to keep their star striker.

“It has been sorted out and I'm available for selection again,” Ashford told the Bucks Free Press on Thursday. “I'm happy to play for Wycombe and I'm looking forward to the season.”

The news will delight supporters and lift some of the gloom that has surrounded Loakes Park during the past months.

Club secretary John Goldsworthy this week confirmed the situation: “Noel Ashford has resolved his problems and will be available this season.”

But the former Enfield hero has not yet signed a new three year contract and is unlikely to do so until the team is settled with a new manager at its helm.

Ashford may have to sit out tomorrow's (Saturday) opening GM Vauxhall Conference clash with Stafford Rangers at Loakes Park.

After fracturing a toe in a five-a-side tournament, he has missed all of Blues' pre-season matches and there are doubts over his match fitness.

He is likely to be included as a sub with new signing Alan Mayes partnering Mark West up front.

Stronger

“I'll see how he gets on in training on Thursday night but I can't see myself putting Noel straight into the side after all the hard work the others have put in during the friendlies,” said caretaker John Reardon.

“Morale has at least improved after our two wins and the fact that Noel's situation has been resolved will also help.

“It is obviously impossible to predict what will happen in a season but we have a much stronger squad in depth now than seasons ago in the Gola League.”

Reardon added that the club will continue to look for quality players.

“We will not just be sitting back — we are constantly trying to improve our ability,” he said. “Having said that the new manager will take over a reasonable squad.”

There is still no development on Gane's replacement although Wycombe hope to appoint the new man within the next week.

“There has been a good response so far,” said Goldsworthy. “Applications are still coming in but we don't want to wait too much longer as the season will be underway.”