

WYCOMBE Wanderers manager Jim Kelman injected new life into his side's championship challenge by splashing out a club record £25,000 for striker Nicky Evans this week.

The 30-year-old centre-forward joined Blues from Barnet on Tuesday and is almost certain to make his debut in tomorrow's (Saturday) home Conference match against Boston United.

And Evans, valued at around £35,000 less than four months ago, believes his new club is capable of landing the championship.

"This is a marvellous set up and I honestly think Wycombe could have a real go at the league," said the Bedford-based full-time footballer. "There are still nine or so games left and the team that can string a consistent run together will take it.

"I was absolutely thrilled when I came to Wycombe. It is such a professional club and the potential here is staggering. If they don't win the league this season then they must stand a great chance next year."

Evans is well known to Blues followers. Last season he netted four times at Loakes Park in Barnet's historic 8-0 League victory.

But many will question the wisdom of spending so much on a 30-year-old player who has not been a regular in the Bees side this season.

Kelman stated: "Every player on the market is over-priced and we have done well to get Nicky at this figure. I am very pleased that at long last we have done something we've been promising the fans all season and that is acquire an established centre-forward.

Debut

"He will make his debut against Boston although I have not decided on the full team yet. I have a number of permutations to play with.

Evans added: "To be honest when I was travelling down from Bedford I wondered why Wycombe wanted to buy me because they have some great strikers who have been scoring regularly.

"They like to play football which was a serious consideration when I signed. I am very lucky in that I am naturally fit so I have a few years football left in me yet."

Evans is still trying to recover his old form after breaking a leg last season but he passed a strict medical examination at Wycombe General Hospital on Tuesday morning.

Evans began his career as an apprentice at Queens Park Rangers before moving to Peterborough where he made eight first team appearances.

He moved to Kettering before being bought for £2,000 by Barnet in the summer of 1983. The former England non-league forward has been a popular figure at the North London club for the past five seasons, making over 270 appearances. He was top marksman last season with 22 goals.

Evans is very much the 'nearly man' of Conference football having collected runners-up awards with both Kettering and Barnet.

"I have come close to both the league and the Trophy but have yet to be on a winning side," said Evans who links up

Wanderers fork out £25,000 for Barnet striker



■ Barnet boss Barry Fry (left) finds it difficult to raise a smile as he parts with star striker Nicky Evans (right) for £25,000. There's no hiding Jim Kelman's thoughts on the deal though.

Rolf Niven reports

again with former team-mate and friend Glyn Creaser. "I hope to change that at Wycombe. I was getting stale at Barnet. Although loyalty is commendable I think sometimes you can overstay your welcome at a club and I needed a fresh challenge."

Although Wycombe have been in negotiations for some while over Evans, this deal was rushed through in a matter of days. Kelman got the backing of chairman Ivor Beeks, currently on a week's golfing holiday in Portugal, and the rest of the board of directors.

Director Graham Peart commented: "This is further evidence of the commitment of the club towards establishing a

place in the Football League.

"We do feel we are lucky to have found a quality striker. We already have three top rate forwards and a fourth gives the manager options as well as cover in case of injuries."

Evans' arrival will take the edge off Wanderers' abysmal exit from the FA Trophy at Hyde United at the weekend and boost confidence as Kelman's men bid to extend their unbeaten league run to 12 games.

Matt Crossley could be another surprise inclusion in tomorrow's line-up. The versatile defender was due to play in Wednesday night's Capital League clash with Welling and, depending on his performance, was in line to make his first appearance since undergoing a knee operation in January.

"Matt has made a remarkable recov-

ery and could be back in the side for the Boston game," added Kelman.

The Blues boss had intended to give his team the rest of the week off after Tuesday's training session following their Trophy demise but then changed his mind.

"I was feeling soft after the Hyde game," he admitted. "We have got to put that behind us by working hard together. You can be sure that Boston will not have Thursday night off."

● Barnet have made a bid for Wycombe's £6,000-rated defender Kevin Day. The London outfit are in the middle of a defensive crisis because of injuries.

Aylesbury United have also renewed their interest in Day who has been taken off the transfer-list by his own request.