

Lester career in doubt once more as Crompton signs

Rolf Niven reports

FORMER STOCKPORT COUNTY goalkeeper Steve Crompton signed for Wycombe Wanderers on Thursday, casting fresh doubts over the future of club stalwart Gary Lester.

Crompton's arrival is set to start a three-way duel for places in Jim Kelman's senior squad with Lester and West Indian John Granville fighting to hang onto their places.

The Blues boss confirmed that one of them is likely to depart Loakes Park either during the summer or at the end of pre-season training.

"Last year Wycombe only had one keeper and that was not a healthy situation," said Kelman this week. "Now I have three who will be there during pre-season although it is almost certain one of them will leave us. I will look at all three of them during training. They will all be given a chance."

But Kelman believes he has unearthed a gem in Crompton and is also convinced he has yet to see the best from ex-Trinidad and Tobago star Granville.

"Steve is a fantastic prospect and was outstanding in the two games we played on tour in Malta," added the Wycombe chief. "I think John will benefit from a full pre-season's training. Gary is also a very experienced keeper and has a loyal servant to the club."

But Lester has been tipped for a move to neighbours Marlow who will be making their first ever venture in the Vauxhall-Opel premier division next season.

Of the three keepers he seems the most likely to depart but it would be a shame if he missed out on a testimonial game after nine years service to the Bucks club.

Twenty-year-old Crompton will move from his home in Cheshire and follow the example of former Colchester man Sean Norman by finding a job in the Wycombe area.

Cheltenham manager John Murphy has temporarily halted Wycombe Wanderers plans to sign former Robins captain Steve Abbley.

Kelman had hoped to talk to Abbley this week to discuss personal details but Murphy has asked the player to report to him before he talks to any other club.

Abbley left Whaddon Road following a bust-up with Murphy.

"It was reported in the Cheltenham programme and in their local papers that Steve Abbley was on a free transfer but now John Murphy wants the player to approach him for permission to leave.

"He is entitled to do so and there might now be a very small fee involved. However I firmly believe Abbley will join us," said Kelman.

If Abbley does arrive Kelman will then turn his sights on a new striker.

"We have some good forwards at the moment but I feel we need one top class striker. I will be sending the scouts out looking for someone who can play football. I am not looking for a big lump up the middle because that would turn us into a kick and rush side.

"I'll be looking hard at the top marksmen in the league."

● Chalfont St Peter stand to make a total of £5,000 if John Regan is a success at Wycombe Wanderers. The Vauxhall-Opel division one club have already received £2,000 and get a further £2,000 if he completes 10 games and a further £1,000 if he completes 20 games for the senior team. The deal will run until Christmas and if he does not shape up then he will return to Chalfont.

