

Kelman's move for Maskell is thwarted

OVER-PRICED!

JIM KELMAN'S hopes of capturing Southampton striker Craig Maskell were dashed this week when the South Coast club slapped a £25,000 price tag on his head.

The Wycombe Wanderers boss had been poised to swoop for Maskell who is transfer-listed at The Dell. But his attempts to add a prolific top class forward were blocked when the Saints named their price.

"I spoke to Chris Nicholl this week but there is no way we can afford that sort of money," admitted Kelman. "He is a good young player who has performed at first team level. He has been scoring regularly in the Football Combination."

But the Blues chief is still hopeful of adding another experienced central defender and will continue his discussions with a first division reserve player this weekend.

"There is a lad coming to watch us on Saturday who is currently playing reserve football with a professional club," said Kelman. "He is interested but really has to make up his mind whether he wants to continue playing in the Combination and hope for a chance of first team football or step into the Conference."

That signing would go some way to making up for the disappointment of turning away Michael Barnes on medical advice.

Kelman was hopeful of offering the former Northampton and Reading defender a first team slot with Wanderers. But Barnes, forced out of League football because of a knee injury, was found to still have a problem with the joint and Blues were advised that maidenhead United's £5,000 asking price was not a good investment.

"I had been impressed with him and would have liked to keep him," said Kelman. "He had been with on a loan basis subject to the medical but Dr John Williams, who is one of the best specialists around, told me the knee could last two or three years or it could go tomorrow."

"Maidenhead were a little greedy asking a flat £5,000 for him. I wanted to pay a starter fee and pay the rest over a period of years. They would have still got their money and we would have got our games out of him."

With the prospect of losing at least three more players in the coming weeks, the Wanderers manager is eager to bolster his squad.

Transfer-listed Nigel Gray is still talking to Tooting and Mitcham. The Vauxhall-Opel premier club were hoping to sign him in time for their match against Windsor and Eton tomorrow (Saturday) but have received unexpected competition from ex-Wycombe chief Alan Gane who brought Gray to Loakes Park. Kingstonian have made enquiries about

Rolf Niven reports

striker Graham Westley, known to have been unsettled at Wycombe for some while. The former Barnet boy has only just returned to action after injury.

One player to have already left Loakes Park is former Brighton youngster Phil Lovell who has moved to Vauxhall-Opel premier side Leyton-Wingate in East London.

Australia-bound Martin Woodall continues to play on a match by match basis but is even closer to a move to Melbourne.

Victim

"He has sorted out his visa and is simply waiting for final clearance before leaving," pointed out the Wycombe boss. "Hopefully he will be around for both the Macclesfield and Fisher games but we cannot tell. It is only a matter of days now."

Influential left-back Sean Norman could be a doubtful starter for tomorrow's GM Vauxhall clash against seventh-placed Macclesfield at Loakes park tomorrow.

Norman was the victim of some crude tackling in Tuesday night's shock 3-1 Berks and Bucks Senior Cup defeat at Windsor and Eton and required stitches for a nasty leg wound.

"I was very upset that the referee nor the linesman took any action against their player," said Kelman this week. "The challenge was a bad one and I could not believe it when he escaped without any punishment. Their fellow was going around intimidating our players and he should have been stopped at the start."

"Sean needed stitches and is doubtful for the Macclesfield game. It depends on how he gets on in training on Thursday night."

Southampton's £25,000 price is too much for Wanderers

Norman is the only doubt for tomorrow with Kelman hoping to name the same squad that drew 2-2 at Sutton United the previous week.

Mark West, who has a broken nose, and Kirk Corbin were rested on Tuesday night but are likely to be back in action along with utility man Nigel Taylor who was cup-tied, and Brian Greenaway who was substitute at Windsor.

"Kevin Day is getting back to full fitness which is good news because we need him at the moment."

With a full-strength line-up the Blues chief will be looking for a far more professional display than Wycombe gave in Tuesday's error-riddled county cup defeat.

"It was a case of the heroes of Saturday turning into villains," he said. "The first and last goals were both John Granville's fault and he knows it. The second goal was poor judgement by Keith Barrett."

"I was not over impressed with the standard of football on show. Windsor have got to the top of their league with a brand of football that is physical to say the least. If we played like that at Loakes Park we wouldn't even get a crowd of 100 coming to watch."

"They pound the ball into the area and try and force you into mistakes. It was effective for them on the night because we made three simple errors but it was not good to watch."

"It worries me because whenever we play against sides like Windsor and Dagenham we don't want to mix it," pointed out Kelman. "When I played it was one of my strong points and the lads have got to learn to battle."

After Tuesday's bruising failure Kelman and his team are looking forward to the visit of The Silkmen who, like Wycombe, have a reputation for playing skillful football.

"I think they will be the best footballing side we've met for a long time. I have a video of their game against Rotherham so I will study that."

Kelman has also had Monday's night's opponents Fisher Athletic watched. Fisher are only one place above Wanderers and victory at Surrey Docks Stadium would go a long way to securing their Conference safety.

Next Thursday Wycombe face the RAF at Loakes Park, kick-off 7.30pm.