

JIM KELMAN's emergence as the saviour of Wycombe Wanderers was completed on Saturday as he led them to GM Vauxhall Conference safety at Telford.

The likeable FA coach, who had more than his fair share of doubters when he was

By Rolf Niven

appointed back in January, assured himself of a special place in the hearts of Blues fans as his heroic troops made mathematically certain of staying up.

A 0-0 draw at Bucks Head together with Bath City's demise at Altrincham means Kelman now has the chance of building a bright new future.

But even the Glasgow-born manager, who admits to having an intense dislike of defeat, reveals he had to think twice about applying for the Loakes Park position.

"There was a certain amount of trepidation because of the position the team was in at the time," he confessed. "I know from experience how difficult it can be and certainly when I arrived a lot of people's heads were down.

"But at least Wycombe gave me enough time in which to work at it. Basingstoke and Oxford have only recently appointed their managers which

gives them no time at all to change things.

"What pleases me is that we've done it without any panic buying. All I've done is improve the stock and the spirit within the squad. That spirit is worth another player in my book."

Now the former Maidenhead United and Hungerford boss can relax, see through the end of this season and begin reshaping his squad during the summer.

"I will be looking to add at least three new players to strengthen the squad even further. Once all the promotion and relegation battles are sorted out then we may have some idea of which players are on the move."

One player Kelman hopes to add to his fold is Trowbridge Town's defender/midfielder Martin Blackler.

"I have already put in seven days notice of approach for him," said the Wanderers manager. "We have had glowing reports on him from one of our scouts and he will be coming on tour with us at the end of the season."

Flu

Once again Kelman singled out Gary Lester for praise following another excellent performance at Telford at the weekend.

"I think having another goalkeeper at the club has helped sharpen Gary up," he pointed out. "He has done superbly in the last two games and more than a match for anything Telford could offer.

"Matt Crossley and Kevin Day also played particularly well and if Nigel Taylor had hit the mark when he stormed through then I think we would have won it.

"Kirk Corbin failed a late fitness test but Mark West produced a very polished performance at right-back.

"Telford did well in the first half and our dressing room was not the place to be at half-time. We came into it much more after that - especially when Brian Greenaway came on as substitute."

Kelman had little option but to field a patchwork side for Monday night's President's Cup semi-final clash with Conference leaders Barnet at Loakes Park.

Keeper John Granville and defender Kirk Corbin are both definitely out through injury with both Mark Boyland and Kevin Day struggling with knocks. Andy Graham, ruled out of Saturday's squad because of flu, will also be missing along with the suspended Sean Norman.

"I believe Barnet are sending their first team but we'll have to wait and see," said Kelman.



■ Jim Kelman - took the reins from Peter Suddaby and has completed the task of guiding Wanderers clear of trouble.