

# Dark horse chosen to lead revival

JIM KELMAN was something of a dark horse when speculation was rife about the new Wycombe Wanderers manager.

Several leading names were being bandied about as possible successors to Peter Suddaby - including Enfield boss Eddie McCluskey and a former First Division star.

Kelman's lack of experience at Conference level made him an outsider in the race for the Loakes Park job and his appointment came as a real surprise to many.

McCluskey's knowledge of the Conference made him most people's favourite but the Blues board believe Kelman's skill as a Football Association coach will help them climb clear of the relegation zone.

Kelman, who joins from Maidenhead United of the Vauxhall-Opel Division 2 (South), has always been an admirer of Wycombe Wanderers but is acutely aware of the problems he faces in his new job.

"I have lived in this region nearly all of my life and I've always admired Wycombe Wanderers," commented Glasgow-born Kelman. "Times have changed however and you cannot live on memories. The Altrinchams and Barnets of this world have set new standards which we must ultimately aim for."

Kelman, appointed at lunchtime on Saturday, took charge of the team in the 5-3 hammering of Cheltenham Town - Blues' biggest League win of the season.

A new man with new ideas, he has already promised that changes will be made.

"There are some very good players in the squad but there are also some who want away," he said. "You cannot hold onto unhappy players because it disrupts the spirit of the club. I have the perfect opportunity to see everyone this week as we have a Capital League match against "I have good contacts in the Football League and I know there are some good players in the League who are unhappy playing in the Combination. More and more are coming out of that and moving into the Conference and enjoying their football."

"Pre-season is the time to be looking at players from lower divisions but right now we need to sign players with experience. It is after Christmas so there will be unsettled and unhappy players about."

Kelman, who lifted Maidenhead out of the doldrums and into a challenging position in the Vauxhall-Opel Division 2 (South), is determined to make his mark.

"I have always been my own man," he stated firmly. "This is a prestigious job but there is only one way to do it and that's my way."

"Peter Suddaby brought in some good players and did the best he could but he may well have been caught up in the backlash after Alan Gane left. Gane did a brilliant job while he was here and I know how highly people regard him at Wycombe. But I am not Alan Gane - I have my own ideas and my own viewpoints."

"I don't believe we are seeing the best from many of the players at the moment," he commented. "I watched them at Wealdstone and there was no passion. Against Cheltenham there was plenty of it but Wycombe were still naive. At 3-1 up at home they should have been home and dry. Cheltenham should never have been given a lifeline."

"It is quite simple - we have to get the results to stay up and that will require hard work."

Kelman, who moved from his native Scotland at an early age, gained his full coaching badge in 1977 and the same year took on his first managerial role at Hungerford Town.

He spent eight happy and successful years there, taking them to the FA Vase semi-finals twice and to the first round proper of the FA Cup. One of the highlights of his rule there was a 1-0 victory over the then mighty Wycombe Wanderers in the 1981/82 Berks and Bucks Cup final.

He then moved to Newbury Town. They were bottom of the league and the atmosphere was 'awful'. But with the backing of a good chairman and the local council, Kelman turned the side around and made them successful. He had high hopes of steering the club onto higher things but when the chairman resigned his dreams fell flat and he decided to take a year off.

He then took a complete year off and toured the United States. When he returned from the US in February last year he applied successfully for the Maidenhead United job and has done well there on a limited budget.

A freelance coach for much of his life, Kelman was approached four years ago by the Football Association who recognised the need for development of coaching in the Berks and Bucks region.

It has built up to such an extent that it has become a full-time occupation and he operates from an office at his home in Hamstead Marshall, Newbury.

"I am a gentleman when I lose but losing is a bad habit and I hate it!"