

WITH the departure of captain Michael Barnes to Windsor & Eton last week, Maidenhead United have not only lost their outstanding player, but appear to have missed out on a substantial transfer fee.

Last month former Magpies boss Jim Kelman attempted to sign Barnes for Wycombe Wanderers. A fee of £5,000 was mentioned.

But Barnes eventually returned after failing a fitness test. Wokingham Town and Windsor had already expressed an interest in the former Reading and Northampton Town player, and Maidenhead would still have been hopeful of receiving a sizeable sum of money for their captain.

However, the departure of the 6ft. 4in. defender eventually left the club with no money, and no Barnes!

Kelman explained how the problem came about. "I was looking to sign Michael due to injury problems in our defence, but I felt the asking price of £5,000 was too high. I was quite prepared to pay a reasonable amount and then additional sums over two years, but Maidenhead still demanded the full fee."

Eventually Kelman agreed, but insisted that Barnes passed the fitness test before any money changed hands. Barnes failed the medical due to a knee injury that had forced him to quit League football.



Michael Barnes,

Kelman went on: "I was very sad that Michael failed the test, as he had played well in his two games for us. But the speed of his return gave Maidenhead ample time to renew his contract."

The problem with the paperwork arose when Barnes arrived at Wycombe. Kelman had to sign him on contract, meaning that his agreement at York Rd was cancelled. When he eventually returned to Maidenhead, the club failed to re-sign him, leaving Barnes a free agent.

All Maidenhead received for Barnes was £250 from Wycombe for the two appearances he made.

Maidenhead United officials declined to comment on the transfer.

The result we were hoping for at Wycombe last Saturday did not come about as we finished up on the wrong end of a 3-1 score-line. This puts even more pressure on the team to pick up vital points from our remaining matches. We welcome Nicky Ironton to the club who has joined us on loan from Barnet, and we hope he enjoys his stay at Welling and can help to maintain our Conference status. We are also relying on your continued support in our bid to remain amongst non-league football's elite.

Once again, we were disappointed at being unable to run a coach to Wycombe due to insufficient bookings. I have heard various comments about away travel from our supporters, but please understand that coach companies do charge a very high fee for hire, and we need at least 20 to 30 bookings in advance to run a coach at an attractive fare without incurring a substantial loss. Maybe the answer is to have a "Travel Club", but again this requires a hard core of 20 or 30 people who are prepared to regularly travel to away matches by coach. If you have any ideas on the subject, please let us know.

WINDSOR and Eton Football Club scooped what must be the bargain of the season this week when they signed one of the Vauxhall-Opel League's most sought after central defenders and did not part with a single penny.

Manager John Clements is fast earning a lofty reputation as a shrewd businessman as well as manager of one of the Premier Division's leading clubs.

He has already made hefty profits with the sale of two players this season. Midfielder Mark Biggins and striker Selvin Campbell both went for surprisingly large fees.

Conversely, this week's capture of Maidenhead United centre-back Michael Barnes has failed to dig into the Windsor coffers at all. If any expence was incurred, it can only have been for the petrol used by assistant manager Keith Collins when he took the necessary forms to register Barnes to play for the Royals.

Clements was pleased with his new addition to the side, and for good reason. Barnes had Football League experience with both Reading and Northampton Town before being forced to give

By DAVID GOODMAN

up the professional game due to a serious knee injury. However, he has since enjoyed a relatively injury free two seasons with Maidenhead.

His performances for the Magpies certainly caught the attention of Wycombe Wanderers manager Jim Kelman during his short spell in charge at United, and was keen to sign Barnes' after taking over at Loakes Park.

As a result, Maidenhead released Barnes to Wycombe, and although he impressed in a match against Dagenham, failure to pass a medical (due to his knee) meant that he was sent back to York Road, and that's where Windsor stepped in.

However, Maidenhead felt more than a little peeved at Windsor's good fortune. The Magpies felt that the Royals were guilty of a little bit of sharp practice, and commercial manager Brian Knights told the 'Observer': "When he (Barnes) came back from Wycombe, he was no longer under contract. As a result we could not demand a fee."

"We operate closely with Windsor and are a little disappointed at both them and Barnes. When Barnes came back from Wycombe he gave our chairman, Jim Parsons, an assurance that he would hold out for a fee despite not being on contract," added Knights.

Although the Magpies' disappointment at losing one of their best players with nothing in return is understandable, Clements felt that United's disappointment with Windsor was unfounded.

"I don't know what they're complaining about," he said.

"We have done everything by the book. We put in a legitimate seven day approach for a non-contract player and are not required to pay a fee. As far as Keith Collins and myself are concerned, we are working for Windsor Football Club and are quite entitled to sign any players that become available.

I can understand how United feel, but if a fee was wanted for every player not on contract, players would never change clubs."