

SQUAD ANGRY AS LEE TAKES OVER



Blues' chairman Brian Lee - back in the front line at Loakes Park.

WYCOMBE Wanderers's managerial crisis reached farcical proportions on Tuesday night when Chairman Brian Lee donned a tracksuit to take team training.

And with new candidates being interviewed this weekend it seems likely that Lee will take charge of the team again for tomorrow's GM Vauxhall Conference trip to Wealdstone.

Lee's decision to handle team affairs has angered and upset players who were only told of Peter Suddaby's surprise departure in midweek. They were furious that Lee rode roughshod over assistant John Readon and there was open resentment towards the chairman. Some even made their feelings known to Lee after the training session.

Wycombe drew 3-3 with Charrington Chiltonian League side Holmer Green in a one-touch training match on Tuesday - indicating how low morale is at Loakes Park.

Lee was the club's most successful ever manager, leading them to a succession of Isthmian League triumphs during the seventies. But his incredible decision to take over the reins from Readon - albeit briefly - will only serve to increase tension amongst the playing staff.

The Wanderers board have come in for severe criticism from several quarters over their handling of Suddaby's departure.

They wanted to keep it a secret until a new man was found but when the news broke they issued a brief statement which claimed that "It has been mutually agreed that it might be in the best interests of the club to change the change the manager because the players are not responding to him."

Our sources, however, reveal that Suddaby, like Alan Gane before him, was given very little choice but to step down. He said from the start that he would never quit and has certainly not handed in a note of resignation.

We know for a fact that he was keen to stay in charge over the next few weeks because Wanderers are due to play a series of crucial relegation battles. He believed the team

By Rolf Niven and Peter Thomas

could pick up enough points to move out of danger.

The former Blackpool skipper declined to add to the club's statement but we understand he feels he was not been given a proper chance in charge.

Fans, though, became disillusioned as the team continued to struggle and began calling for Suddaby's head after Saturday's shameful 5-1 hammering by Wealdstone at home. There is no doubt that many will welcome a change in manager.

Linked

Lee has already talked to several probables for the Loakes Park hot-seat but as usual is keeping his cards close to his chest, merely commenting that "We are continuing to interview potential candidates."

Among those linked with the job have been Keith Blunt, youth team coach at Tottenham Hotspur since 1984 and a good friend of Lee, and Sutton United youth team manager Ted Shepherd - formerly in charge at Croydon. A dark horse could be Jim Kelman who has lifted Maidenhead United out of the doldrums and put them in the promotion picture in the Vauxhall-Opel Division 2 (South). Enfield boss Eddie McCluskey had been linked with Wycombe several weeks ago.

Meanwhile Blues are once again likely to be without striker Mark Boyland for Sat-

Unrest among players as the chairman fills in as manager

urday's all-important trip to Wealdstone, but they may be boosted by the appearance of new signing, Martin Roderick and the return from injury of skipper, Keith Barrett.

Boyland is still suffering from a pelvic injury which has crept up on him in recent weeks. It is believed to be pressure on a pelvic nerve which is causing the problem and the ex-Cheltenham man underwent another session of manipulation today (Friday) in a bid to remedy it.

He looks almost certain to miss the vital clash, but Barrett is a likely starter after a run-out on Tuesday. He seems to have recovered from the recurring compressed fracture of his leg, which kept him out for the past three weeks, and his return will be a welcome fillip for the beleaguered Blues defence.

Finalised

Lack of match fitness is the only doubt surrounding the latest arrival at Loakes Park, former Farnborough Town winger, Martin Roderick.

The deal is expected to be finalised before the weekend, and, if Roderick is in shape, he may well be in the squad.

The 20-year-old, left-sided attacker was unhappy with the travelling involved between the Hampshire club and his parents' home near Oxford, and Wanderers were only too happy to snap him up on the strength of an impressive performance when the two clubs met in a pre-season friendly.

The only other doubt for Saturday surrounds central defender Nigel Gray, who went down with flu on Tuesday. Hopefully his condition will have improved sufficiently by the end of the week to enable him to be considered.

Caretaker manager, John Readon, is under no illusions as to the nature of the task facing Wanderers at Lower Mead Stadium.

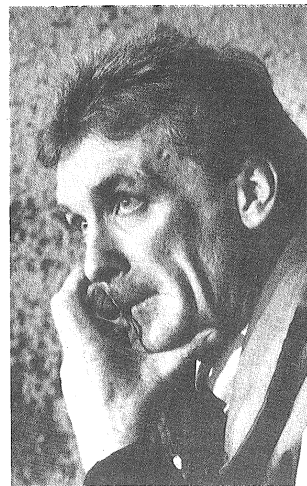
He said: "New manager Tony Jennings will make sure that his side are in the kind of mood to give nothing away, and we have to make sure we are in the same frame of mind, although the players here are a bit bewildered at the moment."

"This is a very big game for us, and we have to get something out of it."

On Boxing Day, Jennings became the first manager to steer the Stones to victory this season, their 2-1 defeat of lowly Dagenham ending a run of 15 Conference matches without a win.

Before this long-overdue success, Wealdstone had managed just one victory in 23 league and cup matches - a victory secured when the club was between its two previous managers of the season.

One man missing from Stones' line-up against Wycombe will be veteran striker Mick Ferguson. The 32-year-old ex-Coventry man has left the club by mutual consent, having hit three goals since his arrival at Station Road in September.



Peter Suddaby - was he pushed?