

Ashford bid is off as Barnet demand £35,000

JIM KELMAN'S plans to bring Noel Ashford back to Loakes Park came to a grinding halt when Barnet slapped a £35,000 price tag on his head.

The Wycombe Wanderers boss, who actually agreed personal details with the England non-league star this week, refused to be drawn into what he called "an auction" and described Barnet's fee as "Outrageous".

"I spoke to Noel this week and he was happy to come back to Wycombe," revealed the Blues chief. "We agreed terms but I am afraid Barnet's price has closed the door on that deal for the time being.

"We are not going to be drawn into an auction with Maidstone who are also interested in signing Noel. We made what we felt was a fair and reasonable offer for him but Barnet are asking too much.

"The club will not be dictacted to so the issue is closed unless Barnet review their price."

Blues received £ 18,000 from the North London club for the ex-Enfield hero last September and their offer is believed to be close to that figure.

The latest developments come as a major blow to Kelman's hopes of building a powerful GM Vauxhall Conference force for next season.

Ashford was named Barnet's Player-of-the-season by the fans but Underhill boss Barry Fry stormed this week "The sooner we get rid of him the better".

Fry has been upset by speculation over Ashford's future which revealed the player was unhappy at Barnet.

He has placed the midfielder on the transfer list and evidently hoping to make a healthy profit on his sale.

Fry and Kelman could cross each other's path again over the next few weeks with both men interested in Lincoln City's Graham Bressington.

Having placed Ashford on the transfer list, Fry may view the powerful midfielder as an ideal replacement.

Bressington, another former Wycombe midfielder, is Kelman's other big target but his future is still very uncertain.

Suspension, injury and a row with Imps boss Colin Murphy has made life difficult

for the ex-Beaconsfield man and he wants to return to the South.

"I have spoken to Lincoln concerning the player but they have not talked to him about his future," said Kelman "I would hope to hear next week so that is still on the boil."

The Blues boss still has several other other deals in the pipeline including a possible move for Kidderminster Harriers midfielder Adrian O'Dowd.

O'Dowd was recommended by Martin Woodall, the former Harriers midfielder who left Loakes Park in February to go to Australia. He played in Monday's Steve King Memorial Fund match against

Chelsea.

Kelman faces stiff competition in his bid to net Ruislip Manor man David Carroll. Vauxhall-Opel premier outfit Farnborough Town have offered the midfielder a tempting deal, but Carroll, who also played on Monday, will be going on tour to Malta with the Wycombe squad.

● Blues will face league and cup double winners Hamrun Spartans in their short end-of-season tour to Malta later this month.

Kelman's men will face the Maltese champions on Tuesday, May 24 before tackling the losing cup finalists Zurrieq FC on Thursday, May 26.

Those confirmed on the



■ **Over-priced: Noel Ashford.**

tour are Kirk Corbin, Brian Greenaway, Sean Norman, Kevin Day, Matt Crossley, Nigel Taylor, Kevin Durham, Adrian Mann, Scott Young, Laurence Osborne, John Ray, Richard Price and Martin Blackler.

Plans to take Reading keeper Gary Westwood have fallen through but Crewe Alexandra have offered the services of one of their keepers.

"There will be one other player but that is yet to be confirmed," said Kelman.

The squad departs on May 21 and returns May 28.

● Due to deadlines we are unable to carry the result on last night's (Thursday) President's Cup final against Brentford at Loakes Park. A full report will be carried in our sister paper Midweek.

● A Wycombe Wanderers end of season review will also appear in Midweek in the next few weeks.

Kelman unveils his new reserve and youth team plans and talks about his long term hopes for Wycombe in next week's midweek.