

Kelman full of praise for Kerr's long-distance Cup dash

BLUES boss Jim Kelman shrugged off the disappointment of Saturday's FA Cup defeat to praise the bravery of young American striker John Kerr, who dashed from the bedside of his sick mother to help the Wycombe cause.

The former 23-year-old Syracuse University student and United States interbational received a telephone call from doctors in Scotland on Friday afternoon advising him that his mother's condition was very serious. She is suffering from cancer.

Kerr travelled to Scotland that evening and contacted Kelman at 1am to say that he would be available to play on Saturday. He dashed back down to Wycombe on Saturday morning for the afternoon's crucial match and dashed straight back to Scotland afterwards.

Kelman was understandably full of praise for the ex-Harrow Borough and Portsmouth forward. He said: "John showed tremendous commitment to the club under very difficult circumstances and it was great to see such enthusiasm and dedication.

"He was under tremendous pressure out on the park and I was just disappointed that we didn't give him more help. On the few occasions he got the ball where he wanted it he was devastating and Kettering were clearly very worried about his pace.

"But he and Mark West didn't get the kind of service they need and were left all on their own up front against a very tight defence. I wouldn't expect the pair of them to go crashing into tackles - that isn't their style of play. We should have played to their strengths.

Depressed

"I was very disappointed for the fans because as a footballing spectacle it was very poor. It was a good exciting cup tie, but it was a very tight game and Kettering were better at it than we were.

"The lads said afterwards that we couldn't play that badly again and, when you look at it, we've only been beaten 2-1 by the league leaders. I spoke to Barnet manager Barry Fry on Sunday morning and he said he doesn't

know where to start after their 5-0 beating at Boston. At least I know where we are going.

"Everyone was very depressed after the game. It's all so final when you concede a goal right near the end. There's no time to get back.

"The game looked to be heading for a draw and I didn't think they looked capable of scoring again, despite all the pressure. But we knew Robbie Cooke was going to be very sharp and it was a brave striker's goal which won it for them.

"He was the deciding factor. I put Kevin Day in instead of Sean Norman to mark Cooke and I thought Kevin had a good game. But Cooke got away from him twice and scored two goals.

"With a big man like Ernie Moss up there as well there was always the chance of a few knock downs, but I thought Glyn Creaser did very well again.

Aggression

"Kettering were obviously very worried about Martin Blackler because he scored against them earlier in the season and they set out to blanket mark him out of the game. They left out their two wide footballing players and they obviously came with the intention of making it a tough battle.

"We were taught a footballing lesson by Kidderminster on Monday and a fighting lesson by Kettering here on Saturday. But Kettering had very few clear cut chances. John Granville had three things to do all game. He saved one volley and picked the ball out of the net twice.

"Unfortunately we had only six or seven shots, not all of them on target, and it was that which disappointed me. We didn't match their aggression and fight and so we couldn't give our forwards the service they needed.

"There were several vicious tackles going in out there and a lot of bookings. But there are no sour grapes from me. They won the game, but I think we are very close to having a very good side.

"We are in the process of sorting out international clearance for Mike Brady, one of John Kerr's old colleagues from America and we are hoping he will be available to play in the Capital League match with Barnet on Tuesday night.

"With Lawrence Osborne still waiting in the wings as well it should be an interesting game as I gather Barnet will be fielding their full first team.

"I am still hoping to get Lance Morrison from Gloucester, although there is no further news yet, and I am continually on the lookout for a big, bustling striker who can knock people out of the way and give us an extra dimension in the air against teams like Kettering.

"The again, everybody's looking for a player like that."