

KELMAN CHASES TOP DEFENDER

By Rolf Niven

BLUES BOSS Jim Kelman is chasing a First Division reserve player in a bid to bolster his defence.

Kelman confirmed this week that he is talking to a centre-half and was hoping to have completed a new deal by the end of the week.

"Nothing is finalised because I'm still negotiating with the player but it would be a great boost," he said. "We need to strengthen our back four."

Kelman was hoping to bag his man before tomorrow's vital GM Vauxhall Conference relegation battle at Dagenham where victory would push Wanderers a further three points clear of the relegation zone.

It would be another coup for the Wycombe manager following the signing of former Aldershot apprentice Mathew Crossley who made his debut at the weekend.

Twenty-year-old Crossley, who formerly played for Overton United in the Hampshire League, was on the books at Basingstoke Town.

At Victoria Road tomorrow Kelman expects a similar game to last Saturday's 1-0 win over Wealdstone at Loakes Park.

"The only difference is that Dagenham will be relaxed as it looks odds on that they will drop out of the league this season. They will have no pressure on them unlike ourselves. On paper we are expected to beat them but it is going to be hard.

"The game against Wealdstone should have been over by half-time - we have got to put away our chances," he commented. "You cannot run at a team for 90 minutes. We had a hard training session on Tuesday which is what we need. We have to be tough - not try and look pretty and play 27 passes."

"We have also got to be aware of tackling the opposition properly. Olaleye caused us problems on Saturday coming through midfield in the first half.

"But we created chances against Wealdstone despite two of our forwards having a quiet day and if we can create the same number of opportunities against Dagenham then I think we'll come through."

Right-back Kirk Corbin took a knock on Saturday but was due to train on Thursday night and is expected to be fit for tomorrow.

"I will be looking at playing the same squad," said Kelman.

Dagenham, 10 points adrift of Wanderers, look good bets for relegation, - a fact confirmed on Monday night when they crashed 1-0 at home to Sutton United.

"They have had a complete upheaval, shelving players and sacking their manager so they are a completely unknown quantity," added Kelman.

The Daggers are without a win in 16 Conference games and only managed to pick up points from four draws. Their last win in fact was back on October 24 when they knocked Great Yarmouth out of the FA Cup.

The club, which had made a loss of £40,000 the previous year, announced proposals for a cut in wages prior to Christmas which sparked the resignation of manager Tony Jennings.

Within a fortnight 90 per cent of the first team players also quit, forcing Dagenham to soldier on with virtually a reserve side.

The few experienced players to have stayed are keeper Darren Williams, central defender and skipper Nicky Bissett - who is being watched by several League clubs - and defender Phil Stacey.

● Kelman hopes to arrange a friendly on Tuesday night. Details of who Blues will be playing are not finalised yet but read Midweek for details.

● Wycombe Wanderers players, assisted by raffle organiser Ruth Payne, contributed £250 between themselves for the Steve King Memorial Fund - set up to help the family of the Chalfont St Peter goalkeeper who died so tragically recently.

The money was handed over to Chalfont chairman David Pembroke by keeper Gary Lester, a former Chalfont player.

"We were overwhelmed by their generosity," said Pembroke.



Kevin set to take a dig at the Daggers!

Wanderers' Kevin Durham - the Stone-crusher.

Loan pair to stay longer?

DAGENHAM are hoping to extend the loan of Maidstone United players Mel Woodruff and Gary Wallace.

McCombe hopes to have both players in his squad for Saturday's vital rearranged home match against fellow strugglers Wycombe Wanderers.

The match was originally due to take place at Victoria Road next Monday but has been brought forward two days.

McCombe has recently approached several players in a bid to strengthen his squad.

"As far as I am concerned, I will still be manager next season so I have to plan ahead," he insisted.

● Dagenham's GM Vauxhall Conference home match against Kettering Town has been brought forward two weeks from April 2 to March 19.

Striker Woodruff and midfielder Wallace were originally on a month's loan but have played just one game for relegation-threatened Daggers due to recent postponements caused by the severe weather.

Now Dagenham manager John McCombe is to ask Stones to extend the loan for at least another month.

"I haven't spoken to Maidstone manager John Still yet but I don't foresee any problems keeping both of them for the time being," said McCombe on Monday.