

SUTTON DEAL FALLS THROUGH

Awartefe **says no to** **career at** **Wycombe**

WYCOMBE Wanderers were dealt a fresh blow at the weekend when their plans to sign Sutton United striker Edgar Awartefe fell through.

Blues boss Peter Suddaby had been chasing Awartefe for some weeks and I believe had struck a deal with Sutton manager Barrie Williams.

The Blues management duo, desperate to strengthen the squad and halt their recent run of poor results, were prepared to meet Sutton's full asking price of £5,000.

But Suddaby and assistant John Reardon will have to look elsewhere for a top striker now after Awartefe turned down the move to Wycombe.

"The player didn't want to come because he said travelling was a problem," said Suddaby. "It is a blow because there are very few Conference players available at the moment."

Awartefe only became available after the return of star Paul McKinnon who has been playing for Swedish Second Division side Orebro. McKinnon will link up front with United's six-goal Lenny Dennis, forcing manager Williams to put both Awartefe and Mickey Joyce on the transfer list.

Joyce has already made it clear he does not want to move.

Suddaby admits he is being forced to look outside the Conference in an effort to merely boost the size of his squad.

"I wanted to build a squad slowly and with the right players but at the moment I just need to increase the numbers," he confirmed. "I haven't given up trying but there is just no-one available in the Conference."

Last week at Welling United, Blues only had 12 fit players with the injured Kevin Durham named as substitute.

Unbalanced

With four consecutive Conference defeats and only one win in 13 matches, Wycombe are now scouring the Vauxhall-Opel League for talent.

"It is not a situation I like but we need the players."

With such a limited squad at his disposal, the Wanderers chief has little option but to continue to play the same side.

"Certain players are still not doing themselves justice," he said. "People keep telling me how good these players are but I have reached the stage where I cannot wait any longer. They have yet to prove themselves to me."

"Stafford were no great shakes but we didn't have the brains to cope with Gordon Hill. We showed a bit of fight at Welling in midweek and at Stafford we played a bit. Overall, however, we probably only performed well for 30 minutes in the match which is no good to anybody. We are still unbalanced."

"Kevin Day did a great job for us in the middle and we did create chances."

By ROLF NIVEN

Wycombe were never even given the chance to warm-up at Stafford after a breakdown on the M1 held them up en route. Their coach broke down at Toddington service station and another vehicle had to be sent for. The team eventually arrived at Stafford just 25 minutes before kick-off.

"It was no way to prepare for a match and they scored a great early goal while we still were sorting ourselves out."

Wanderers take a break from League duty tonight (Tuesday) when they face Bognor Regis at home in the first round of the GMAC Cup.

The West Sussex club will be eager for revenge at Loakes Park following their undeserved 3-0 defeat by Blues in the Vauxhall Charity Shield last August.

That day Jack Pearce's men squandered a hatful of chances before finally falling in extra-time to goals by Keith Bowen, Alan Mayes and Steve Norman.

Bognor will again look to their long-serving brothers Mick and Paul Pullen to provide stability in the side.

Their forward line should be led by former Southampton and Reading man Pat Earles who played for 13 years in the Football League.

The Vauxhall-Opel Premier outfit showed they are in fine fettle by blasting Thanet United out of the FA Cup fourth qualifying round on Saturday with a 4-0 victory away from home.

For Wanderers, floundering fourth from bottom in the Conference table, this is a great chance to get a rare win under their belt and boost confidence.

Left-back Neil Price and midfield men Kevin Durham and Graham Bressington are still ruled out through injury.